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COMMUNICATIONS

from the

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

May 1977

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FROM THE EDITOR

The election results are in (page 2), with individual comments to the constitutional amendments on page 7. There will now be an additional election to determine the new editor of the newsletter (page 9). He/she will bring out the next issue in the fall.

What remains for me is to thank all those who voted for me. I shall do my best to deserve their confidence. In the meantime, have a good and productive summer. geb

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ELECTION RESULTS

BALLOTS RETURNED : 53

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Amendments to the Constitution, Passed:

Article II, 2 (a), (b), (c) (46)

Article IV, 1 and 2 (46)

Article VI, 1 and 2 (46)

Article V, 1 to 5 (47)

Article VII, 1 and 2 (46)

COMMUNICATIONS - THE BRECHT NEWSLETTER - Vol. VI No. 3 (1977)

Published by The International Brecht Society

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MORE ON "THE IMAGE OF WOMEN" Laureen Nussbaum

The wind-up of the MLA Special Session on "The Image of Women in the Works of Bertolt Brecht" left me rather dissatisfied since there was no opportunity for the panelists (either during or after the session to discuss their rather disparate views. We were three woman speakers and the approach of my colleagues was predominantly feminist, i.e., somewhat one-sided. So, in the end, all three of us were "straightened out" by Darko Suvin's rather fatherly take-over, which could have been avoided if the session had been better organized. The panelists could have clarified some controversial points. I, for one, was ready for that.

It seemed to me that Sara Lennox in "Wo Gewalt herrscht: Saint Joan in Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe" did not do justice to one of Brecht's most complex figures. Johanna is not only an ineffectual do-gooder (a stereotype middle-class woman) but, amongst other things, also a strong, very Brechtian persona, driven by the will to find out for herself why the workers are locked out ("Ich muß es wissen," repeated four times in her first scene). The play (and Johanna's role in it) is only on one level a parody of classicism and Schillerian idealism. In addition it is a critique of revisionism and a last warning to the German bourgeoisie just before the Nazi take-over. Brecht did not say that Johanna, because she is "only" a woman, cannot stem the tide of fascism but rather: this woman, because of her bourgeois background and ideological limitations learned too late that wo [ökonomische] Gewalt herrscht the only true strength lies in solidarity with the workers. In his next play, Die Mutter, which Brecht wrote in part concurrently with Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe, the title figure is a proletarian woman of often super-human revolutionary strength. While it is undoubtedly true that the upgrading of the (self-)image of woman was not one of Brecht's major concerns in Die heilige Johanna ..., it appears unfair to me to declare him a male chauvinist because of that fact. His preoccupations were different from ours and they have to be seen in their historical context.

As to Dagmar Lorenz's paper on "Das Bild der Frau in Brecht's Lyrik," I had the impression that her ample quotations were selected to prove the preconceived idea that only the Brecht of the 1948-56 period gave woman her due. It is, of course, true that in the early Augsburg poetry women-- apart from the mothers of soldiers--are predominantly seen as sex partners and often as sex objects. But predominantly is not exclusively. There is much self-irony in some of the

(cont'd next page)

(IMAGE OF WOMEN - cont'd)

early ballads and poems (including "Vision in Weiß" from which the speaker quoted), and there is a great deal of criticism of bourgeois values concerning sex relationships (e.g., in "Lied der Galgenvögel" and "Vom Mitmensch"). Moreover, Evelyn Roe is not only the girl who allows herself to be abused. She also stands paradigmatically for Brecht's early orientation toward the here and now, and her "Legende" expresses the same skeptical hedonism as the famous Hauspostille poem "Gegen Verführung."

Dagmar Lorenz did not quote from Brecht's city poetry of the twenties, where women are shown as particularly vulnerable participants in a mercilessly exploitative society. Nor did she pay enough attention to the wonderfully strong and politically astute mother-educator figure of the Wiegenlieder of 1932. Certainly Brecht did not ridicule elderly women--as the speaker had it--but rather admired their vitality and spirited independence in his early Augsburg-Munich years (e.g., "Ballade von der alten Frau") as well as in the more didactically oriented poems of the thirties (e.g., "Die Käuferin"). And when in "Lob des Lernens" Brecht admonishes woman: "Lerne, Frau in der Küche! / Lerne, Sechzigjährige! ..." he does not imply that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Rather, starting from the existing situation, wherever she is and whatever her age, he charges woman to join the struggle and to take responsibility for change: "Du mußt die Führung übernehmen" (ibid.).

