Communications from the International Brecht Society. 42 2013

Columbus, OH: International Brecht Society, 2013

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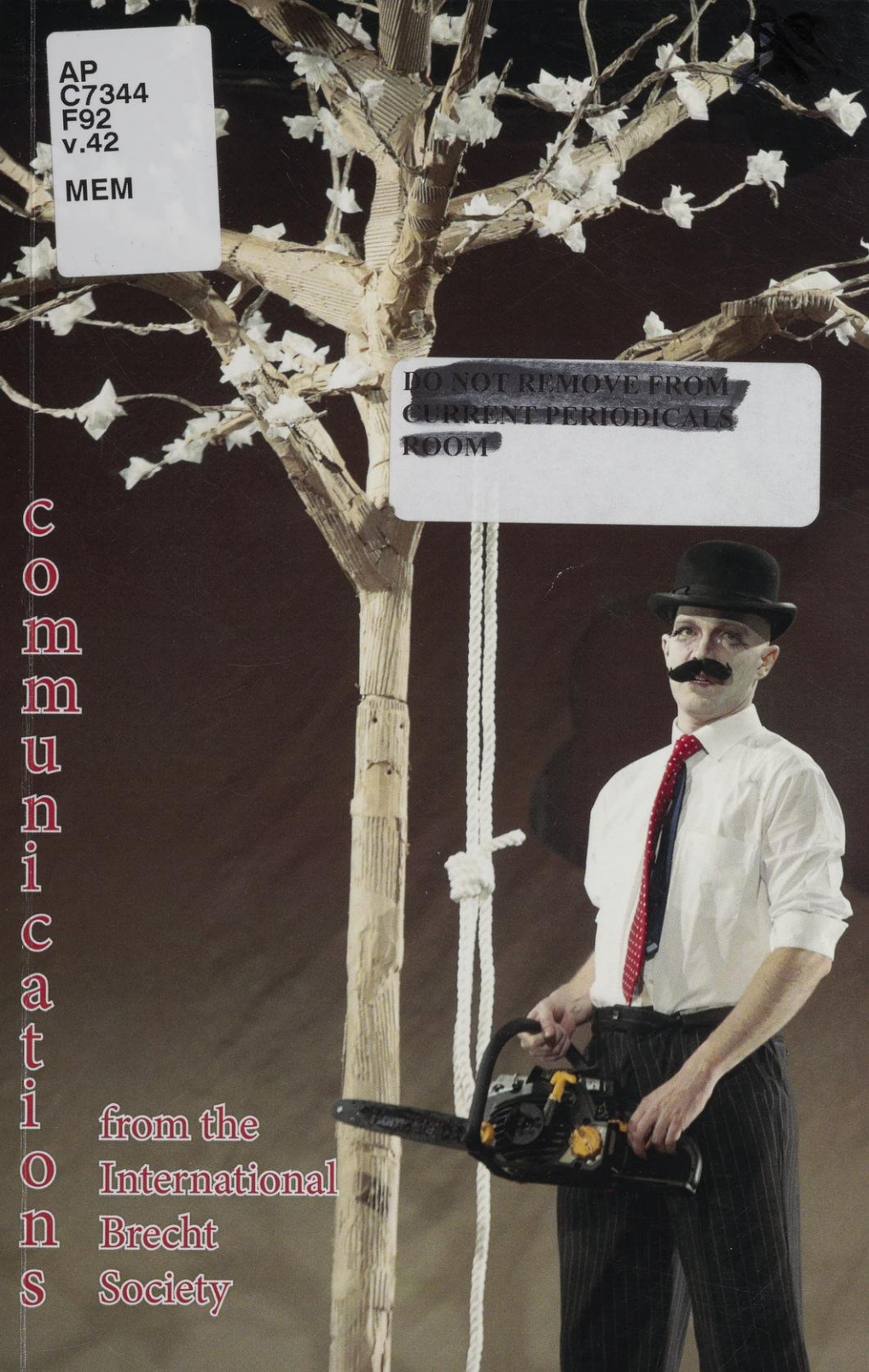

communications

from the International Brecht Society

Communications 42/2013

Editor: Andy Spencer

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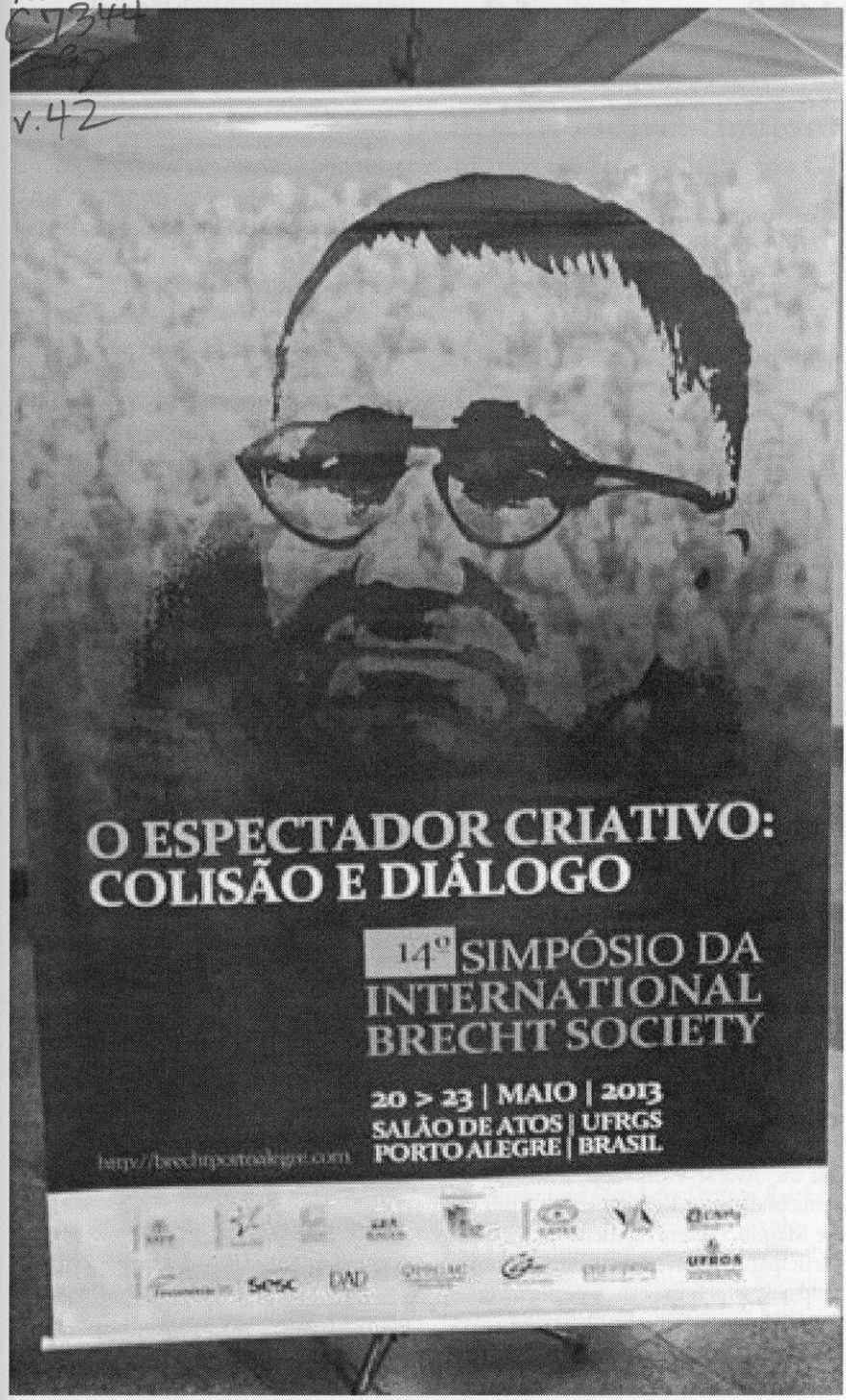

14th Symposium of the International Brecht Society in May 2013

"O espectador criativo: colisão e diálogo"
"The Creative Spectator: Collision and Dialogue"
http://brechtportoalegre.com/

For four days from May 20-23, theater practitioners and academics, directors, literary scholars and students participated in the 14th Symposium of the International Brecht Society in Porto Alegre, Brasil. Lectures were held in the halls of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) as well as in the Goethe Institute of Porto Alegre. Together with university professors of theater, students and guests from Latin America, Canada, the United States and Europe, the participants heard lectures and/or took part in workshops in German, English, Spanish and Portuguese. The hosts planned excursions to the city's theater scene, in the Culture Center Casa de Cultura Mrio Quintana for a performance of theater group She She Pop (Berlin) titled "She She Pop is the Marquise of O." During the conference Farrokh Asadi (Chicago) premiered his film of Brecht's "Jewish Wife," a scene from his exile play *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich:* "Why Participatory Theater? – Exploring the stylistic differences between epic and dramatic theater using Bertolt Brecht's 'Jewish Wife.'" Especially well-received was the "Avatar-Workshop" with students of director Kent Sjöström from the Malmö Theatre Academy in Sweden. Participants received directions through headsets, which they then performed: those who were actually observers practiced their presentation as actors, without identifying with their roles.

The business meeting of the International Brecht Society took place under the direction of the president Hans-Thies Lehmann and secretary/treasurer Paula Hanssen. Dr. Lehmann greeted the members in the name of the IBS board and announced the upcoming election of the new board for the end of 2013. Theodore Rippey, the newly appointed editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*, introduced himself and spoke about future plans. Yearbook 39 (2013) will have two sections and feature the four symposium keynote lectures (Miguel Rubio Zapata, Ingrid Dormien Koudela, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Hans-Thies Lehmann) and a selection of the symposium presentations, as well as a dossier about the Berlin director Manfred Karge. Contributions for this volume must be submitted by February 2014. Further *Yearbooks* are in the planning: *Yearbook 40* (2015) will focus on "Ästhetik und Krieg/Aesthetics and War" to include contributions from the IBS-section of the Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago (in January 2014), *Yearbook 41* (2016) "Sinnen/Senses" and *Yearbook 42* (2017) with contributions from the 15th Symposium, still in the planning stages, or about the theme "Brecht und Pop/Brecht and Pop." The new editor of *Communications of the IBS*, Andy Spencer, has announced September 2013 as the the submission date for the new *Communications* volume.

The announcement was made that the *Brecht Yearbook* is available on the Internet for volumes 1 through 32 (2007): http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/German.Brecht.Yearbook as a part of the "German Studies Digital Collection" at the University of Wisconsin. In the open discussion it was announced that the IBS is now a member of the German organization "Arbeitsgemeinschaft liter-

arischer Gesellschaften" (ALG). Other announcements: The "Brecht-Tage" 2014 will take place again at the Brecht House in Berlin (theme: Brecht's Novels); a series of lectures and talks with the title "Brecht-Lectures" are planned for the "Literaturforum" in the Brecht House; Tom Kuhn (Oxford) has offered to host the 15th IBS Symposium (2016) with the theme "'Recycling Brecht' – in other languages, other genres, other media." Joachim Lucchesi announced the new series with the publishers Könighausen & Neumann, "Der neue Brecht"; Nikolaus Müller-Schöll spoke about the work on Brecht's *Maßnahme* with theater institutes in Frankfurt am Main and Tel Aviv (26 – 29 September, 2013).

The organizers of the 14th IBS Symposium brought together an interesting, dynamic collection of scholars, practitioners and students for four days in Porto Alegre. We thank all the organizers and students in Porto Alegre for the organization of the conference, of the lectures and the rooms, and especially for the friendly support. A selection of the dynamic presentations and exchanges heard by the participants will be available to all in the *Brecht Yearbook* 2014.

14. Symposium der Internationalen-Brecht-Gesellschaft im Mai 2013

"O espectador criativo: colisão e diálogo":
„Der kreative Zuschauer: Karambolage und Dialog"

http://brechtportoalegre.com/

Vom 20. – 23. Mai kamen Theaterwissenschaftler, Regisseure, Literaturwissenschaftler und Studenten für das 14. Symposium der Internationale-Brecht-Gesellschaft zusammen: in Porto Alegre, Brasilien. Die Vorträge fanden in den Hörsälen der Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) und weitere Veranstaltungen im Goethe Institut Porto Alegre statt. Zusammen mit Theaterwissenschaftlern der Universität, Studenten und Gästen aus ganz Lateinamerika, Kanada, den Vereinigten Staaten und Europa hörten die Teilnehmer Vorträge oder nahmen an Workshops auf Deutsch, English, Spanisch und Portugiesisch in den 4 Tagen teil. Die Gastgeber planten auch Exkursionen in die Theaterszene der Stadt, z.B. in das Kulturzentrum „Casa de Cultura Mario Quintana" für eine Aufführung von ‚She She Pop' (Berlin): "She She Pop is the Marquise of O." Während der Konferenz gab es auch eine Film-Premiere: Farrokh Asadi (Chicago) zeigte seinen neuen Film von dem Einakter „The Jewish Wife" aus *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs*: "Why Participatory Theater? – Exploring the stylistic differences between *epic* and d*ramatic* theater using Bertolt Brecht's *Jewish Wife*". Besonders beliebt war ein "Avatar-Workshop" mit Kollegen aus Schweden, die den Teilnehmern

im Workshop Befehle über Kopfhörer erteilten, die sie dann ausführten. Die, die eigentlich Zuschauer waren, übten die Rolle des Schauspielers ein, ohne sich mit der Rolle zu identifizieren.

