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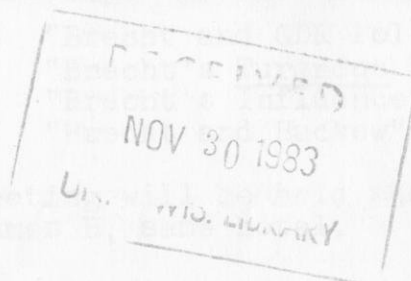
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communications

from the

international brecht society



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November 1978

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COMMUNICATIONS -- THE BRECHT NEWSLETTER -- Vol. VIII No. 1 (1978)

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symposium

In case you didn't receive a postcard from John Fuegi: the 1978 Symposium has become the 1979 Symposium, to be held in Washington, D.C. on March 28-31, 1979. NEH approval for funding did not occur in time to permit a November meeting. The topics remain:

Brecht's America
Brecht's Philosophy
Brecht's Relationship to the Stage and Film

meetings

Our annual Special Session at the 1978 MLA Convention in New York will take place on Friday, December 29 from 2:45-4:00 PM in Vendome 11, Americana Hotel. "Brecht and the GDR" is the topic; Betty Weber will lead the discussion. Speakers:

John Fuegi:	"Brecht and GDR Politics"
Henry J. Schmidt:	"Brecht's <u>Turandot</u> and his Cultural Politics"
Marc D. Silberman:	"Brecht's Influence on GDR Theater"
Karl-Heinz Schoeps:	"Brecht and Buckow"

The IBS Business Meeting will be held shortly thereafter (4:30-5:45 PM) in St. James B, same hotel.

dues notice

Please send your 1978 dues to our new Secretary/Treasurer:

Professor Kay Goodman
Department of G.R.E.A.L.*
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio 45056

. . . who will send you in return the Brecht-Jahrbuch 1978. Rates are on p. 5. DM-equivalents have not been included, partly out of embarrassment; if applicable, consult your local bank or newspaper about the value of our decomposing dollar. PLEASE NOTIFY IF YOUR ADDRESS HAS CHANGED!

* German, Russian, and East Asian Languages

commemorations

BRECHT MIT 80 JAHREN

At the invitation of the city of Frankfurt am Main, Professors Walter Hinck (Köln), Hans Mayer (Tübingen), and Hans Dieter Zimmermann (Frankfurt) organized a Brecht Colloquium held in Frankfurt from September 28-30 of this year. The Colloquium was officially opened on the evening of September 28 with an address by Dr. Walter Wallmann, current mayor of Frankfurt. Frequently interrupted by hecklers who objected to Wallmann's pro-Berufsverbot position in the German Federal Republic, Wallmann went out of his way to interpret Brecht's work as being largely Stalinist in its orientation. Following Wallmann's address, Hans Mayer gave the plenary address of the Colloquium and managed, in passing, to correct most of the errors of fact and interpretation that had been contained in Wallmann's address. The full text of Hans Mayer's address was carried on the "Feuilleton" page of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Hans Mayer's paper was followed by an extraordinary stage presentation by actors of the Frankfurt Schauspielhaus. With remarkable verve, the actors presented a semi-operatic semi-rock group "history" of negotiations between the Schauspielhaus on one side, and Suhrkamp Verlag and Barbara Brecht on the other side, to get the rights for a Brecht premiere in Frankfurt. Presented in rock and straight opera form, the letters from Barbara Brecht and from Suhrkamp Verlag became patently absurd and presented the controllers of the Brecht estate in the worst possible light. An audience that had been outraged by Wallmann's address and cheered by Hans Mayer's presentation obviously thoroughly enjoyed the stage pillorying of the Brecht heirs.

The opening session on the second day of the Colloquium was devoted to Brecht's Lehrstücke. Though an occasional new insight was offered, the presentations by and large repeated the findings already available in published form. The afternoon session of the second day was given over to problems of interpretations of The Caucasian Chalk Circle. Again, as with the morning session, those familiar with the published secondary literature had few additional insights to gain. Participants in these two sessions included Dr. Elmar Buck (Köln), Prof. Cesare Cases (Turin), Prof. Reinhold Grimm (Madison), Dr. Reiner Steinweg (Kronberg), Klaus Völker (Kronberg), Prof. Betty N. Weber (Austin).

On the evening of the second day, a "Brecht Evening" was presented at the Kammerspiel by the Württemberg Staatstheater Ensemble. Reading from a wide selection of Brecht texts, the Ensemble was well received by a most appreciative audience.

The final day of the Colloquium was devoted to two sessions both entitled "Brecht und das heutige Theater." On the morning program were the theater directors Harry Buckwitz (Zürich), Jürgen Flimm (Köln), Peter Palitzsch (Frankfurt a.M.), Claus Peymann (Stuttgart), Niels-Peter Rudolph (Berlin), and Ernst Wendt (München); the afternoon program included Dr. Rainhard Baumgart (Grünwald), Tankred Dorst (München), Franz Xaver Kroetz (Altenmarkt) and Hartmut Lange (Berlin). As the various directors and playwrights spoke, it became ever more clear that there is a radical gulf between contemporary Brecht scholarship and

(cont. on p. 6)

ibs membership

Help us recruit new members!

I would like to join the International Brecht Society.
Dues payment is enclosed.