In Brecht's poems addressed to Margarete Steffin and to Helene Weigel it is evident that these two women are respected and loved as highly valuable and productive partners, who work each from her own strength for the same goals as he does. Most of these tributes were written in exile and compared to them the post-exile poems which mention women as partners carry little weight in number as well as in power of persuasion (e.g., "Nachkriegsliedchen" and "Glückliche Begegnung"). Whereas all through Brecht's lyrical work woman can be said to stand paradigmatically for his own life feeling and hopes, we miss this gauge precisely for Brecht's years in East Berlin. His image of woman in those years must be derived from the way he staged female figures in the theater since in this last period of his life Brecht concentrated most of his efforts on directing the Berlin Ensemble. Little can be gleaned from Brecht's late poetry concerning his image of woman in a fledgling socialist society. To pretend otherwise seems to me untrue to Brecht.

FORUM

Richard E. Stanford writes:

I wonder if I ought to be writing this at all. As a relatively early dues-paying member of IBS, I decided in '74 that it was not really worth my while to continue paying for a book published in German--a language I have trouble speaking with children, much less reading on an academic level. That's my problem.

In December, I received a little note card advising me of the business meeting to be held at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York. As I was planning to be in New York for some other research of my own, this was fine. However, the hours of the Lincoln Center Library are such that it is difficult to pass up much-needed time there, and I missed the business meeting. Again, that's my problem.

I received this week the February COMMUNICATIONS, with the proposed changes in the constitution and much rhetoric about opening up the Society for active participation by non-academics. The next COMMUNICATIONS is due to come out in May, after all the ballots have been counted. That's not my problem.

For those of us without University franking privileges (i.e. practically unlimited postage), any opposition to the constitutional amendments is useless. Any opposition to committee officers or Society nominees is likewise foolhardy--especially if one does not live in or around Wisconsin. So, with some degree of resignation, I pose the following questions to those who talk so much about "activating" IBS.

How does anyone propose to bring into the Society people of non-academic trades when most of the meetings are held at conventions of Germanisten alone?

How does anyone propose to make any real changes in the ruling structure of IBS when the nominations are sealed at the afore-mentioned Camera Academia, then sent out in February, returns returned in April and the next bulletin not printed till May? (The otherwise healthy-sounding initiatives I read about might sound healthier if the voting and rebutting schedule were changed around a bit.)

Would IBS fall apart at the seams if its ruling class were not professors? (Moreover, aside from one another, who really cares what the nominees have or haven't written and published in academic journals?)

(Cont'd next page)

(FORUM - cont'd) - cont'd

Would IBS dissolve into bankruptcy if the "little people" were allowed to voice ideas and suggestions about proposed changes BEFORE selection-time?

I probably belong to a miniscule minority of IBS members: non-academic, non-Germanist, only 3/4 bi-lingual and not at all close to being in grasping distance of a University expense account. With one or two exceptions, I am the only "Brecht-freak" within miles of my practical circle and the COMMUNICATIONS tends to be the only forum I see regularly devoted to Brecht. And so, I wonder if I ought to be writing this at all. Being in so small a minority, I probably ought to leave academia to its back-slapping discussion panels and just go my own way. But, without the Brecht Society, how do we make Brecht's poetry, Brecht's theatre, Brecht's ideas accessible to people? Or does anyone in IBS believe that accessibility outside of academia is worthwhile or profitable?

Latham, New York

Katherine Eaton writes:

I would like to make a suggestion for the next Brecht conference. I think it would be advantageous to hold the conference during a school vacation period (spring or summer break) when university dorms are not in use. Then people attending the conference could stay in dorms instead of in hotels or motels. I presume that dormitory room would be a lot cheaper and they are often very nice. Other advantages of university dorms over hotels: more informal atmosphere; campus location (which is more scenic and gemütlich than a downtown hotel); more spartan and therefore perhaps more appropriate to students of a Marxist artist, than a flashy hotel would be.

