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COMMUNICATIONS

from the

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

December, 1975

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FROM THE EDITOR

By now it must be clear to everyone that the Berliner Ensemble is not coming to the U.S. this year, or else IBS members would have received notices of the event earlier this fall. The reasons for the negotiations with the Brooklyn Academy of Music to have broken down are financial, which are the most regrettable reasons of all. Also, the Brecht Center which was supposed to be established in East Berlin right after the 25th anniversary of the GDR in October 1974, never was founded, and all is quiet over there on this issue.

In the meantime, however, an American Brecht Center called Epic West has been struggling to come into existence (see p. 3ff.). It looks very promising and could be a great resource center for IBS members in this country.

Two Brecht Seminars and a membership meeting have been scheduled for the upcoming convention of the Modern Language Association in San Francisco from December 26 to 29 (see p. 7), and I hope to see a great many of you there.

geb

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JAHRBUCH V - DUES NOTICE

Volume V of the Jahrbuch is scheduled for publication in December 1975. Membership dues for 1975:

Student Member	§7/DM20	Sustaining Member	§25/DM75
Regular Member	§10/DM30	Institutional Mem	§18/DM55
Senior Member	§18/DM55		

should be sent in early 1976 to

Brecht-Jahrbuch, Department of Comparative Literature
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201, USA

with a clear notation on the check itself that your payment is for volume V. As of 1976, a regular schedule of publication of one volume a year is anticipated and it is hoped that the confusion caused by Athenäum's endless delays on volume III will never be repeated. Those members who have not yet paid for, or received either volume III or IV, should immediately contact Ms. Ursula Gropp at the above Milwaukee address.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

notices should also be sent to the Milwaukee address, rather than directed to the editor of the newsletter.

COMMUNICATIONS - THE BRECHT NEWSLETTER - Vol. V No. 1 (1975)

Published by The International Brecht Society

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EPIC WEST

by Ronald G. Davis

(Editor's note: Ronny Davis has been working on establishing a cultural center for the study of Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre for over a year now. Below he outlines his purposes and goals for the center. Two members of the IBS Action Committee, Lee Baxandall and Gisela Bahr, fully support this project. They suggest that Ronny be invited to speak at the IBS membership meeting in San Francisco on December 26, to present his plans to the members perhaps in more concrete terms, and that endorsement by the IBS be considered.)

The purpose of our institute is to provide a broad approach to the study and application of the works of Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre. The initial impetus to establish Epic West is based on the sure knowledge of the worth and unique character of Bertolt Brecht and the notion of epic cultural formulations in the 20th century.

Our institution will focus attention not only on Brecht's body of work, but also on the further reaching implications of his ideas, which emphasize the social processes that produce human interaction. Thus, we expect to reach and influence the cultural work of many different peoples in different mediums.

The 70's require an investigation into the cultural fiber of our society. Both "serious" cultural activities and mass entertainments are ineffectual tools for growth in understanding of our very complex lives today; in fact, they are designed to do the opposite. We believe, as Brecht did, in the human species' inherent ability to investigate rationally the human condition, and then use this method of dialogic thinking to solve human problems. Through Epic West, we hope to establish a broad cultural approach to learning and social progress.

Our organization includes the establishment of a library, a film collection, an information-performance-and-research center, a cultural training center and a theatre. Each of these elements has its own particular relationship to the overall objectives of Epic West, but will also keep an independent identity and association with the community. At the same time, each will relate to similar groups in the community. Our ultimate objective is a broad cultural network.

The history of any significant cultural advancement encompasses a community of peoples who are developing along with, tangential to, and inside the core of the movement. Our purpose is to establish an institute in which the various concerns of diverse peoples may interact, and this core belief is essential to our development.

(cont'd next page)

(Epic West - cont'd from p.3)

By establishing a library where research may occur, we both attract scholars and provide practitioners with materials for research into the history of their practice. Our library materials will include everything available in English on Brecht, his co-workers, and subjects related to his work. The film collection offers scholars the possibility of observing both theatrical and film presentations of the works they examine, as well as providing film makers and the general public with documents on the Berliner Ensemble productions and films related to the artistic innovators in theatre, film and music. Our collection of films on Brecht and Brechtiana will be the only one of its kind in the United States.

The cultural training center, operating in San Francisco, is the most expansive project associated with Epic West. Not exclusively devoted to the works of Brecht, rather to a critical examination of culture, it offers classes on a variety of subjects ranging from theatre, dance and music to history and economic theory.