\$7 Student member
\$10 Regular member
\$18 Senior member
\$18 Institutional member
\$25 Sustaining member

Name

Address

Zip

Please mail to: Prof. Kay Goodman, Department of G.R.E.A.L., Miami University, Oxford, Ohio 45056.

elections

The terms of all elected officers expire this coming spring. Nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and editor of Communications will be accepted at the Business Meeting in New York; if you don't plan to attend, please send me your nominations by December 10. Please try to obtain the consent of the nominee beforehand!

I wish to nominate

Name

Address or Affiliation

for (circle one):

President / Vice President / Secretary-Treasurer / Communications Editor

Mail to: Henry J. Schmidt, German Department, 1841 Millikin Road,
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210

(cont. from p. 4)

contemporary theater practice. Niels-Peter Rudolph was most explicit when he said that even when he looked to philologists for help with his productions, he felt the advice he received tended to be more of a hindrance than a help. On the question of Brechtian influence on the playwrights involved in the panel, generally the playwrights seemed to suggest that they felt themselves to be beyond Brechtian influence as such.

It is presumed that the proceedings of the Frankfurt Colloquium will become available this next year in published form.

--John Fuegi



recent productions

Saint Joan of the Stockyards: Encompass Theatre, New York City.
 Premiere: May 25, 1978 (closed June 18). Director: Jan P. Eliasberg. Music: Miriam Charney/Paul Kazanoff/George Quincy. Set Design: Tracy Killam. Translator: Naomi Replansky. Cast: Joan MacIntosh, Ron Faber, David Keith, Esther Rivlin, Barbara Hariday, Robert Schlee.

The Threepenny Opera: State University of New York at Albany.
 Premiere: October 18, 1978 (6 performances). Director: Jerry Hanley. Set Design: Robert Donnelly. Music: Kurt Weill. Translator: Marc Blitzstein. Cast: Kevin Thiele, Richard Stanford, Becky Nikolski, Theresa Landi, Laura R. Nichols.

recent publications

Berg-Pan, Renata. "Brecht and Chinese Philosophy." Philosophy and Literature (October 1977).

Hye, Allen E. "Brecht and Atomic Physics." Science/Technology and the Humanities (Spring 1978), pp. 157-68.

Tatlow, Antony. The Mask of Evil. Brecht's Response to the Poetry, Theatre and Thought of China and Japan. Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 1977. (The book is obtainable only from the publisher.)

Brecht and Film--submitted by Eric Rentschler:

Gersch, Wolfgang. Film bei Brecht. München: Hanser, 1976.

Happel, Reinhold. "Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt--eine exemplarische Analyse." In Film und Realität in der Weimarer Republik. Helmut Korte, ed. München: Hanser, 1978.

Lesage, Julia. "The Films of Jean-Luc Godard and Their Use of Brechtian Dramatic Theory." Diss. Indiana University, 1976.

Polan, Dana B. "Brecht and the Politics of Self-Reflexive Cinema." Jump Cut, 17 (1978), 29-32.

Thompson, Kristin. "Sawing Through the Bough: Tout va bien as a Brechtian Film." Wide Angle, 1, No. 3 (1977), 38-51.

theater reviews

This spring two productions of Mother Courage and Her Children appeared on Oregon stages. In January, Peter Fornara's Production Company opened its version of Brecht's Chronicle of the Thirty Years' War in the Auditorium of the Portland Art Museum. Gaynor Sterchi played a thoroughly convincing Mother Courage: above all robust and resilient, but also with a keen perception of the dialectic tension which Brecht built into his merchant-mother. Sterchi's Courage was in turn concerned and callous, shrewd and short-sighted, admirable and despicable. The performance suffered from too small a stage and from too little attention to important details of gesture and staging. The original music of the company's composer, Nicholas Flynn, was often fascinating but tended to take over and to drown out the lyrics. The Production Company is using its own modified version of Bentley's translation of Mother Courage. The play was kept in the Company's repertory till summer. But the show was moved to a different auditorium: the Centenary Wilbur Church, Portland's center of non-establishment services to the community.

Starting in February, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Or., 300 miles south of Portland, made Mother Courage and Her Children part of its spring and summer repertory on the Festival Stage II (Angus Bowmer Theatre). Directed by Jerry Turner, the Ashland performance benefited from a spacious revolving stage and from the director's great attention to details of staging and gestures. The overall level of acting was considerably more sophisticated than in the Portland production but Margaret Rubin, who gave a very inspired rendering of Mother Courage, is too young for that role. Half curtains were used between the scenes and they provided effective screens for the projected synopses of the action to come. On the full-length rear curtains, images of outdoor settings were projected as a suggestive backdrop for individual scenes.

In Ashland the new Manheim translation of Mother Courage was used. Mercifully, the music composed and arranged by Larry Dellinger never drowned out the lyrics. It appropriately included elements of church hymns, some of which were sung a capella. Yet in this performance, as well as in the Portland one, the 10th scene (the song of the rosebush and the shelter) fell flat because it was not tied into the epic by a meaningful gesture of response on the part of Mother Courage and/or Kattrin (Terry Hays). However, the climactic eleventh scene was superb in Ashland. Till the last minute Hays showed Kattrin's increasing tension between determination and desperation and it must have been primarily this scene which moved the full house to a standing ovation at the end of the play, even though the theatergoers had been warned of the bleakness, the tedium, and the outdatedness of the play by unknowledgeable and ununderstanding reviewers in the Oregon press and on television. Perhaps the audience can help educate the reviewers, on whom, apparently, Hilary Tate's excellent program notes (background information on both Brecht and the Thirty Years' War) were lost.

--Laureen Nussbaum

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