Denton, Texas

Thomas Nadar writes:

A bit of good news. I introduced a course here at SUNY/Albany on Brecht in 1975, and after running it consecutively for four semesters, I continue to have good enrollments (about 25 students). I must admit that I was somewhat discouraged in spite of the course's success, since it seemed that only a small portion of the university community was involved. I was informed a few days ago that the Theatre Dept. is planning two Brecht plays during the '77/'78 academic year, including Der kaukasische Kreidekreis. Sometimes we don't realize the extent of our circle of influence.

Albany, New York

FORUM II - COMMENTS FROM THE BALLOTS

II,2 (a) Annual Symposia are an excellent idea.

II, 2 (b) I vote for this out of apparent necessity but with great reluctance. Every effort should be made to reinstate the tri-lingual format of the yearbook. Otherwise we might as well call the IBS the ABS (American Brecht Society) - which, ironically, publishes its yearbook in German.

I strongly urge the editors of Brecht Jahrbuch to re-establish the trilingual format of Brecht Heute. The Brecht Jahrbuch is now directed exclusively toward a German audience (if I understand the current publishing arrangement correctly), and this does not properly reflect the international membership and audience of IBS.

II, 2 (c) Make it four times a year at least.

IV, 1 Include Editor of Brecht-Jahrbuch as officer, if Editor of Newsletter is to be included, despite change in yearbook status.

VI, 2 Delete "business meetings" unless such meetings are defined to exclude such exclusive gatherings as the MLA.

VII, 1 Never!

Is it understood that under article VII, 1 all business conducted at the MLA meetings will not be official until action of international membership through a mail ballot?

I hope the conference plans work. There is much work involved in obtaining funds. If a popular series is started, we could perhaps generate our own funds.

As a non-profit corporation, we would have our own mail stamp.

The IBS should pay its own postage, not sponge on a university. If a university likes to make a grant, that's another matter.

Since the Jahrbuch is done by the Suhrkamp Verlag, it seems to me that we simply need to place orders.

You haven't tackled the problem of getting Europeans involved. I don't know what the answer is, but obviously the IBS will be more effective if it is I(nternational).

(cont'd page 18)

PUBLICATIONS

- Bernath, Peter. Die Sentenz im Drama von Kleist, Büchner und Brecht. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag 1976.
- Brandt, Helmut. "Sozialkritischer Umgang mit dem Erbe: Bertolt Brecht." Schriftsteller und literarisches Erbe. Zum Traditionsverhältnis sozialistischer Autoren. Hrg. Hans Richter. Berlin u. Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag 1976.
- Dahmer, Helmut. "Bertolt Brecht and Stalinism." Telos 22 (Winter 1974-75), 96-105.
- Faul Dessau Opfern. Hrg. Fritz Hennenberg: Bertolt Brecht, Die Verurteilung des Lukullus. Peter Palitsch/Manfred Wekerth nach Bertolt Brecht, Puntilla. Heiner Müller/Ginka Tscholakowa nach Jewgeni Schwarz, Lanzelot. Reihe Dialog. Berlin: Henschelverlag 1976.
- Eaton, Katherine. "Brecht's Contacts with the Theater of Meyerhold." Comparative Drama (Spring 1977).
- Mews, Siegfried. "Bertolt Brecht and World Literature." Papers on Language & Literature 13, 1 (Winter 1977), 89-110.
- Tatlow, Antony. The Mask of Evil. Brecht's Response to the Poetry, Theatre and Thought of China and Japan - A Comparative and Critical Study. Bern: Herbert Lang & Cie. 1977.

IN PROGRESS

- Eaton, Katherine. The Theater of Meyerhold and Brecht. Diss. Comparative Lit., U of Wisconsin, Madison. Adv. Richard B. Vowles & Reinhold Grimm. Completion exp. 1977.

_____ "Sergei Tretiakow and Brecht's Der kaukasische Kreidekreis."

CANDIDATES FOR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

(1) BETTY NANCE WEBER, University of Texas, Austin

Articles: "Die Hebbel- Hundertjahr-Gedenkfeier und Bertolt Erecht: Eine kritische Begegnung", Hebbel-Jahrbuch 1974. "Marxismus, Brecht, Gesamtkunstwerk", Brecht-Jahrbuch 1976. "Brecht, Caucasian Chalk Circle and the Gap of Fascism", Internat. Jahrbuch der Germanistik. Materialienband zu Der kreidekreis (in press). Co-organizer of Fourth Brecht Congress, Austin, 1976.