Cultural workers in all mediums require both the advancement of their skills and a knowledge of our environment to improve, not so much the quantity (for we are glutted with poor entertainment) but rather, the quality of their production. With the investigation of socio-economic conditions surrounding the arts, practitioners have a better chance both in creating useful cultural products and in making a living from their cultural labor.

The final element, but by no means the end product of Epic West, will be the full range of creative activity surrounding theatrical productions. The productions we devise, whether from the works of Bertolt Brecht, or from other relevant playwrights, will of necessity be supported by the work in all other areas of our institution.

Our intention is to develop productions that are far above the average theatrical fare, experimental in the sense of spending enough intelligent time to produce unique presentations which can then tour other locations. Our production must necessarily be complex in organization yet accessible to a general public. Our designers, directors, composers, performers and stage hands must be understanding of the audience and the ingenuity needed to provide enlightened cultural entertainment. Therefore, on every level we must re-train and train our co-workers towards making comprehensible that which appears to be incomprehensible. The experience and training people receive as instructors or students, performers or dramaturgs for various theatrical and film programs, will spin off into other

(cont'd on page 11)

IM DICKICHT DER STÄDTE : EIN
BEITRAG ZUR QUELLENFORSCHUNG

von Ingrid Schuster

"Über die Zeit der Entstehung des Dramas Im Dickicht, den Verlauf der Arbeit und die den Autor dabei leitenden Gesichtspunkte ist bisher wenig bekannt geworden."(1) So schrieb Gisela Bahr 1968, und auch heute hat der Satz noch Gültigkeit.

Nach Brecht schildert Im Dickicht der Städte "den unerklärlichen Ringkampf zweier Menschen."(2) In meinem Vortrag auf dem Kongress der ICLA im Sommer 1973 wies ich bereits darauf hin, daß die taoistische Lehre vom wu-wei (Nicht-Handeln) - vermittelt durch Alfred Döblins Roman Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun - eine Erklärung des "unerklärlichen" Ringkampfes ermöglicht.

Es kommt jedoch noch eine weitere literarische Quelle in Betracht. Als Brecht 1921 begann, Im Dickicht zu konzipieren, gab es unter den deutschen Literaten neben Döblin einen zweiten "Fachmann" für Chinesisches: Klabund. Auch er hatte, kurz nach Döblin, den Taoismus "entdeckt". Von 1918 an finden sich in seinen Veröffentlichungen häufig Hinweise auf Lao-tzu und Zitate aus dem Tao Te Ching; 1920 erschien seine Version von Laotse. Sprüche. Brechts Freundschaft mit Klabund ist bekannt, besonders 1921/22 sah man sich häufig. Im Herbst 1921 hielt sich Brecht in Berlin auf (Klabund vermittelte den Vertrag mit Reiss); im Januar 1922 trug Brecht in Trude Hesterbergs "Wilder Bühne" eigene Lieder und Texte von Klabund vor; im September 1922 trat Brecht mit Klabund und Valentin in München auf.

Klabund vollendete in dieser Zeit den Roman Spuk, der 1922 erschien. Neben einem Kapitel "Vom Sinn" (Klabund übernahm von Richard Wilhelm die Umschreibung "Sinn" für "Tao") findet sich dort auch das Kapitel "Der Boxkampf". Der dicke, kräftige Metzgerssohn Munk - "Dictator mundi" - tritt gegen die "chinesische Wildkatze", den "asiatischen Meister" Mai Lung Fang, an.

Ich steige persönlich in die Schranken. Niemand soll sagen, daß ich feige bin. In mir verkörpert und vergeistigt sich der Kontinent. Die große Stunde schlägt. Die Frage ist: Europa oder Asien? Die weiße oder die gelbe Rasse? Schinderhannes oder Schöpenhauer, um zwei Polaritäten zu benennen - oder Laotse und Lihungtschang? Schnaps oder Opium? Wem gehört die Zukunft, die Ewigkeit heißen wird? Meine Muskeln sind gestählt. Ich bin trainiert. Ich habe Laotse gelesen. Mit seinen eigenen Waffen will ich ihn schlagen, den Gelben. Mir kann keiner. Zwei Monate berührte ich kein Weib. Ich berste vor Zeugungskraft. Verantwortung strafft mich. Schon hör ich sie singen, die Champions von Gleiwitz, Nancy,

(cont'd next page)

(Dickicht - cont'd from p. 5)

Warschau, Czernowitz, Malmö und Napoli: ave Caesar,
morituri te salutant ... (128)