Die Sitzung der Internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft (IBS) fand unter Leitung vom Präsidenten Hans-Thies Lehmann und Sekretärin/Schatzmeisterin Paula Hanssen statt. Herr Lehmann hat die Mitglieder im Namen des Vorstands herzlich begrüßt und alle auf die Vorstandswahl Ende 2013 aufmerksam gemacht. Theodore Rippey, der neue Herausgeber des *Brecht-Jahrbuchs*, stellte sich vor und sprach zum vorläufigen Plan des Jahrbuchs. Das 39. Jahrbuch (2014) besteht aus zwei Hauptteilen: den vier Keynote-Vorträgen des Symposiums (Miguel Rubio Zapata, Ingrid Dormien Koudela, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Hans-Thies Lehmann) und einer Auswahl von überarbeiteten Symposium-Beiträgen sowie einem Dossier zum Theaterregisseur Manfred Karge. Beiträge für diese Ausgabe sind spätestens bis Februar 2014 einzureichen. Weitere Jahrbücher sind vorgesehen: Jahrbuch 40 (2015) zu „Ästhetik und Krieg/Aethetics and War" inklusiv ausgewählter Beiträge der IBS-Sitzung bei der Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago (im Januar 2014), Jahrbuch 41 (2016) zu „Sinnen/Senses" und Jahrbuch 42 (2017) mit Beiträgen vom möglichen 15. Symposium oder zu dem Thema „Brecht und Pop/Brecht and Pop". Der neue Herausgeber der *Communications* der IBS, Andy Spencer, hat den Abgabetermin September 2013 für neue *Communications*-Beiträge angekündigt.

Es wurde auch bekannt gegeben, dass das Brecht-Jahrbuch bis einschließlich Band 32 (2007) im Internet frei verfügbar ist unter: http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/German.BrechtYearbook als Teil der „German Studies Digital Collection" an der University of Wisconsin. In der offenen Diskussionsrunde wurde die IBS-Mitgliedschaft in der in Deutschland ansässigen Arbeitsgemeinschaft literarischer Gesellschaften (ALG) bekanntgegeben. Weitere Ankündigungen waren: Die „Brecht-Tage" 2014 werden wieder im Brecht-Haus in Berlin stattfinden (Thema: Brechts Romane); es wird auch eine Reihe von Vorträgen und Reden unter dem Titel „Brecht-Lectures" im Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus geplant; Tom Kuhn (Oxford) möchte Gastgeber für das 15. IBS-Symposium (2016) zum Thema „‚Recycling Brecht' - in other languages, other genres, other media " sein; Joachim Lucchesi hat die von Könighausen & Neumann herausgegebene Buchreihe „Der neue Brecht" präsentiert; Nikolaus Müller-Schöll sprach über das gemeinsame Arbeit an Brechts *Maßnahme* zwischen Theaterinstituten in Frankfurt am Main und Tel Aviv (26-29 September 2013).

Die Organisatoren des 14. IBS-Symposiums stellten eine interessante, aufregende Auswahl von Wissenschaftlern und Praktikanten für die Tage in Porto Alegre zusammen. Wir bedanken uns bei allen Mitarbeitern in Porto Alegre für die Zusammenstellung der Vorträgen und Hörsäle, und besonders die freundliche Betreuung. Eine Auswahl der Vorträge, die die Teilnehmer dort hörten, werden in dem Brecht Jahrbuch 2014 für alle verfügbar.

Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis/Missouri)

Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound, Tacoma/Washington)

Symposium Executive Committee:
João Pedro Alcantara Gil
Marta Isaacsson
Mirna Spritzer
Patricia Fagundes
Silvia Baelstreri Nunes
Suzane Weber da Silva

Scholarship and Performance Committee:
André Carreira
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Florian Vaßen
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Jorge Dubatti
Luiz Fernando Ramos
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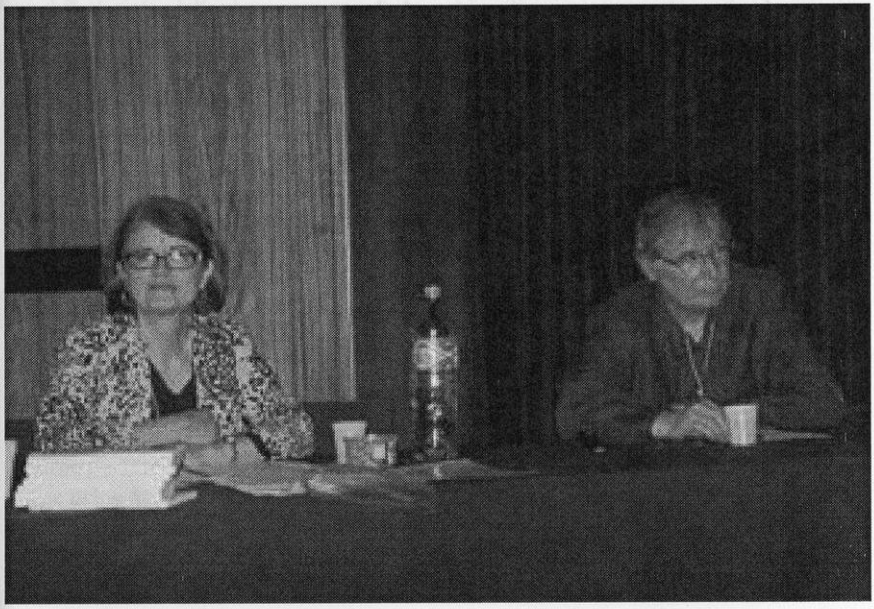


UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

Prof. Dr. Günther Heeg

Institut für Theaterwissenschaft
Geschäftsführender Direktor

Institut für Theaterwissenschaft
Ritterstraße 16, 04109 Leipzig

Leipzig, 1/22/2014

Press Release

Citing a resolution of the Academic Senate of January 9, 2014, the Leipzig University president's office yesterday announced out of a clear blue sky the planned closure of the Institute for Theater Studies and the termination of the BA and MA programs in Theater Studies.

No discussions with the impacted parties were held prior to the announcement, no reasons were given for the resolution, and the criteria for the decision were not made public. This method of proceeding suggests that the decision was based not on substantive or structural reasoning, but rather that the opportunity is being taken to cut the positions of three Professors and two assistants by the year 2020.

The random and unmotivated actions of the president's office are directed at an Institute which is, measured by all recognized evaluative criteria, such as external funding and international partnerships, excellently positioned. The Institute's academic programs number among the most popular in the College. According to a survey of alumni, graduates are very successful in finding positions in the core theater professions and in the cultural and media landscape in general. Beyond that, the Institute is the sole Institute for Theater Studies in the new federal states. It serves to encourage and promote the entire theatrical and cultural scene in eastern Germany. In autumn of this year it will be hosting three international symposia as part of the celebrations marking its twentieth anniversary.

Colleagues and students of the Institute for Theater Studies will not take the threatened closure lying down. They are protesting strongly against the President's actions and appealing to the Academic Senate to immediately reverse this wholly incomprehensible decision.

The Institute for Theater Studies has initiated an on-line petition, calling on the political decision-makers (President of the Saxon Parliament, Dr. Matthias Rößler, Saxon State Secretary for Science and Art, Prof. Sabine von Schorlemer, and President of Leipzig University, Prof. Beate Schücking) to reverse the planned job-cuts.

http://www.change.org/de/Petitionen/für-den-erhalt-des-instituts-für-theaterwissenschaft-der-universität-leipzig

IBS at the Modern Language Association (January, 2014)

Marc Silberman (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

The MLA held its annual convention in Chicago (1/9-12, 2014), and as an official, allied organization, the IBS sponsored a number of activities, including a business meeting. The two IBS sessions both had moderate turnouts. "Brecht and the Century of War" included two papers: Saskia Fischer (Universität Bielefeld) addressed Brecht's *Antigone* as a commentary/critique on rituals of violence, and Gerrit-Jan Berendse (Cardiff University) elaborated on the *Kriegsfibel*'s cyclical structure and "flânerie" as a pattern that one finds as well in W.G. Sebald's prose treatments of WWII; an extended response by Ted Rippey reflecting on the temporal and spatial dynamics of exile was enabled by the fact that Ingvild Folkvold had to cancel owing to a lack of travel funds. The second session, "Teaching Brecht," aimed at practical approaches for teachers challenged by translating Brecht's theories into classroom practice. Sabine Gross (University of Wisconsin) presented detailed strategies for demonstrating *Verfremdung* and *Gestus* using a very short passage from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Morgan Koerner (College of Charleston) walked us through a one-week unit on the film *The Lives of Others*, aimed at students recognizing patterns of emotional identification and their implications and then developing their own means for critiquing and responding to them using techniques adapted from Brecht; Carrie Preston (Boston University) demonstrated a lesson on "unfree thinking" based on a 3-step exercise using *Jasager/Neinsager* in which students experience their own assumptions about authority and obedience in response to her as the classroom teacher; finally, respondent Elena Pnevmonidou (University of Victoria) reiterated the tendency of students to find Brecht "easy" in theory but a real challenge in practice, concluding that "doing Brecht" is the best way to understand Brecht. This session yielded so much buzz that there are now plans underway to plan an edited volume on "Teaching Brecht"; stay tuned! A third session on "Fifty Shades of Brecht: Vulnerability versus Autonomy among Brecht's Female Collaborators" was sponsored by the organization Women in German and included contributions by IBS members: Paula Hanssen (Webster University) traced Elisabeth Hauptmann's working relationship with Brecht that spanned over four decades, including after his death; Ute Bettray (University of Connecticut) used her personal interview with actress and *Brecht-Schülerin* Käthe Reichel to show how she negotiated the paradox of "falling prey" to Brecht's magnetism, on the one hand, and of becoming an independent, astute artist with her own ideas and career, on the other; Helen Fehervary (Ohio State University) focused on Asja Lacis and Regine Lutz as two women in Brecht's life who never became intimately involved with him but with whom he engaged in important ways, both intellectually and emotionally; Kris Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound) gave a brief response that led into an animated discussion about the extent to which Brecht's relationships with female collaborators was unique for its partnership qualities, another example of male patronage, or whether the entire conceptual apparatus of gender binaries is adequate for exploring these fruitful but psychologically complex relationships.

The IBS business meeting was both an occasion to discuss upcoming Brecht-related events as well as a social occasion at a nearby restaurant. Two suggestions for

IBS sessions at next year's MLA – scheduled for Vancouver from 1/8-11, 2015 – were ratified: Kris Imbrigotta and Ted Rippey will organize a session on Brecht and 60s Protest Cultures, and Elena Pnevmonidou will work with Matthew Smith (Stanford) to organize a collaborative session on Brecht and music. Calls for papers follow this update. In addition, Ted Rippey will explore the possibility of an IBS session on Brecht and WWI at the German Studies Association conference, scheduled for Kansas City (9/18-21, 2014). Other business included details about upcoming volumes of the Brecht Yearbook and the need to explore digital publication in the future (maybe with a decision forthcoming at the next IBS symposium); the increase in IBS membership following the symposium in Porto Alegre; the topic of Brecht's novels at the February 2014 Brecht-Tage in the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus as well as the planned series of "Brecht Lectures" there to begin this spring with Klaus Theweleit as guest speaker; the major publishing initiatives of Brecht in English by Bloomsbury/Methuen under the general editor Tom Kuhn (Oxford University); and the tentative plans for the 15th IBS Symposium on Brecht in/ and Translation at the University of Manchester in June/ July 2016, hosted by Brecht biographer Stephen Parker.

MLA: Call for Papers #1:
Brecht, Protest, Youth

Brecht had one eye on the future, the other fixed on the past. His writing aimed not only to come to terms with contemporary events but also to expose social and historical causes of conflict and crisis. This was the case in the GDR (reactions to the Prague Spring) and the BRD (the 1968 student movement) as well as in Western Europe (May 1968 in Paris) and Latin America (Paolo Freire's and Augusto Boal's focus on the oppressed). What about today? Is Brecht still timely after the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, the Great Recession, and the rupture of global free market economies? What can we learn from BB's theories and representations of protest and criticism? Of particular interest are the ways in which protest movements and younger generations have engaged with and/or critiqued Brecht's work.