Statement

In addition to the function of communicating between the members the newsletter now serves, I want to suggest three points:

- (1) to provide a forum for dialog on the dialectic of present meaning and past significance of Brecht's work;
- (2) to provide a systematic review of theatre work on Erecht;
- (3) to include an annotated bibliography of current publications on Brecht, both books and articles.

To accomplish this, I would invite a good number of members of IES to collaborate on the newsletter.

(cont'd next page)

B A L L O T

for the election of the Editor of the Newsletter, for a two-year term.

() BETTY NANCE WEBER

() HENRY J. SCHMIDT

Please send your ballot to:
Margaret Kindler, 40 Irvin Hall, Miami U, Oxford, OH 45056
by July 1st, 1977

(2) HENRY J. SCHMIDT, Ohio State University, Columbus

Articles: "Bertolt Brecht and Hangmen Also Die", Monatshefte 50, 3 (1969) (with Reinhold Grimm); "Bertolt Brecht's Turandot oder Der Kongreß der Weißwäscher: Satire and Learning Play" (in progress). Co-editor, with R. Grimm, of Erecht Heute (New York, 1970). Director of numerous student productions, incl. Turandot at Ohio State in 1976.

Statement

The newsletter has served IBS members well as a clearing-house for information and critical comment. Expansion in these areas would be unquestionably useful. (To avoid bankrupting the budget I would try to locate independent funding to help cover printing and distribution.) Some possibilities: the Theater and Popular Publications Committees should be encouraged to issue regular progress reports about their activities and plans. Through a membership poll, the newsletter could compile an annotated list of publishers known to be supportive of our diverse efforts, as an aid to members who yearn to enter the public sphere. An accounting of IBS-sponsored activities, publications, and other innovations should be drawn up early; members could then compare this at their leisure with the policy statements issued by our officers before they were elected. I would attempt to expand the Forum with numerous short reviews of Brecht performances. Most important, I would plead for more critical opinion from our membership, and I would seek out responses from appropriate sources (officers or otherwise) as quickly as possible. Such debate, I think, is the sort of productive challenge we need to keep our bureaucracy on its toes.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS TO THE NEW EDITOR:

BETTY NANCY WELSH ()

HENRY J. SCHMIDT ()

PRODUCTIONS

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE - La Mama Theater, Third World Institute of Theater Arts and Studies, New York City, March 1977. Director: Fritz Bennewitz. Sets: Jun Maeda. Costumes: Beryl. Music: Emelyn Gillick. Azdak: Jamil Zakkai. - Bennewitz, director of the State Theater in Weimar, developed his production from a six-week workshop whose participants--60 percent of them amateurs--came from the Philippines, the Middle East, Indonesia; others were Americans of Haitian, African, or East Indian origin.

DER GUTE MENSCH VON SEZUAN - U of Maine, Orono, April 16, 1977. Director: Doug Hall. Cast: Undergraduate and Graduate Students. Other performances: Newton H.S., Newton, Mass. 4-22; U/Mass, Amherst, 4-23; SUNY, Albany, N.Y., 4-24.

HAPPY END - Chelsea Theater, Brooklyn, N.Y. March 8 - April 30, 1977. Director: Michael Posnick. Sets: Robert U. Taylor. Costumes: Carrie F. Robbins. Musical Director: Roland Gagnon.

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN - Richfield H.S., Waco, Texas, at North Texas SU, Denton, April 22, 1977. Director: J.E. Masters. - This production was Richfield H.S.'s entry in the University Inter-Scholastic League Drama Competition. It will compete for the statewide award on May 6, 1977.

OCEAN FLIGHT - Jeannette Cochrane Theatre, London, March 21-23, 1977. Scaled-down stage performance of Lindberghflug by F. Early & colleagues of Dance Space with singers from Guildhall School of Music and five instrumentalists.