Aber Munk verliert: "Der Chinese hatte ihm beide Augen aus dem Kopf geschlagen. Es gab keine europäische Weltanschauung mehr." (131)

In Brechts Stück verliert der Asiate, der Kämpfer mit der östlichen Weltanschauung. Gargas letzte Worte an ihn sind: "Und das Geistige, das sehen Sie, das ist nichts. Es ist nicht wichtig, der Stärkere zu sein, sondern der Lebendige." (3) Brecht hatte erkannt, daß die Zeit des vom Taoismus inspirierten Idealismus, wie ihn Döblin, Klabund, Hesse u.a. verkündet hatten, vorbei war. Ivan Goll kam - von einem anderen Standpunkt aus - zu derselben Einsicht. 1921 schrieb er: "Kein einziger Expressionist war reaktionär. Kein einziger war nicht Anti-Krieg. Kein einziger, der nicht an Brüderschaft und Gemeinschaft glaubte." Aber: "Das Leben, die Maschine, die Natur behalten recht: jenseits von Gut und Böse. [...] Das nackte Leben ist besser, will sagen: wahrer als du. Beweis: deine Weltanschauung hat nirgends gesiegt." (4)

Anmerkungen

- (1) Im Dickicht der Städte. Erstfassung und Materialien. Hrsg. von Gisela E. Bahr. Frankfurt a.M., 1968, S. 157.
- (2) Gesammelte Werke 1. Frankfurt a.M., 1967, S. 126.
- (3) Ebenda, S. 190. Ähnlich in Bahr, op. cit., S. 100.
- (4) Zitiert nach Paul Pörtner. Literatur-Revolution 1910-1925. Dokumente, Manifeste, Programme. Bd. 2. Berlin, 1961, S. 338

MUSICAL MATERIALS

For those interested in obtaining musical materials for perusal in order to decide whether to use a given score in a Brecht production, without having to rent it first: such perusal materials may be obtained from John Fuegi for Eisler's Die Maßnahme; from Leonard Lehrman (1616 So Olive St, Apt 2, Bloomington, Inc. 47401) for Eisler's Die Tage der Kommune and Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe; and of course from Tams-Witmark for Weill's Dreigroschenoper. Anyone who can add to this list, is requested to let COMMUNICATIONS know. As soon as negotiations are completed for Theodore Presser Co. Inc. to act as clearing house for Henschelverlag, Deutscher Verlag, Breitkopf & Härtel etc. for such materials, this will be announced here, too.

MEETINGS IN SAN FRANCISCO

MLA Seminar 16:
Brecht's Plays in Performance

This year's Brecht Seminar will be on Friday, December 26, from 7:00 to 8:15 p.m. in the ~~Merced~~^{San Miguel} A room of the Hyatt Hotel. The session will be chaired by Lee Baxandall and John Fuegi. Ronald G. Davis of Epic West has kindly consented to do a presentation on Brecht in the Theatre.

IBS Membership Meeting

A meeting of the U.S. and Canadian members of the IBS has also been scheduled for December 26, from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m., in the Potrero Room of the Hyatt Hotel. Unfortunately, this time coincides with at least one other meeting that will be of considerable interest to many IBS members, but it does have the advantage of immediately following the Brecht Seminar itself.

MLA Seminar 76:
Brecht and Film

This additional Brecht Seminar will be held on December 27, from 8:30 to 9:45 a.m. in the Conference Theater, Hyatt Hotel. Discussion leader: Renata Berg-Pan. Panelists and topics as follows:

1. "Brecht and Film: The 'Epic' Model in Cinema as a Critique of Reality" - Gautam Dasgupta, Theater Dept., CUNY
2. "On the Limit of Cunning or The Failure of the Threepenny Film" - Renate Fischetti, Dept of Humanities, U of Maryland
3. "Epic Synthesis, Film-Montage and Estrangement-Effect: A Comparison of Brecht and Eisenstein" - Rainer Friedrich, Dept of Classics, Dalhousie U, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
4. "Brecht and the Film Medium" - John Fuegi, Dept of Comp Lit, U of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Interested participants can obtain copies of the papers from Renata Berg-Pan by writing to her before December 20 (Dept of German & Scandinavian, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.) or by contacting her at the Hyatt Hotel on December 26 after 6 p.m., or from the individual contributors. Essentially, all are welcome to attend but there might not be enough room.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Schmidt, Henry & Maurice O'Sullivan. Gay's Beggars Opera and Brecht's Threepenny Opera, with critical material. To be published by Norton in late 1976.