This panel seeks submissions from a wide range of topics including, but not limited to:

-Themes of protest and/or revolution
-Representations of opposition
-Juxtapositions and contradictions between theory/practice, complicity/action
-Theories of "experiment" (Versuche) as critique and/or resistance
-Brecht's (ir)relevance for today's popular youth movements and/or protest cultures
-The importance of youth, children, and future generations for creating a new social system (i.e., GDR politics, FDJ, Junge Pioniere)
- individual works by Brecht or genres (essays, plays, journals, prose, songs, film, etc.)

Please send 250-word abstracts to Ted Rippey (theodor@bgsu.edu) and Kristopher Imbrigotta (kimbrigotta@pugetsound.edu) by March 15, 2014.

Call for Papers #2:
Brecht, Music, and Opera

Brecht's influence on modern opera, epic opera in the broader context of modernist opera, the work of his musical collaborators, "Brechtian" operas or music theatre by other composers, "Brechtian" stagings of opera.

Please send 500-word abstracts to Elena Pnevmonidou (epnev@uvic.ca) and Matt Smith (mwsmith1@stanford.edu) by March 15, 2014.

Report from the IBS Secretary/Treasurer
Paula Hanssen

IBS Checking -- pre expenses (includes royalties, back orders, new memberships from 2012 – 2013) $18,921.29

Summary of paid expenses in USD

Brecht Yearbook 37 (12)	$3200
Shipping	950
Communications 41 (12)	2919
Shipping	1115
Shipping Yearbooks for late memberships 08:	150
Database maintenance	270
Grant transcription: Interview M.Karge	500

Total Expenses:	-$9,104.00
Funds Available (mid 2013):	$9,817.99

Euro account:

Expenses: 3885.00 IBS Symposium Porto Alegre
50.00 ALG membership

Euro checking 6553,51Euro = $8,910.00

US Money Market savings $10,622.36

Projected expenses in the coming year:

Communications 41:	$ 2100.--
+ shipping	900
Brecht Yearbook 38 + shipping	$6000

Synopsis of IBS Membership

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2007	53	72	170
2008	76	84	171
2009	75	85	160 (175 projected)

War Primer 2 - A Recount

Sam Skinner talks about his work on *War Primer 2*, winner of the 2013 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize

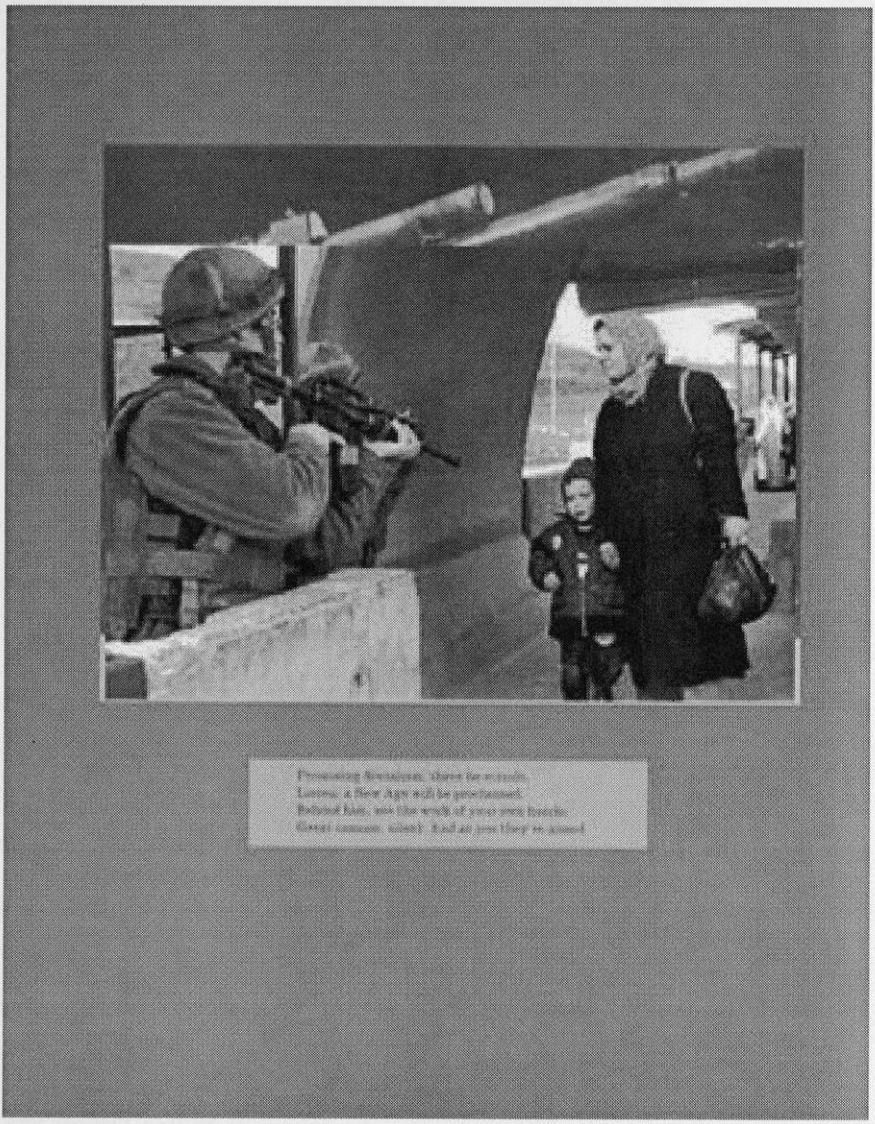
War Primer 2 is a radical updating of Brecht's 1955 *Kriegsfibel* publication, by artists Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, who have montaged images of the so-called 'war on terror' with Brecht's original photo-epigrams, directly into 100 copies of John Willett's 1998 English-translation edition. Each of the newly selected 85 images, one for each plate in the book, was printed 100 times, creating 8500 offset prints, individually mounted into the books. The resultant limited edition artist book was published by Mack Books in 2011, and a free-to-download eBook version was published in 2012 by Mapp Editions. *War Primer 2* has also been exhibited extensively, most recently at MOMA, New York, and was awarded the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2013. Plans for an opera version incorporating the moving image and Hanns Eisler's *Bilder aus der Kriegsfibel* composition are in development.

I worked as a picture researcher on the project, alongside the artists and four others, forming an unofficial picture desk of sorts. Over several weeks and months we analyzed Brecht's photo-epigrams, seeking out new images to splice with the original, scouring the internet for photos and video. At the time I was living in Berlin and communicated with Broomberg and Chanarin via email and Skype, sending folders of images daily, to be sifted and détourned. Together with everyone else on the project, I must have viewed thousands upon thousands of images of war, in all its many guises, all the while Brecht's poetry ringing in our ears.

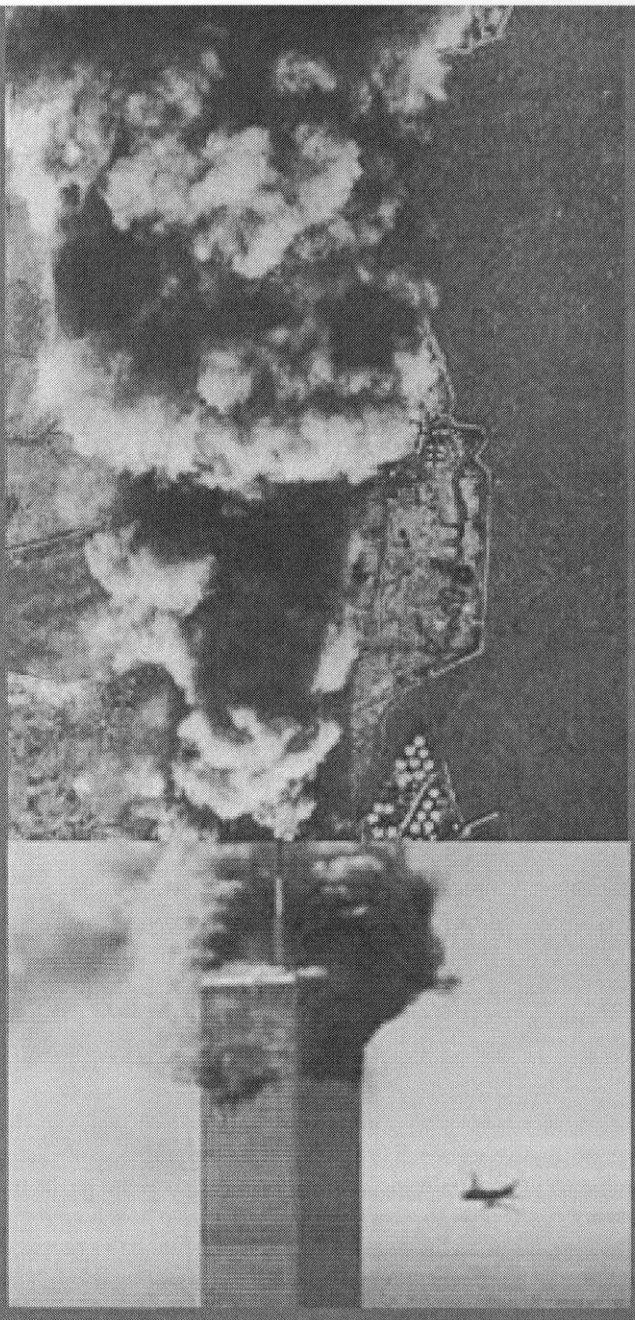
*

Brecht's original *Kriegsfibel* gathers a myriad of perspectives on the Second World War and critiques the media's depiction of it. *War Primer 2*'s metanarrative focuses in on photography and the media's embeddedness in the 'war on terror'. The chosen images include, among others; satellite and CCTV imagery, 'citizen' and professional journalistic photography, war trophy and leaked photos - foregrounding the act and use of photography. Pixelation features heavily, drawing attention to the material and technological dimensions of contemporary war photography - its production, consumption, distribution and manipulation. Faces are blacked out in some images, in others figures are blindfolded - censorship mixes with torture, both employing sensory deprivation to control and intimidate.

If though, it is through the media that war partly perpetuates itself in emoting power, as Paul Virilio has written, to what extent is *War Primer 2* able to avoid this complicity and create a critical space? After all, it treads a problematic line of simultaneous critique and appropriation of war photography, and herein lies a paradox: that its thinking and making, both constitute and divide itself. Does appropriation, however well executed, still have the critical and subversive power it once did? Furthermore, little detail is supplied beyond captions and URL's for each image; as such *War Primer 2* can be criticized for its failure to contextualize individual images by providing further discussion or evidential facts. Images of war, more than most, need this.



A poetic and performative approach is potentially problematic, especially in light of the images' connection to atrocity and war. However, it can be countered that appropriation and a lack of contextualization are not so much a failing of the work, but rather both its subject matter and medium, implicating, performing and problematizing our relationship to war photography and news media. In splitting war photography into its broad constituent parts, we see its range and power, but also how boundaries blur: censorship doubles as propaganda; trophy photos become front-page news, and once innocent studio portraits become icons of martyrdom. It is a frightening scenario, such slippery meaning on such a massive scale, armies of photographers, cameras and images, across the globe,



A cloud of smoke told us that they were here.
They were the sons of fire, not of the light.
They came from where? They came out of the darkness.
Where did they go? Into eternal night.

continually doubling and dividing. In the metanarrative of *War Primer 2* the individual identity of each image, each photographer, each subject, is partially traded in for an understanding of a larger narrative.

And so too parts of the original *Kriegsfibel* are replaced in the process of its reworking. The book's almost prosthetic appearance becomes an echo and embodiment of the distortions and destructions enacted by war and, furthermore, the act of war blurs with the artistic act. But this disfigurement is also a symptom of its rejuvenation. As Adam Broomberg has stated, one reason for the project was to increase awareness of and engagement with the original *Kriegsfibel*, but this paradoxically required a process of creative destruction, of the kind that Heiner Müller extolls in his essay *Fatzer ± Keuner*, as key to a meaningful contemporary relationship with Brecht. As such, *War Primer 2* can be seen to give *Kriegsfibel* a helping hand, and vice versa - artists and artworks as comrades across time, as Boris Groys might describe it. In this way, it is post–modern in the classic sense of a simultaneous recycling and denial of the old avant–garde, but also in the more recent sense of a post-modern modernity, as a continuation or return to aspects of an unfinished, not failed, modernist project.

*

The first time I saw the finished book in the flesh was on Dr. Erdmut Wizisla's desk at the Brecht Archiv, Chausseestrasse 125, Berlin, where Brecht lived from October 1953 until his death on 14 August 1956, and a stone's throw from his grave in the neighboring Dorotheenstadt Cemetery. Dr. Wizisla had kindly met with me to discuss my research related to *War Primer 2*, which eventually became an essay included in the eBook. Broomberg and Chanarin had donated an edition to the archive, a poetic almost votive act of re-accession, or coming home. Before my visit there, my experience of *War Primer 2* had been one of drifting in a sea of web-based imagery, endless scrolling, saving and screen grabbing my way through variously banal, poignant and distressing .jpgs and .mov files. Since then Broomberg and Chanarin had, at their London studio, made their selection, printed, and with a team of assistants, stuck fast the images to the leaves of 100 copies of the 1998 Libris edition, and, across the book's back pages, silkscreened in red the images' original captions and URL's.