LITTLE MAHAGONNY - at the Rock Garden, London W.C.2, February-March 1977. Directed by Frank Marcus's son.

Four concerts of Weill's music by London Symphonietta at Queen Elizabeth Hall, March 1977, including Little Mahagonny, Berliner Requiem, suite from Happy End, etc.

Oxford Playhouse is currently preparing The Threepenny Opera. Greenwich Theatre, The Good Person of Szechwan. National Theatre plans to do Galileo in a new (commissioned) translation by Howard Brenton.

FOR MEMBERS

Brecht Workshop

A Brecht Workshop will be offered by Stanford University during its summer session, from June 20 to August 12, 1977.

The summer workshop will feature a seminar in Brecht's Lehrstücke, conducted by Andrzej Wirth, who has worked with both the Berliner Ensemble and the Warsaw Dramatic Theater. The seminar will culminate in an experimental theatrical demonstration based on the reconstruction of the Fatzer materials. Workshop productions of Brecht's The Measures Taken and The Exception and the Rule will be directed by Robert Sagan and John Rouse.

For further information, write:

Brecht Workshop
Department of Drama
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Special Brecht Session

At the MLA meeting in Chicago, December 1977, a Special Session on Brecht will be offered, entitled "Brecht's Theater as a 'Collective of Independent Arts'". Discussion Leaders: Helene Scher, Amherst College, and Thomas R. Nadar, SUNY Albany.

- Speakers:
1. "Bert Brecht and George Grosz", Herbert Knust, U of Illinois, Urbana.
 2. "Brechtian Scene Design and Socialist Realism", Richard J. Rundell, New Mexico State U.
 3. "Bert Brecht and Marc Blitzstein", Leonard Lehrman, musicologist, SUCNY Geneseo.

Discussants: Reinhold Grimm, U of Wisconsin, Madison
Thomas R. Nadar, SUNY Albany.

A business meeting of the IBS will be held following this program.

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Fred Fischbach

Klaus D. Müller

Klaus B. Vollmar

Judith Zivanovic

Can someone help?

IF YOU DO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS, PLEASE NOTIFY THE EDITOR!

(FORUM II - cont'd)

The idea of parthenogenetic committees might be okay if they had nothing to do with the steering committee, but as proposed the 'Hundertschaften' could take the steering committee over. Surely people can set up such groups without their having to be written into the constitution.

I think Grimm's bias is too academic to make for interesting conferences.

Note

Gisela Bahr would like to receive suggestions for places and dates for possible IBS business meetings, other than MLA. Please write to her at 14 N Campus Ave, Cxford, CH 45056

Brecht Congress in Frankfurt ?

Walter Hinck, Universität Köln, sent the following information:

"Während der Geburtstagsfeier des Suhrkamp Verlags für Hans Mayer hat ein kleines Gremium (Hans Mayer, Siegfried Unseld, Hans Dieter Zimmermann, Hilmar Hoffmann und ich) Möglichkeiten besprochen, im Februar 1978 einen Brecht-Kongress in Frankfurt zu veranstalten. Leider sind die Hoffnungen, daß die Stadt Frankfurt als Gast- und Geldgeber auftritt, nach den letzten Wahlen (absolute Mehrheit der CDU) auf ein Minimum gesunken. Mit diesem Rest an Hoffnung allerdings wollen wir versuchen, den Plan zu verwirklichen. ... Hoffentlich bald positive und konkretere Nachrichten."

The organization is in the hands of Hans Dieter Zimmermann, former secretary of the Academy of Arts in West Berlin.

Dr. Fritz Bennewitz (see PRODUCTIONS) will again be at La Mama next season, roughly from December to February, and might be able to do a limited amount of traveling. He visited Miami U last March and proved to be a fascinating speaker. We shall try to invite him again next year. Mail should reach him at the La Mama, New York City, or write to him ahead of time to Staatstheater, Weimar, German Democratic Republic.

TO: GISELA E. BAHR, DEPT. OF GERMAN, RUSSIAN & EAL, MIAMI UNIV., OXFORD, OHIO 45056

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NOTE

has several of the suggestions for places and
dates for possible 1955 business meetings, other than MIA.
Please write to her at 45056 Oxford, OH 45056

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