DISSERTATION

Wartenberg, Dorothy. Verlaine, Rimbaud and Brecht: A Study in the Change of a Literary Relationship. Adv. Guy Stern. Dept of German, U of Cincinnati, August 1975.

PUBLICATIONS

Brecht, Bertolt. Tagebücher 1920-1922. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen 1920-1954. Hrsg. von Herta Ramthun. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1975.

Seidel, Gerhard. Bibliographie Bertolt Brecht. Titelverzeichnis Band 1. Deutschsprachige Veröffentlichungen aus den Jahren 1913-1972. Werke von Brecht. Sammlungen. Dramatik. Berlin u. Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1975.

Baxandall, Lee. "The San Francisco Mime Troupe Perform Brecht: A Comradely Criticism." Praxis No. 1 (1975), 116-121. (Followed by: Ira Shor, "The Case For Revolutionary Culture: The Mime Troupe Versus Baxandall." 122-127, and: Lee Baxandall, "Reply to Ira Shor." 128-129.) +)

Berg-Pan, Renata. "Confucius in Modern Europe: On the Image of China in Brecht's Work." German Life and Letters (London), July 1975.

Fiebach, J. Von Craig bis Brecht. Theatertheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts. Berlin: Henschel-Verlag 1975.

Frisch, Werner & K. W. Obermeier. Brecht in Augsburg. Erinnerungen. Dokumente. Texte. Fotos. Berlin u. Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1975.

+) Praxis can be obtained from 2125 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, Cal 94709, for \$3.25.

PUBLICATIONS (cont'd)

- Fuegi, John. "Beckett und Brecht." In Das Werk von Samuel Beckett, ed. Hans Mayer & Uwe Johnson. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch 225, pp. 185-204; 234-239.
- Glade, Henry. "DDR-Dramatik in der Sowjetunion." Europäische Ideen No. 13 (1975), 47-50. (A slightly enlarged version appeared in Die Tat, Nov. 7, 1975.)
- Knust, Herbert. "George Grosz: Literature and Caricature." Comparative Literature Studies (U of Illinois), Summer 1975.
- Lyon, James K. Bertolt Brecht and Rudyard Kipling. A Marxist's Imperialist Mentor. The Hague: Mouton 1975. (Will also be published in edition suhrkamp vol. 804)
- Morley, Michael. "Brecht's Arbeitsjournal - a rejoinder." The German Quarterly XLVIII No. 2 (March 1975), 229-233.
- Schürer, Ernst. "Bertolt Brecht's American Gangster Play The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui." To be published in Perspectives on Contemporary Literature. U of Louisville, Louisville, Ky.
- Tracy, Gordon L. "Bert Brecht und die chinesische Philosophie." Universitas 30 No. 7 (July 1975).
- Vollmar, Klaus-Bernd. Ästhetische Strukturen und politische Aufklärung. Ein Versuch, die materialistisch dialektische Literaturtheorie wieder auf den Boden des Textes zu stellen. Frankfurt, Bern, New York: Lang 1975.

ALSO IN PROGRESS

- Shull, Ronald K. is compiling a collection of the music composed for Brecht's plays, to contain over 160 individual songs, the operas and cantatas, incidental music and, if possible, various versions of the scores and/or texts. Also included an analysis of the theatrical importance and uses of music in Brecht's plays and theory.

PRODUCTIONS

The Good Woman of Setzuan Residential College Players, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor, April 10 to 13. Revised English version: Eric Bentley. Music Composer & Director: Peter Ferran. Dir.: Douglas C. Sprigg. Sets: Eric Keller; Costumes: Beth Rontal. Shen Te: Maureen Sullivan.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle U of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, April 10 to 19 (9 perf.). Transl.: Eric Bentley. Music: Herbert Pilhofer. Dir.: Corliss Phillabaum, John Fuegi. Sets: E. J. Dennis; Costumes: Al Tucci. G: Chris Cedarburg; A: Herb Felsenfeld.

The Little Mahagonny Cincinnati Opera, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 12 to 14 (6 perf.). Transl.: Michael Feingold. Music: Kurt Weill. Dir.: David Alden. Cond.: Jonathan Dudley.

The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny Everyman Company, Cat's Cradle, Chapel Hill, N.C. October 6 to 8 (6 perf.). Music: Kurt Weill. Dir.: Brenda Mezz, Gordon Ferguson. Cond.: Michael Crave, Barbara Downey. Sets: Ted Outwater; Costumes: Gretchen Whitney.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle The Playhouse, Pennsylvania State U, October 30 to November 8. Transl.: Eric Bentley. Music: Paul Dessau, adapted by Martin Guttenplan & Dan Camburn. Dir.: Knox Fowler. Sets: Wm. Bloodgood; Costumes: R. Hieronymus. G: Carmella Maurizi; A: John Fahnestock.