At the archive, the book sat almost flat on the table. It had an engorged appearance, the new prints stuck within, faintly thickening and skewing its pages, as if water-damaged or like a book of flower presses. Its dust jacket had been removed and a large red number 2 printed across its grey cloth-bound cover.

*

I encourage others to explore the work and download the eBook, or view the hard copy at the Brecht Archiv or elsewhere. More work awaits articulating and exploring *War Primer 2*'s bonds to Brecht and his times, and developing other experiments in Brechtian confabulations.

I had the privilege of corresponding with Prof. Karen Leeder of Oxford University (who chaired a discussion with Broomberg and Chanarin at the Photographers' Gallery, London, where the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize exhibition was held during the summer) - she writes: 'Broomberg and Chanarin's reworking of Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* carries the impetus of Brecht's critique of ideology and photography further into the

digital age. Here our relationship with the politics of terror and the media that both support and expose it are exposed and laid bare. *War Primer 2* and the film and opera being developed out of it go to the heart of the fraught relationships between vision and blindness, power and complicity, but they also interrogate the nature of aesthetic response in images that are shocking, moving and terribly, horribly, beautiful in almost equal measure.'

*

War is evermore de-territorialized and mechanized, and the media, the internet and digital technology engulf us with a new abundance of information and imagery. Old and new media exist in a perpetual now, dissolving notions of chronology, authorship and place. Some ask if the internet is becoming sentient or simply more like a Borgesian Library of Babel? If only, perhaps, because the way in which new-media images, particularly those born of war, are produced and used is very far from random or autonomous.

As I write this, Nelson Mandela's death has just been announced. Whilst imprisoned, authorities sought to undermine support for him by outlawing his writing and image. Instead, these acts contributed to making him a martyr and an icon. Today, through digital and analogue networks, the power of media to communicate, to be our middle, the world becomes ever more a connected body of people, for good or ill, which does allow at least, to some degree, Mandela's words to echo out across our radios, his dignified gestures to appear upon our screens, and others to reflect, collectively.

As John Donne wrote in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*: 'All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated...' Or as Brecht's final epigram in *Kriegsfibel* concludes 'learn to learn, and try to learn for what.'

.....

War Primer 2 can be downloaded free here: http://mappeditions.com/publications/war-primer-2

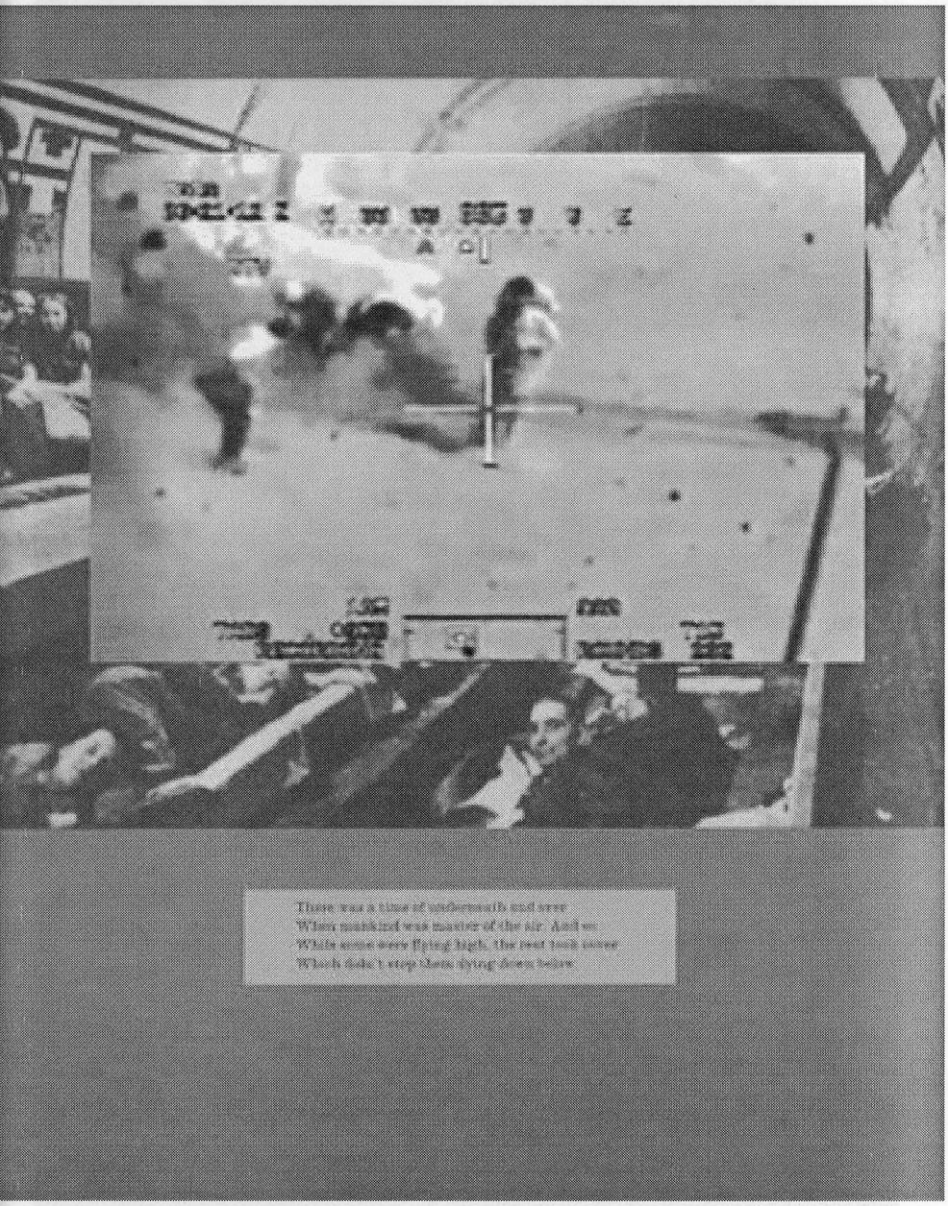
See also:

Broomberg and Chanarin's website for further details, and in particular two other Brecht/*Kriegsfibel* inspired projects from 2011: *Poor Monuments* and *Portable Monuments*.
http://www.choppedliver.info

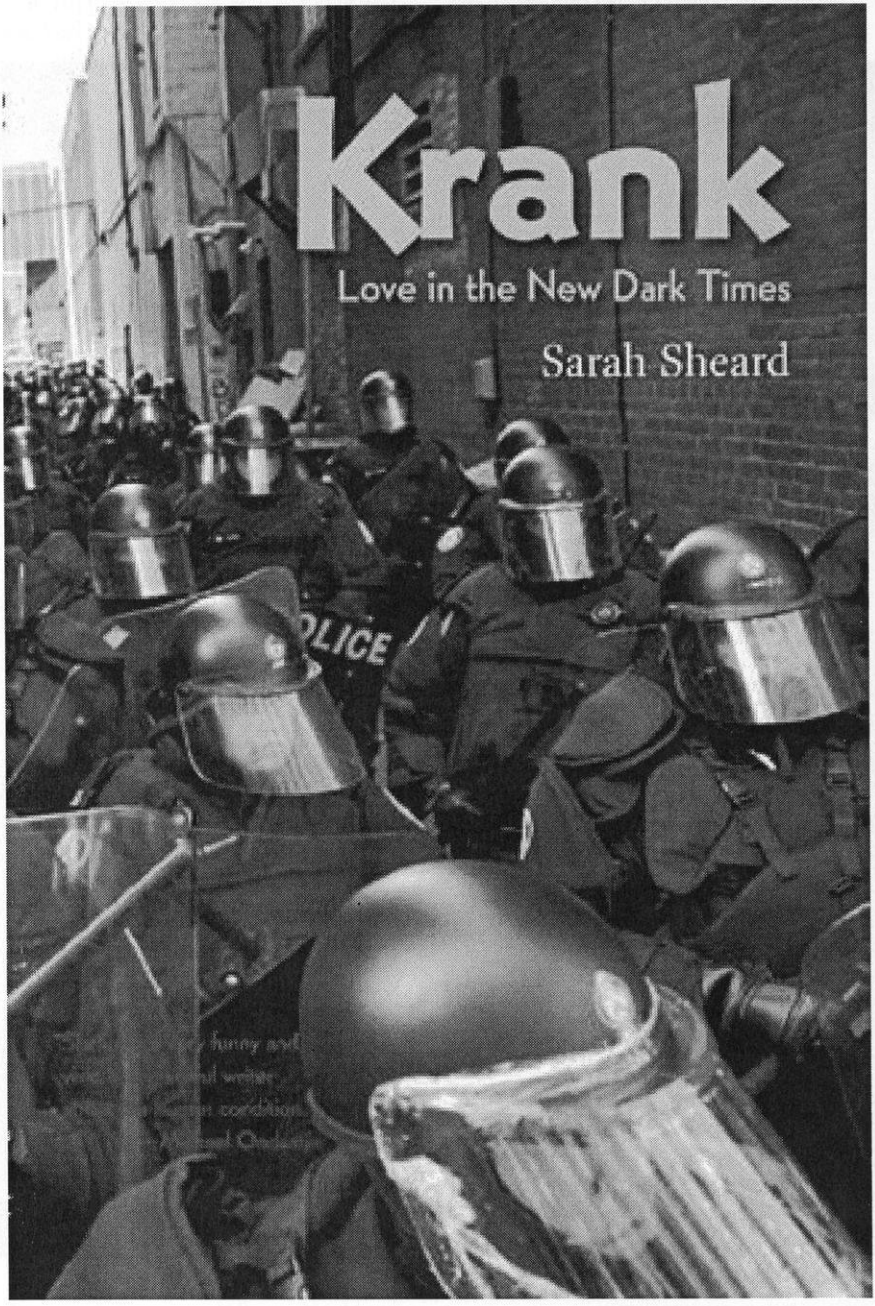
Broomberg and Chanarin in discussion with Prof. Karen Leeder and conductor Paul Kildea, recorded after a work-in-progress performance of a *War Primer 2* opera, at the Photographers' Gallery, London, April 25, 2013.
http://vimeo.com/67305432

David Evans, 'Occupying Brecht: Broomberg and Chanarin's War Primer 2'. http://thephotographersgalleryblog.org.uk/2013/06/15/occupying-brecht-broomberg-and-chanarins-war-primer-2-david-evans/

Gemma Sief, 'Bertolt Brecht and the Media Today', in *Frieze Magazine*, Issue 148, June 2012. http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/books2028/



There was a time of underneath and over
When mankind was master of the air. And so
While some were flying high, the rest took cover
Which didn't stop them dying down below

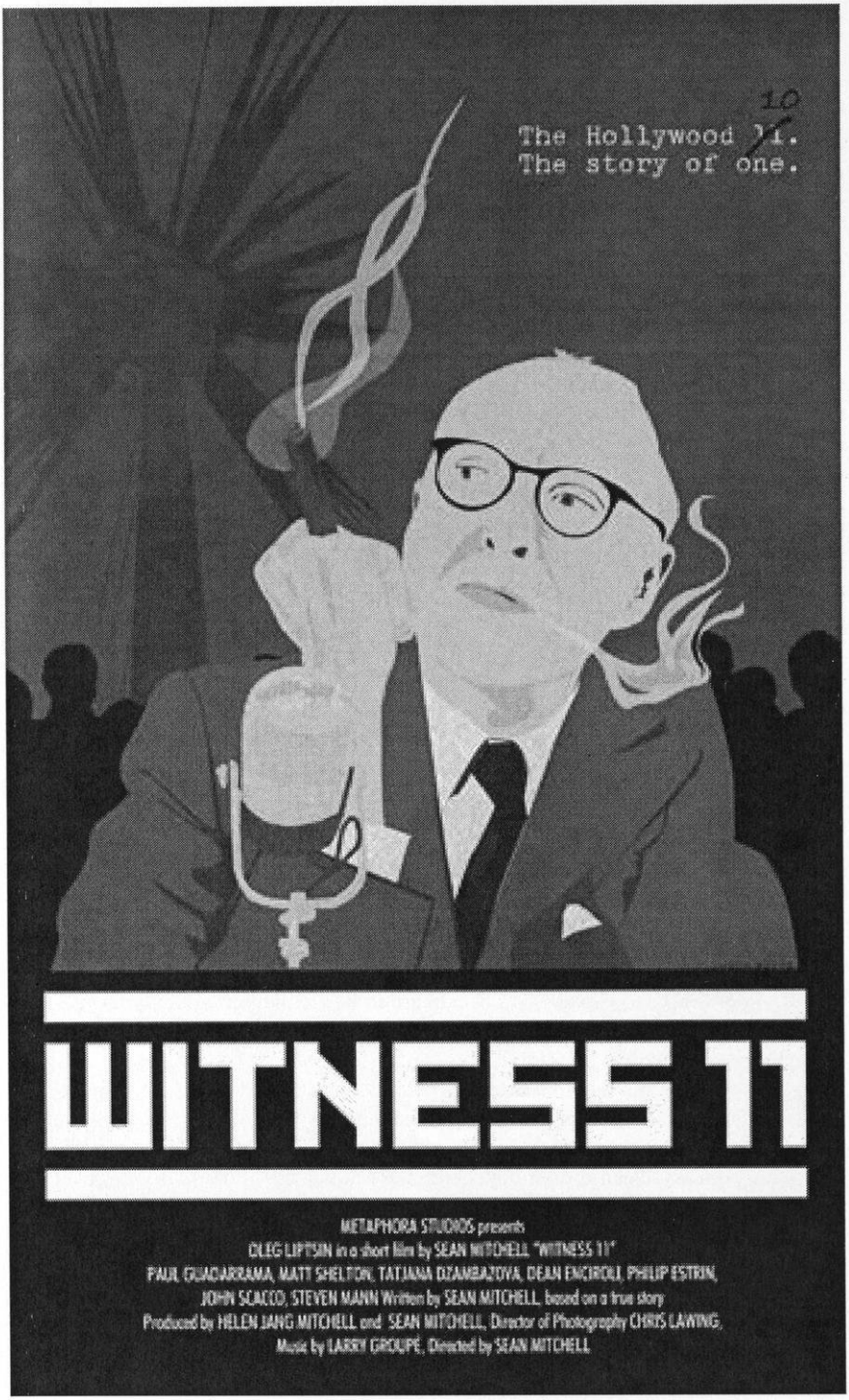

Krank
Love in the New Dark Times
Sarah Sheard

BOOK REVIEW: New Fiction

KRANK: Love in the New Dark Times
By Sarah Sheard
Canada: Seraphim Editions, $19.95
E-book internationally: Tullamore Press, Kobo, $9.99