BRECHT-REZEPTION IN NORDAMERIKA

Klausbernd Vollmar (2355 Stolpe, Gut Horst, Federal Rep. of Germany) arbeitet an einer Rezeptionstheorie politischer Texte am Beispiel von Brecht-Aufführungen in Nordamerika und bittet um die Unterstützung der IBS-Mitglieder. Er sucht eine Liste von Brecht-Aufführungen in Nordamerika von 1950 bis etwa 1974. Außerdem interessieren ihn Publikumsreaktionen sowie die Stücke "Die Mutter" und "Die Tage der Kommune". Er ist ferner an Textbearbeitungen von Brechtstücken interessiert.

(Epic West - cont'd from page 4)

communities and thereby engender concurrent comparisons healthy both for our survival and the establishment of a broader community.

Cultural activity and the entertainment industry are producers of consciousness and the way people view their lives. It is urgent that intelligence and the history of rational thought be included in any cultural work. Those most cynical in our society assume that people are fixed in their attitudes and are unable to understand their condition. Yet, these very people have learned their cynicism.

"Inquire if a thing be necessary
Especially if it is common
We particularly ask you--
When a thing continually occurs--
Not on that account to find it natural
Let nothing be called natural
In this age of bloody confusion
Ordered disorder, planned caprice
And dehumanized humanity, lest all things
Be held unalterable."

Bertolt Brecht, The Exception and the Rule

For the Left

There is no guarantee in making a choice that we will achieve what we intend, nor is there in choosing a form such as Epic Theatre or any correlary activity, that "a new way of thinking" (Marxist) shall become a part of the viewer's habits. At every juncture we must choose material and programs that we understand to be of value, yet have enough energy and intelligence to examine: why, where and for whom.

In our United States' variant of monopoly capitalism, the use of Brecht is no guarantee that we will produce a Marxist approach to culture either in the doing or the receiving. Brecht, as others, noted the problematic in the reception of the audience or the masses, of a way of thinking that is both beneficial to their well being, yet opposed to their false consciousness. The difficulty that one finds in new art or new politics ("new" being something old re-tuned to the present tempo) is the present condition of the audience or the masses' sensibilities. While the performer or activist must understand the state of the audience or the mass, that realization does not stop there; rather it requires that we present work that entertains as it demonstrates, while explaining the

(cont'd next page)

(Epic West - cont'd from page 11)

demonstration. In short, a bourgeoisified audience, and we are included, is to be taught a Marxist methodology while being entertained in a Marxist manner.

This is not to say that within bourgeois thought there are no seeds for Marxist thought, rather that those seeds are plowed so deep as to need unearthing as one begins watering. The surest way to stunt the growth of our seedlings (to continue the metaphor) is to have to rush into production or money making programs that are not politically developed or drain off intelligent energy. Americans have the nasty habit of learning two facts and leaping into action, thereby guaranteeing a dead-ended project or a failure that doesn't produce much wisdom for the next struggle.

It is to our advantage that we have the experience of the 60's close at hand and have learned something from that hysterical, if not a-historical period. The road to socialist thinking is not easily established in a capitalist society, in fact the problem is to make the road strong enough to prevent being washed out, overgrown or ignored.

An institution based upon the study and practice of Bertolt Brecht is likely to survive, given it is unique, and that the general reception is good. However shall it be; a repository of documents and thoughts or a dynamic producer of cultural activists? We desire, and this country needs the latter. A fundamental requirement is the funds to give us time to coordinate, structurally analyze and establish a firm foundation for our future production.

GDR MUSIC EXPERT IN THE U.S.

Fritz Hennenberg of Leipzig, an expert on Brecht and Music and an associate of Paul Dessau, is planning a U.S. tour in May 1976. He will be visiting Cornell University. Reinhold Grimm and Ulrich Weisstein are also trying to get him to their campuses, but there is room for more visits. Hennenberg offers lectures, in German or English, on "Brecht and Music" and workshops on interpretation with actors and/or singers. Anyone interested in inviting Dr. Hennenberg can write to him directly (DDR-7035 Leipzig, Zum Harfenacker 2) or contact either of the two IBS members mentioned above, or write to Mr. Glen Becker, Theatre Arts Dept, Cornell University.