Reviewed by David Bolt

What would happen if Bertolt Brecht came back to life in the 21st century?
On the political and economic front, he'd see a few things that remind him of Germany in the 1930s. Calling our corporate culture - the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of the 1% - pre-fascism, is becoming more and more common these days.
And on the personal front, in this novel at any rate, he'd find a woman to pass the time with.
It is November 11th, 2009. Ainsley Giddings steps aboard the ferry to Ward's Island, about 15 minutes offshore from Toronto. A forties-something psychotherapist on a self-imposed writing retreat, she has sublet a cottage for a year - a year in which to think and to write about Gestalt therapy.
Unbeknownst to her, Brecht is on that same ferry boat - suddenly given a second chance at life.
They strike up a conversation, and she discovers that not only is he unsure of that day's date, but of the year as well. Fascinating. Their acquaintance develops into a bizarre and eccentric love affair. But mixed in with the affair are local politics and eventually a civic uprising in downtown Toronto - in effect, the G-20 conference of 2010 - which provokes a brutal repression by the police. The Ontario Ombudsman called this "the most massive compromise of civil liberties in Canadian history."
This of course reminds Brecht of the 1930s resistance against Fascism in Berlin, especially when he is caught in the sweep by cops and thrown into a temporary jail with hundreds of others.
At the end of the book, Ainsley and Brecht are in Berlin, which suddenly reverts to the 30s, giving her a visceral understanding of the adage about being condemned to relive the past should we forget it.
It is worth pointing out that this Brecht is not idealized. He smells of cigar smoke and sweat, he gets involved with other women, he flees from the police. Yet all these things perversely appeal to Ainsley, who is tired of ordinary men. Comparing him to her squeaky-clean former boyfriend, she reflects that "Brecht, for all his transgressions, including his latest, his filthy fingernails and alleycat wanderings, was seventy times the man she'd left behind."
The novel is the story of an apolitical woman gradually becoming aware of political realities. (The title, of course, is the German word meaning sick.) But the culture shock both she and Brecht experience creates a magnetic attraction between the two lovers, and the intensity of their affair shocks her alive.


The Hollywood 10.
The story of one.
WITNESS 11
METAPHORA STUDIOS presents
OLEG LIPTSIN in a short film by SEAN MITCHELL "WITNESS 11"
PAUL GUADARRAMA, MATT SHELTON, TATJANA DZAMBAZOVA, DEAN ENGROLI, PHILIP ESTRIN,
JOHN SCACCO, STEVEN MANN Written by SEAN MITCHELL, based on a true story
Produced by HELEN JANG MITCHELL and SEAN MITCHELL, Director of Photography CHRIS LAWING,
Music by LARRY GROUPE, Directed by SEAN MITCHELL

Film I: *Witness 11* is a short film by San Francisco-based filmmaker Sean Mitchell which recreates Brecht's testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. With any luck, it will be coming to a festival near you soon. In the meantime, Sean kindly took the time to answer a few questions via e-mail.

Andy Spencer (AS)
Sean Mitchell (SM)

AS: Could you maybe say something about the genesis of the project – where the idea for it originated?

SM: I had just finished a feature-length screenplay on a different historical event, the last fatal duel in Scottish history. I wrote that screenplay to be my directorial debut. But, as is often the case, the producers and financial people interested in the project wanted to see me direct a short, narrative film first. Although I've been a cinematographer for over twenty years, writing and directing are newer disciplines for me. So, I was looking for a short film to do, preferably one that was also a historical piece. One evening I was watching a documentary, with my wife and co-producer, called *Theater of War*. As you might know, the documentary centers on a staging of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* in New York in 2006. Among several incredibly interesting things, like seeing Meryl Streep's process in preparing for the role of Mother Courage, the documentary deals with Brecht's testimony in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947. Being a filmmaker, I was familiar with the "Hollywood Ten," but never realized Brecht was even in the United States at the time, much less testified at the hearing. For those well versed in Brecht's work and life, this is old news, but for me it was something I didn't know anything about and felt there were many others who were like me. History has simplified the event to the "Ten" but has glossed over the eleventh witness. And what Brecht did with his testimony, the way he answered the questions, which seemed to be informed by his work on *Life of Galileo*, was so brilliant, I was hooked. As Carl Weber, a former assistant director for Brecht, put it, "It sounds like a comedy written by Brecht."

My wife suggested it as a possible short film and I thought it was perfect. So, I contacted Carl Weber, who is a professor in Stanford University's theater department. He agreed to become an advisor on the film and we were off and running. In fact, Carl was going to play the role of the interpreter, but had a 104 degree fever during the first day of production, so I had to quickly re-cast.

AS: How did you go about financing the film, casting, and now exhibiting/distributing etc.?

SM: The film is mostly self-financed. Unfortunately, in the U.S., most short films are financed this way because short films generally don't make money, so business people don't want to come near them. Although we raised $5,000 on Kickstarter and received a grant from Berkeley Film Foundation for $2,000. The rest of the $30,000 budget came out of pocket.

I cast the film locally, all with actors from the San Francisco bay area. In fact, most of them out of Shelton Studios, a method acting school started by noted acting teacher Jean Shelton in 1961. Danny Glover, Peter Coyote, and Howard Hesseman were all students of Jean's, among many others. Francis Ford Coppola used to sit in on her classes to "brush up." I've taken classes there over the years, so it

was a natural place for me to start casting. Jean Shelton's first husband, Wendell Phillips, was blacklisted. So the project had personal meaning to the folks at Shelton Studios. Jean's son, Matt Shelton, was our casting director and also plays the role of Dalton Trumbo.

As for exhibition and distribution, we're sending *Witness 11* out to film festivals right now. This is the beginning of the process. We'd also love to see it air on PBS at some point, as well as internationally.

AS: How did you go about editing the transcript down for the film?

SM: Brecht testified for something like 50 minutes. An audio recording of his testimony is available online, but it's incomplete. Even the written transcript has gaps in it, so it's hard to say how long he testified. At any rate, this is much, much longer than any of the other witnesses, because the others didn't answer questions and were arrested almost immediately. Our film is only 21 minutes long and of that, the testimony takes up about 12 minutes. So, I had to edit it down. It was a tricky process, but I started by looking at the moments where Brecht got the gallery (audience) to laugh. I first focused on these moments because these were the dramatic events in his testimony. This is how Brecht turned the tables on the Committee. So, I started there and worked outward, making sure to include key things that Brecht did and did not do. He did not, for example, "name names" of members of the Communist Party, even though the Committee asked him to do so. Another example would be Brecht's testimony regarding the song "In Praise of Learning." The music was written by Brecht's friend, Hanns Eisler, and as we point out in the film, the lyrics were written in German by Brecht. Brecht says "I wrote the song; Hanns just wrote the music." To some, this is an indication of Brecht's arrogance. However, upon slightly closer examination, I don't see how anyone can read this statement as anything other than Brecht covering for his friend while on the hot seat. An action that speaks volumes about Brecht.

AS: Am I right in thinking that Stripling is a central figure who almost, but not quite, seems on the brink of realizing the absurdity of his situation?

SM: Ha! Well, in our film you can certainly read it that way. In reality, I don't think Stripling did realize the absurdity of his situation. He only seemed to realize that these "Commies" were slippery characters. Stripling wrote a book a couple years after the hearing called *The Red Plot Against America*. In it, he makes his case for the so-called Communist conspiracy. His views are quite clear. By the way, many people assume the committee was headed by Joseph McCarthy, after all, this period is called the "McCarthy era." But McCarthy was a Senator and the HUAC Hearings were, by definition, in the House of Representatives. The committee was chaired by J. Parnell Thomas, McCarthy's role model and hero. Richard Nixon also served on the Committee. In an interesting twist, J. Parnell Thomas was indicted on charges of conspiracy to defraud the government only ten months after the Hollywood Ten Hearings. He was accused of putting friends on the Congressional payroll, who did no work, and in return shared their salaries with him. He was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months in prison. Two of his fellow inmates were Lester Cole and Ring Lardner Jr., members of the Hollywood Ten who were serving time as a result of refusing to testify in front of Thomas and HUAC.

AS: And as for Brecht – does he treat the whole thing as "theater"? Could he then be accused of having abandoned the others?

Oleg Liptsin as Brecht

SM: In the film, Brecht answers questions honestly until he feels something inappropriate is asked. Then, he lights his cigar and treats it as theater. In my opinion, this reflects reality if you look at what Brecht did. This was highly controversial at the time, and among surviving blacklisted victims and their families, it remains controversial. The key reason for the controversy in Brecht's case centers around the fact that he answered questions at all. In the view of the "Ten," this legitimized a committee that was asking questions about political affiliations, protected under the 1st Amendment. But Brecht wasn't a U.S. citizen and did not have the same legal rights as the Ten. In a situation where two options are presented: don't talk and go to jail, or, talk, name names, rat on your friends, and save yourself, somehow Brecht found a third option. This alternative is the film's theme which is simply that creativity can overcome tyranny.

AS: Finally, how do thing stand right now with the project?

The film is finished and we're sending it out to festivals. We're waiting to hear from Tribeca and other festivals. Wish us luck, because it's a difficult process. With so many short films out there these days, it's easy to get lost in the shuffle.

For a behind the scenes photo-book see http://www.seanmitchell.net/witness-11book.php
Username: Witness11 Password: Brecht
Facebook: witness11thefilm

Pete Seeger 1919-2014

April 1961: Pete Seeger and wife Toshi arrive in federal court in New York for sentencing on a conviction for contempt of Congress. He was given a one-year sentence (later overturned) for refusing to answer questions about possible Communist ties. Before sentencing, Seeger asked Judge Thomas F. Murphy for permission to sing a song. Murphy declined.

"I decline to discuss, under compulsion, where I have sung, and who has sung my songs, and who else has sung with me, and the people I have known. I love my country very dearly, and I greatly resent this implication that some of the places that I have sung and some of the people that I have known, and some of my opinions, whether they are religious or philosophical, or I might be a vegetarian, make me any less of an American. I will tell you about my songs, but I am not interested in telling you who wrote them, and I will tell you about my songs, and I am not interested in who listened to them."

Film II: *Judith*

Farrokh Asadi's film, *Judith*, a cinematic adaptation of Brechts *Jewish Wife* was selected for screening at the 14th International Brecht Symposium, held in Brazil in May 2013. In February, 2014, *Judith* made its American premiere at North Central College in Naperville, IL.

Gregory H. Wolf asked the director about adapting Brecht's *Jewish Wife*: "Bertolt Brecht originally wrote the Jewish Wife in a non-epic and non-episodic dramatic format during his exile in Denmark (~1935)," said Asadi. "*Judith* is an epic-style adaptation of this play that has been filmed with the hope of reinforcing active cognitive participation from the audience. I chose *The Jewish Wife* because the concept of the play is relevant under today's political climate, and offers an examination of the regimes around the world that are oppressive, manipulative, dishonest, corrupt, and create fear and misery in their societies.

"My primary goal in producing this adaptation was to not simply duplicate the original play, but to show a contemporary audience the social forces behind events that have essentially become commonplace in today's society. The name Judith, who is also the protagonist of both the original play and the film's screenplay, was chosen to replace the original title of *Jewish Wife* in order to apply a more universal theme to the concept of the play that can ultimately take place during anytime and anyplace in the world."

Afsaneh Asadi-Grigsby as Judith

Günter Grass in Conversation: Remembering 17 June 1953 at the Berlin Ensemble

Margaret Setje-Eilers, Vanderbilt University

To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the uprising in former East Germany on 17 June 1953, the Berlin Ensemble hosted a momentous event on the same day in 2013, with a film screening of Hans Lietzau's *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* (*Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand*, 1970), the cinematic adaptation of Günter Grass's 1966 play, followed by a discussion with Grass and an illustrious group of panelists. The collected expertise of the invited speakers would delight any number of symposia on Brecht's response to the uprising, his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, Grass's play, and Lietzau's film, all in the context of the uprising itself, its impact on the cultural history of the former East and Europe, and its role in the Cold War. Dieter Stolz, head of the editorial office for Grass at the Steidl Verlag, moderated the conversation with Grass and scholars Daniela Dahn, Friedrich Dieckmann, Frank Hörnigk, Volker Schlöndorff, Klaus Staeck, Wolfgang Thierse, and Andrzej Wirth.

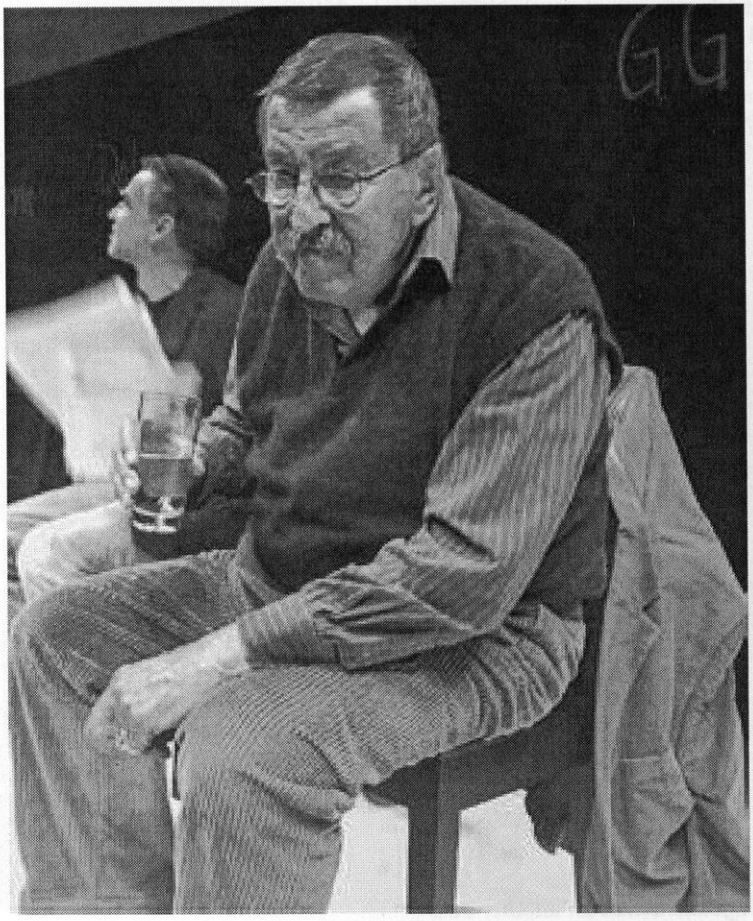
In his welcoming remarks, artistic director Claus Peymann revealed that the event was the first of its kind in the *Neue Probebühne* at the Berlin Ensemble. Four hundred people had gathered in the theater's present rehearsal area, transformed into a movie theater for the projection of Lietzau's film onto a full-sized screen. Significantly, the evening took place in a rehearsal space that duplicates the size of the main stage, and even though Brecht was not actually rehearsing *Coriolanus* during the uprising, and the *Berliner Ensemble* did not move into the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm* for another nine months (in March 1954), Grass's play and its cinematic interpretation both take place during a rehearsal. A small group of workers interrupts a rehearsal of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, in which the plebeians of Rome are going hungry despite ample supplies of grain held by the patricians. Grass's play emphasizes the similarity in the situations on stage and out in the streets of Berlin: the workers come to ask the Brecht figure, director and adapter of the Shakespearean play – transparently called the Boss – for a statement in support of their protest against increased production norms. They leave in disappointment, neither with his written support, nor having found the leader they had hoped for.

After the film screening, Grass opened the panel discussion with a story about the inspiration for his play. Peering across the border between the American and Soviet Sectors in Berlin on 17 June, he had seen people throwing cobblestones at a tank. He had been thinking of adapting *Coriolanus*, attracted by the dialectic between the reality of the street and the position of the intellectuals. Instead, ten years later, he wrote a play linking Shakespeare's work, Brecht, the June uprising, and the confrontation of power and powerlessness.

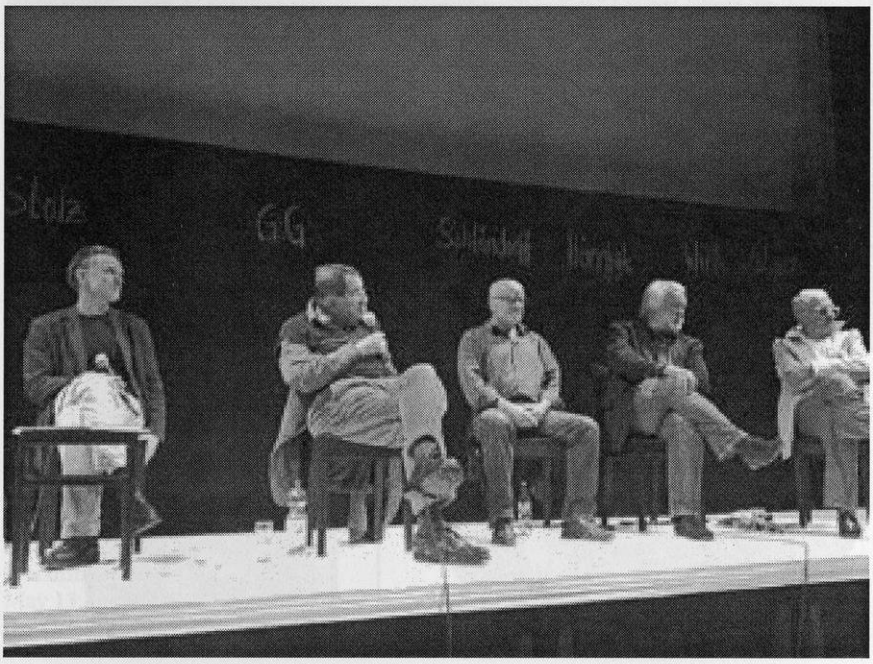
Following Grass's lead, statements from each of the panelists initiated discussion about the ambivalent tension between theory and reality, raising questions that extended well beyond the scope of the evening. Are the play (and its filmic adaptation) examples of documentary theater? Why does the Boss fail to write a statement for the workers? How does Grass characterize him (and the workers)? How does the play line up with the letters Brecht wrote that day and his poem "The Solution" (*Die Lösung*), written that summer as one the *Buckow Elegies*? How was Grass's play received in

the former East and West? Were the protests that took place all over the former East – more than a million participants in seven hundred cities and the provinces – limited to workers, or were they an uprising of the people, as the events were first publicized in the West? And in the context of the Cold War, how did the former East perpetuate two narratives, namely that the uprising was a counter-revolutionary putsch from the West and that the new holiday in the West celebrated the uprising's defeat? Since the Wall had not yet been built, why didn't even more people leave the Soviet Sector of Berlin after the tanks rolled in? And from a global perspective, how does the uprising figure in the larger historical picture of East-West tensions and subsequent uprisings in Poland, Hungary, and Prague? What does historical and literary memory still need to process?

The audience had most likely assembled at the *Neue Probebühne* anticipating statements from intellectuals, particularly from Grass, and they probably left without clear answers, but with an appreciation of the complex issues the uprising and its literary interpretations continue to raise. Any frustration seemed to lie in the time constraint. Even well into the night after several of the panelists had left the stage, some speakers, including Grass, continued the conversation.



The discussants: Wolfgang Thierse, Friedrich Dieckmann, Daniela Dahn, Dieter Stolz, Günter Grass, Volker Schlöndorff, Frank Hörnigk, Andrzej Wirth. Photos Margaret Setje-Eilers



Above:
Fig. 8
Left: Fig. 1
Right:
Fig.2

Staying with Brazil...

The same year that the IBS went to São Paulo for its conference saw the start of the German Foreign-Office led initiative „Deutschland + Brasilien 2013-2014“,

aimed at furthering relations between the two countries. Sponsors of the year-long celebration, which was officially

inaugurated by German President Joachim Gauck in São Paulo on May 13, include BDI Brazil Board, the Goethe-Institut, and Germany's Ministries for Education and Research, and Economic Co-operation.

To mark the occasion, the Brazilian post office issued a set of five commemorative stamps, each one focusing on one aspect of the proposed collaborative endeavors. So we see a tourism stamp with images of German influenced building styles in Curitiba/Paraná und in Canela/Rio

Grande do Sul; a trade stamp with the images of a cargo ship and a Volkswagen Beetle; the science and education stamp

This Page: Figs. 3-6

Postage stamps are political statements

Micky Aldridge

Think about it. A postage stamp is merely a receipt to indicate the fee paid for a service contracted; there is no functional reason why it should carry any sort of illustration whatsoever. The reason that stamps do, is that, by and large, they are issued by governments, and governments always have very firm ideas how they want their countries to be viewed by both their own citizens, and others.

Stamps are "paper ambassadors"[1] conveying "miniature messages"[2], as two commentators have put it. Whether it's banner-waving proletarians in North

depicts solar panels and a studious young woman blissfully unaware of the laptop floating ominously over her right shoulder; the politics stamp features Hermann Blumenau (1819– 1899), the German émigré pharmacist who, in 1850, founded the city of Blumenau, situated in the Itajaí-Açu river valley in the state of Santa Catarina. Apparently German schools still prevail there to this day. And finally, there is the culture stamp, which offers us a theatrical production from the perspective of the stage, and... Brecht. Reason enough for CIBS to range a little further afield and take a quick tour through philatelic history, ably guided by Micky Aldridge.

1 *Paper Ambassadors: The Politics of Stamps*, Dennis Altman, North Ryde NSW, 1991.

2 *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps*, Jack Child, Durham NC, 2008.

This Page: Figs 7, 9-11

Korea, or regal pomp and majesty in the UK; whether it's vast rolling landscapes (USA) or obscure doctors and chemists (France), the choice of image is intended to tell you something significant about the issuing nation's character and psyche.

This may well be fascinating for semioticians, but for stamp collectors it is simply a massive boon – because it allows the development of *thematic* collections. There is practically no item or theme which hasn't found its way onto some stamp somewhere, that a dedicated collector can't use as the basis of their own personal thematic collection – embroidery, astrophysics, German left-wing playwrights...

So is it possible to construct a thematic collection on the subject of Brecht? And how would one go about it?

Any good collection dedicated to so specific a theme should of course begin with depictions of the principal. Brecht's personal appearances on stamps have in fact been relatively scarce (compared with Goethe or Shakespeare or Pushkin, say), but they can be found. He first appeared on stamps on 14th August 1957, exactly one year after his death, when he was honoured with two stamps issued by the **DDR** (Figs. 1 & 2), both reproducing a famous photographic portrait. Some considerable time passed before his next appearance, this time on another **DDR** stamp issued on 2nd February 1988 to

mark the 90th anniversary of his birth. This took the form of a *miniature sheet* with just one stamp in it, the selvedge being decorated with an image from his *Life of Galileo* (Fig.3). The DDR expired shortly after that issue, but Brecht himself appeared again, albeit in somewhat stylised form, on a stamp issued by the reunified **BRD** on 5th February 1998 to mark the centenary of his birth (Fig. 4). This event was also marked by **Bulgaria**, with a distinctive caricature (Fig. 5), and by **Italy**, using a more formal portrait and

This Page: Figs 12-15

including an allegory of 'drama' (Fig. 6). **Belgium** chose to honour Brecht

within its series 'A Journey Through the 20th Century' issued in November 2000 (Fig. 7), which, according to the Belgian post office, depicts – alongside a fairly standard portrait of Brecht – a scene from the Coronet Theatre (London) production of *Life of Galileo*, from 1948. Last but not least, the most recent depiction of Brecht appears among a set of five stamps issued as recently as October 2013 in **Brazil** (Fig. 8) to celebrate over 500 years of cultural links between Brazil and Germany and specifically the contribution over the last 200 years of the *Deutschbrasilianer* to the development of modern Brazil. As I suggested in the opening paragraphs, it may consciously or unconsciously reflect the priorities and preferences of the current Brazilian regime that it chose Brecht as the archetype of 'the best' of German culture, rather than, say, Goethe.

However, at the next level, one could amplify any thematic collection by including stamps containing depictions *relating* to it, rather than depicting the theme directly. In Brecht's case the first example would be the 35pfg top-value of the three value set[3] issued by the **DDR** in May 1973 to commemorate "Major Theatre Productions" of the DDR (Fig. 9) – the image is of the *second* staging ever of *Mother Courage* by Brecht (and Erich Engel) at the *Berliner Ensemble* in 1949. This version of course starred

Helene Weigel, herself depicted on a 70pfg **DDR** stamp of 1980 (along with an image of the theatre exterior) (Fig. 10).

3 The others were (10Pfg) the Deutsches Theater production of *King Lear* by Wolfgang Langhoff, and (25Pfg) the Komische Oper production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* under Walter Felsenstein.

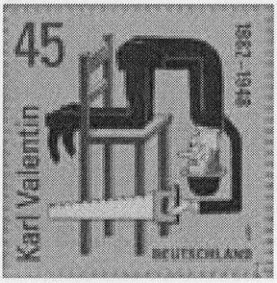
This Page: Figs. 16-19

The actress who *first* played the role in Zürich in 1941 and who reprised it in Munich in 1950, Therese Giehse, was herself depicted on a 100pfg stamp issued by the **BRD** in November 1988 among the series dedicated to "Women in German History" (Figs. 11, 24, 26).

Taking up this theme, one can find a few stamps depicting other people with whom Brecht collaborated or who were important in his life. Lion Feuchtwanger, with whom he worked on *Edward II* in the early twenties, was depicted on a 35pfg **DDR** stamp issued in 1974 (Fig. 12). Max Reinhardt, who directed the *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin where Brecht got his earliest directing opportunities, is depicted on quite a number of stamps; on one from **Berlin** in 1957 (Fig. 13); from **Austria** (Fig. 14) and the **DDR** (Fig. 15) in 1973, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth; and from the **BRD** (Fig. 16) in 1993 on the 50th anniversary of his death. The *Deutsches Theater* itself was shown on a 700pfg definitive stamp issued by the **BRD** in 1993 (Fig. 17). And what about Brecht's most well-known collaborators of all? In the west that is surely Kurt Weill - to date only one appearance, on a stamp from

the **BRD** in 2000 (Fig. 18) to mark the centenary of his birth. But in the **DDR** itself? Undoubtedly that was Hanns Eisler, who can also be found on a 1968 stamp marking his 70th birthday (Fig.19).

An even more unusual and esoteric representation of Brecht's work comes in the form of three stamps issued by the **DDR** in 1974 (Figs. 20-22). Issued to mark the occasion of "DDR74", a major stamp-collectors festival being held at Chemnitz (then Karl-Marx-Stadt), they depict details from a series of



monumental relief sculptures, then newly-installed on the Brücken-straße, which celebrate the 'triumph of communism' by giving form to poetry; the poetry in question being his "Poems of Praise" from *The Mother* and *The Measures Taken*. So we have "In praise of the revolutionary" (*Mother*) by Eberhard Roβdeutscher on the 10pfg; "In praise of dialectics" (ditto) by Jo Astram on the 20pfg; and "In praise of the Party" (*Measures*) by Martin Wetzel on the 25pfg. "Communism" and "Learning" (the other two subjects from *The Mother*) don't actually get a look-in, apparently! The sculptures still stand.

In a similar vein, another 35pfg stamp from the **DDR** in 1978 (Fig. 23)

relates to Brecht in its depiction of the memorial sculpture "*O Deutschland, bleiche Mutter*" ("O Germany, pale mother") created by Fritz Cremer, the original of which stands at Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria, and a copy of which currently stands to the north of Berlin Cathedral on Museum Island in Berlin-Mitte. Cremer chose his image – a constrained woman expressing pain, shame and outrage – from Brecht's poem of the same name from 1933.

Although these are all the stamps I have been able to find (for now) with a fairly direct connection to Brecht, it is noteworthy that several of them emerged only during the research for this article rather than being previously known to me; and if one throws one's net a little wider, so to speak, and includes items even more indirectly related to the central theme, it is clear a much more substantial collection could be constructed. What about the 45 cent stamp issued by the **BRD** in 2007 marking the 125th birthday of Brecht's early idol Karl Valentin (Fig.24)? Or the 220pfg stamp issued by the **BRD** in 2001, commemorating the playwright Marieluise Fleißer, whose early work Brecht vigorously championed (Fig. 25)? Or an image of Alfred Döblin, who moved in Brecht's circles (**DDR** 1978, on the occasion of the centenary of his birth (Fig. 26)? Or Marlene Dietrich, who also passed through Reinhardt's hands in the 20's (**BRD** 1997, Fig. 27)? Or a view of Augsburg, Brecht's birthplace (**BRD** 1985, Fig. 28)? Or views of Berlin or Zürich, where he worked…? (There are too many to list!).

In conclusion, I hope I have stimulated perhaps just a little interest in the philatelic opportunities Brecht presents. All the stamps mentioned are available for just a very modest outlay via one of the dedicated collectors' auction sites such as www.delcampe.net. At the very least, perhaps you'll give those sticky labels on your mail a little more curious a glance next time they drop on to the mat…!

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The Rest Is Noise: Playwright David Edgar on Brecht's Influence on his Work

For twelve weekends over the course of 2013, inspired by Alex Ross' book *The Rest Is Noise*, the South Bank Centre in London staged *The Rest Is Noise Festival*, an extended look at 20th-century history which aimed to reveal the influences on art in general and classical music in particular. At the beginning of March, the third weekend of the series took as its title *Berlin in the '20s and '30s: Cabaret, Paranoia and Fascism 1920-1933* and Brecht-related performances included *The Threepenny Opera* (London Philharmonic Orchestra), the *Mahogonny Songspiel* (London Philharmonic Orchestra's Foyle Future Firsts), and *The Seven Deadly Sins* (BBC Concert Orchestra, Andre de Ridder and Shara Worden of My Brightest Diamond), as well as a screening of *Kuhle Wampe*. In addition, composer Dominic Muldowney discussed "Brecht's Composers", and on March 3 playwright David Edgar and actress Charlotte Randle talked with festival curator Jude Kelly about the influence of Brecht on their work. Edgar's remarks, in lightly edited form, follow:

Kelly first asked Edgar about his earliest experiences with Brecht, which included directing *Mother Courage* as a 17 year-old student:

I want to start with a bit of another play: "Before we start / This evening's art / We'd like to take you through a bit of theory / It's conceptual stuff / And it's short enough / But even so we're going to sing it so's to stop it getting dreary. / So sit up straight / Concentrate / Don't laugh you'll only make the place untidy / For here comes Bertolt Brecht / And we expecht / Your essays to be handed in b' Friday." That's the opening of Lee Hall's wonderful translation version of *Squire Puntila and his Man Matti* [Methuen, 2003], a 1940 Brecht play, which was, rather shamefully actually, the only major contribution to the celebrations of the centenary of Brecht's birth in 1998 [Almeida Theatre, directed by Kathryn Hunter], and I quote that because that's a sort of relationship with Brecht that I've never had, remotely, but is I think a kind of prevailing one still, namely heavy, Teutonic, academic, incomprehensible, dull. For me, the emblematic incident actually occurred several years later on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. I did a program about Brecht's final years in the new East Germany in the late '40s and early '50s, and went out to Bückow, which was the country estate which the East Germans gave Brecht, actually huge, a great lake, to do some interviews, and the person was late or there was some delay, and they said there's this little place that you might like to look at where there are some old costumes and props from the plays. It didn't sound frightfully enticing but anyway, out of politeness... and in the first room there were breastplates and a couple of pikes, and I thought they might be from *Mother Courage*, might be from somewhere else, and then I walked into the second room and there was the cart, the cart in which Mother Courage and her family roll onto the stage at the beginning of the play, arguably the most memorable prop, and the most memorable image of twentieth century theatre, and I said "Is that the cart?" and they said "well it's, yes it's the cart". "Can I touch it?" And that really took me back to a kind of reverence for Brecht I had when I was growing up, both as a schoolboy and later on as a revolutionary student in the late 1960s in England, when we regarded

Brecht as being absolutely what theatre should be about. I said that the cart was arguably the most significant and memorable image in twentieth century theatre, the arguably is because of another one, obviously, which is two tramps and a tree, which is *Waiting for Godot*, and we felt very much that Beckett and Beckettianism was the enemy, that it was pessimistic, it was about fragmentation, it was about there being no truth, nothing is true nothing is false, it was very individualistic in our view and Brecht stood for causality, stood for one thing leading to another and particularly stood still for the idea that there was going to be a great socialist future and that that's what one should be aiming towards.

We were talking earlier and saying that Brecht became deeply unfashionable in the '90s but he sort of came back a bit and I came back with him really when I started translating Brecht, which has been my relationship with the great man more recently. I've done a translation of *Galileo*, which Timothy West did at the Birmingham Rep [2005] and I've done one of *Mother Courage* for another large theatre which is coming on stream soon we hope. And that was a fascinating process because that absolutely forced me to look at Brecht through time, look at how Brecht is seen now, and look at how those plays touch on the contemporary world, and I was seeing that through the prism not just of me looking at Brecht and in the case of *Galileo* looking at Brecht's three versions of *Galileo*, all of which are intriguingly different, both dramaturgically and in terms of what they're about, what Brecht was most interested in focusing on in the story of Galileo, but also because a lot of my friends and colleagues had also translated those plays and unlike some other translators, and by translator I'm afraid I mean translating from a literal translation produced by somebody else, I had open on my desk like a sort of console around me the *Galileo's* written by the great John Willett and Eric Bentley, but also more recent ones done by David Hare [Almeida, 1994] and Howard Brenton [National, 1980]; and when I was doing *Mother Courage* I was also looking at Hanif Kureishi's *Mother Courage* [RSC, 1984], David Hare again did *Mother Courage* [National, 1995], Tony Kushner did the *Mother Courage* that was done at the National [2009], and so it was a way in, interesting particularly because I know all of those writers personally, a way into their minds as it were, as well as a way into Brecht's mind. By that stage the issue about Brecht was whether or not people could take Brecht and recast him in various spirits of the times through which we were moving fifty years after his death, and in particular Brecht's relationship with post-modernism, and that of course, postmodernism, being about fragmentation and about mosaic and about things splitting up and about challenging the idea that the author is a completely omnipotent figure creating completely rounded characters, challenging all of that, challenging the idea that there's only one truth and so on. There was a book called *Postmodern Brecht* by a woman called Elizabeth Wright in 1989 which sort of tried to capture Brecht for the.. said Brecht challenged the idea of the great, grand narrative of history and that seems a bizarre thing to say about a Marxist-Leninist, but that was what she said and argued. So it was, for me, a way of trying to confront what Brecht meant now and whether Brecht was this great thing in the middle of the twentieth century which was about an ideology which I was increasingly, obviously, suspicious of, and coming to terms with the changes that happen in what you think

about the world as you grow older, and whether or not he was just stuck there in that, or whether or not you could look at him in terms of recapturing him, and it became a little bit like the debate that we have about Shakespeare; does Shakespeare survive because of universal human values which he just expressed so completely wonderfully, or does Shakespeare survive because he's so wide and so broad that you can reinterpret him in each new generation in a different way, and I think that's kind of the debate that's now going on about Brecht and I'm sure that's the debate we'll partially be having about Brecht over the next hour.

The role of the Gesture in Brecht's work:

Brecht recaptured the notion of the scene, really. Scenes are obviously something that in a play text is very obvious but isn't always very obvious in performance, and with Shakespeare's scenes, because he was done on an open stage and they flow, you don't always necessarily know where one scene goes to another. In the late nineteenth century Ibsen really wanted the whole play to be a continuous flow, so that you wouldn't say "why are we here now?" because scene two of *Doll's House* flowed, even though there's a little bit of a time gap, not a very long one, but scene two of *Doll's House* flowed so naturally from scene one that it's as if we were just being shown exactly what we needed to know to tell the overall story and indeed in late Ibsen the plays become almost in real time. *John Gabriel Borkman* is in real time, although it's in three different places, in other words the length of time of the play is the length of time of the incidents it describes. Now Brecht said no, what we want to do is for people to ask questions constantly about what's going on, and one of the questions I want them to ask is "why have we moved from this scene to that scene?" So in *Galileo*, which moves about all over Italy, why have we now moved from Padua to Venice, why have we moved from Venice to Florence? We've moved here because I want to tell you something else about what happens which relates to what's about to happen, to what happened before. That's the reason for the placards, so we're now going to look at this thing that happened and the great expression Brecht used for that was showing the knots. Ibsen didn't want you to see the knots, Brecht absolutely wanted you to see that, and crucial to that is the idea that the scenes should be quite different from one another. Again, Ibsen writes lots of plays which are in the same place, in the same house; he wants it to feel consistent and coherent. Brecht wants you to say "oh, this is a different sort of storytelling happening in this scene" and one way of doing that is to have in the middle of the scene some great fuck-off thing around which the message of the scene revolves. One very good example of that in *Galileo* is the scene about the telescope. Galileo has discovered that the moons of Jupiter go round Jupiter, by looking through the telescope, and that means, because in the medieval period they thought that the earth was at the center of the universe and that all the stars were on these great invisible crystal spheres, sort of glass spheres, and obviously if moons, if a heavenly body went round Jupiter that would smash through the crystal spheres. "January 10th, 1610, Galileo abolishes heaven" is the title of the scene, and he's wanting to convince the Grand Duke of Florence, who is ten, of the truth of this so he brings him in, and this telescope is sitting in the middle of the room waiting for the Grand Duke to look through it. Everybody in the scene, except Galileo, is stopping the Grand Duke from looking through the tele-

scope. There's a philosopher there, there's a mathematician there, and they're saying we need to have a discussion about whether these stars could exist, what is the meaning of this prospect, and he keeps saying just have a look through the telescope and nobody ever looks through the telescope. So this telescope sitting in the middle of the room - and what do you do to a telescope – you look through it - becomes the scene in which no one looks through the telescope. Now obviously one way of doing that scene would be with the telescope next door, but no it has to be on stage and that's a fairly classic example of a Brechtian *Gestus*, which is something that defines a scene in one single, often visual image.

Verfremdungseffekt:

That leads us effortlessly to one other thing that it might be important to say a word or two about which is the notorious alienation effect, the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which I actually think is not a very helpful translation, as a much better word for it is the estrangement effect, as it also connects that effect with lots of other things that are happening in Weimar and in the early part of the twentieth century generally, in literary theory, in music and in many other places, in the visual arts, which was the idea of making strange. The idea of making you look at things - Wordsworth "to bring the charm of novelty to the things of everyday" – that you'd actually look at things, and look at things fresh. One image that Brecht has for that is driving a Model-T Ford, one of the first mass-produced cars, and if you drive a Model-T Ford you are apparently reminded that a car proceeds by explosions, that's what is actually happening, explosions are happening very, very fast, but of course you're not aware of that driving a contemporary car, unless it's mine. So what you do, by making strange, is you're looking at processes that seem natural, like for example we look at the processes of the market, and say that these seem natural, the only way that you can possibly run society, but then you analyze it, you notice, in a play like *Mother Courage*, that pursuing the market is actually going to destroy you and your family even though you're doing it in order to preserve and help you and your family. So you look at these processes and think isn't this weird and then the idea of course is that you then say "ah, well this is weird, there must be another way of doing things, I wonder what that is, I see, it's communism", and that's the message. And in a way – is Brecht post-modern, another terrible jargon word – but in a way you could see post-modernism, that takes things apart but doesn't put them back together again, in other words post-modernism is very interested in making strange, in making you look at things differently, but it's interested in doing that to make the point that there is no logic, that fragmentation is the condition of humankind, whereas Brecht wasn't interested in that, he was interested in taking the watch apart to see how it works, and then putting it back together again so it can tell the time in a new way.

On Brecht's falling out of favor in Western Europe:

Brecht wanted a communist society, he went back to East Berlin, he wanted to be living and working in a communist state. His arguments about the fact that the East Germans offered him what he wanted, which was a theatre ensemble, which wasn't on offer anywhere else in the German language... well, that's what he was and that clearly was something that after 1989 was no longer on the historical agenda in any way, I think that is true. I also think that a lot of the things that

we call Brechtian became clichés; they became clichés because people did them again and again and again. He was the great director of the twentieth century; those things, when they were first done, were electrifying, completely different from anything that had been done before, did what he said they would do, *did* force audiences to look at the world in a new way and I think he tends to get blamed, perhaps he should be blamed, for his ideology, although it was the spirit of the times, but I think he reinvented the language of play-making. What was interesting about Deborah Warner's very engaging and exciting production of *Mother Courage* [2009] was that its design was kind of Brecht in inverted commas, in, I thought, quite a clever and deft way: that it did actually use the signs but that they were was done in a different way with huge writing actually on the set in some cases, so it was a kind of joke on Brecht which I think Brecht would have enjoyed himself.

In answer to the question as to whether Brecht will endure, as opposed to having made a particular point at a particular time:

Well, he was trying to do that and one of the theories that we were bashing against in the '60s and '70s was the idea of "great playwright, pity about the politics", and that somehow there was this contest between Brecht writing these wonderful, great characters - we keep coming back to these two plays, but it's for a reason, *Galileo* and *Mother Courage* - and that they were in contest with the play, that Brecht was trying to constrain them within a political message, but actually they were too big for it. A normal, proper, nice play was breaking out of these terrible constraints which this mad Marxist was trying to impose on them, despite his own talent. I don't buy that at all and I think particularly with the two plays that I've worked on that the moral complexity is the point. If Mother Courage didn't have the equipment, the psychological, the political equipment to realize how she was achieving exactly the opposite objective from the one she set out to achieve, if she didn't have that equipment then the play would be of no interest; it's the fact that she *could* change her mind, she *could* act differently, she was of a scale as a human being to do that, that is the point of the play, and I think that's also true of *Galileo*. I think those great plays will continue to work and function. Seeing *Mother Courage* in the current context, it is also about how war destroys society, and you say "oh, you know, Brecht wrote an anti-war play, does the Pope have a funny hat?" but actually we were then going through two wars, fought for the best possible motives, certainly the people who were promulgating them felt that very strongly, not understanding what wars do to society, and what wars do to societies is they eat them up, they destroy all the social institutions which allow you to rebuild. That's what happens, that happened in the Thirty Years' War absolutely classically, which was the *Mother Courage* war, and it happened in Iraq, and it's happening now in Afghanistan.

On Brecht's influence:

A lot of my generation of writers in the '70s used that - and probably me, Howard Barker, and Howard Brenton more than anybody else, but also some of David Hare's work and so on - used the Brecht box of tricks and tried to update it. The difference with us is an interesting one actually, and it was partly an anti-Brecht thing, we wanted to write plays in contemporary society. Most of Brecht's great plays are written in the past - and in some cases, like *Caucasian*

Chalk Circle which is set in the Caucasus in the Middle Ages and *The Good Person of Szechuan*, which is set in China, quite a long time ago and quite a long way away - and that makes it much easier for them to be revived, whereas we were writing plays set in contemporary England as a kind of point of principle, which is one of the reasons, there are various other ones obviously, like the fact that Brecht is a genius and I'm not, why his work has survived so strongly.

In answer to a question from the audience on the difficulty of the Lehrstücke for contemporary audiences:

I think one of the problems with the *Lehrstücke* is that they're also the most uncompromisingly Marxist, and Marxist-Leninist of the works, so a lot of their message we would regard as an attack on humanist sentimentality which borders on "dump your comrade because he has petit-bourgeois instincts". So I think they're quite alien to us now, they're probably an interesting corrective.

In response to an audience member who wondered whether there was any relationship between Brecht's work and Edgar's own adaptation of Nicholas Nickleby and whether there could be such a thing as "revolutionary catharsis":

There's a further sort of twist to that because the production of *Nicholas Nickleby* that I did the adaptation for was a very Brechtian production [1980]. It was on a junkyard set, you were constantly made aware that the actors were actors, and it ended in a way in a critique, or an attempted theatrical critique: we were asking whether Dickens is bringing everybody together at the end, in Orwell's famous phrase, with ten thousand pounds a year, all problems are solved by ten thousand pounds a year, lots of children living in the country, a house with ivy on it, and above all no work. It was a very self-consciously Brechtian treatment of that. Brecht wasn't a great Dickensian, he was a fan of some quite odd people to be a fan of. He was a great detective novel reader, he was a great fan of Kipling, which informs *Man is Man*, so he himself was a great adapter and I was certainly modeling on that so that we could bring our own perspective to the Dickens' story.

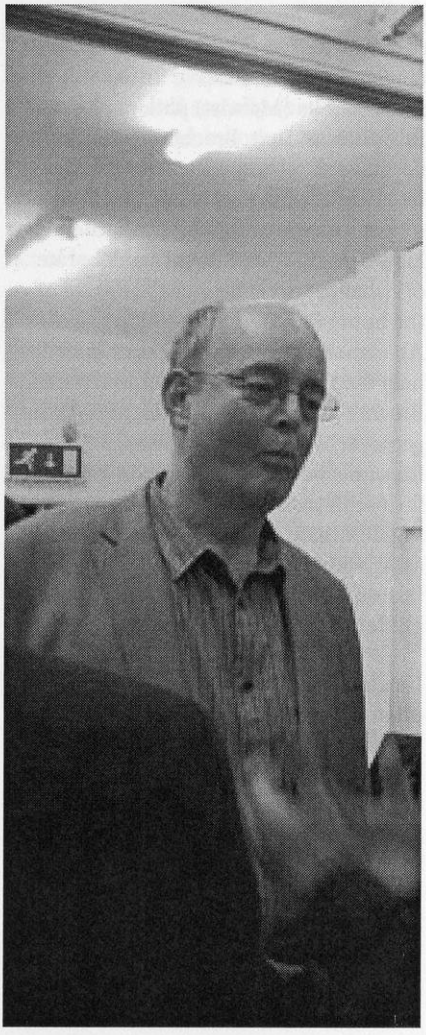
What's interesting, if you do work on Brecht as intimately as you have to when you're translating him, is that the repertoire is very similar, the scenes are constructed more like Shakespeare scenes than Ibsen scenes - an absolutely classic example of a *Gestus* would be the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet* which ends up with the brother and the lover of a dead woman having a fistfight in her open grave, disrupting the ceremony of the funeral; the open grave would be a classic example of a *Gestus*. People talk about twelve-tone music as if the notes are different, it's not that, it's the same repertoire of work but Brecht is inviting you to do different things with that repertoire. And so you get a production like the production of David Hare's version of *Galileo* at the Almeida Theatre [1994], where he takes out all of the titles of the scenes and it does become different. Obviously if you know the play you know what's going to happen but not being told what's going to happen in the scene... they're just, they are scenes that operate like scenes operate. And the other thing that we haven't really talked about is the relationship between Brecht the playwright and Brecht the director, and because he was a director of his own work there is a sense that there's a kind of seamlessness between those two things which is quite exceptional, and so if you take Brecht the director out of a particular Brecht play there is also a

liberating opening-up of the possibilities that you have for doing something different and new with it.

Finally, in response to a question from the audience about notions of justice:

There's a late poem by Brecht which is *To those who come after* and there's a line in it which says "we who wanted to lay the foundations of kindness / could not ourselves be kind" and I think that it happens, particularly in the post-Weimar work, in the later work, when Brecht is aware of the contradictions of communism in practice, that he does realize that it's not doing what it says on the tin. He accepted the Stalin Peace Prize and he had to make all kinds of accommodations with the East German regime, but I think he became increasingly interested in – and in a way it goes back to the *Lehrstücke* as well, which are also about how horrible you have to be to bring about the revolution which will make a society in which people can be kind to each other - the kind of paradox which he dealt with hugely in plays like *The Good Person of Szechuan*, the terrible temptation of goodness. The idea that under capitalism, if you're good, it's bad for you, and that's also at the heart of *Mother Courage*. So I think there was a contradiction there, it wasn't just "we need to bring about a just society", it wasn't Agitprop, and even the *Lehrstücke*, the very hardline plays, have a kind of paradox or an irony at their core and I think that's what makes it continually contemporary, and that's a dramatic thing too, that's kind of what you're watching , and I think that is something that can carry on even if the particular circumstances under which he was writing have changed.

David Edgar's plays include *Destiny*, *Maydays*, *Pentecost*, *The Prisoner's Dilemma*, *Playing with Fire*, *Testing the Echo*, and *Entertaining Strangers*. His stage adaptations include Albie Sachs' *Jail Diary*, Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*, and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, *Albert Speer*, based on Gitta Sereny's biography of Speer for the National Theatre, Julian Barnes' *Arthur and George* for the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Ibsen's *The Master Builder* for the Minerva Theatre, Chichester. He is the author of *How Plays Work* and President of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.



A Short Organum on Ideology: Brecht on the Bourgeois *Weltanschauung*

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Since its initial publication in 1949, Brecht's essay, "A Short Organum for the Theatre" has proven an indispensable resource for understanding his 'epic theatre.' It was written to familiarize students of the theatre with its basic concepts like *gestus*, *Verfremdungseffekte* (estrangement effects), its narrative form, and its (Marxist) philosophical foundations. In it, Brecht stresses the necessity for theatre to overcome the fetters of the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* in order to enlighten the audience. However, this piece does not elaborate on what precisely he sees the nature of the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* to be. An elaboration on this theme can better help the theatre practitioner understand Brecht's own attempts at shattering bourgeois ideology and provide a framework for understanding ideology, in general, for use in their own efforts at overcoming dominant ideologies. Therefore, this essay reconstructs Brecht's conceptualization of ideology to serve as a practical guide.

Brecht's thoughts on ideology are often fragmentary and found scattered throughout many sources. Still this theme continually reappears throughout his copies theoretical writings and musings. Among other places, it can be found in his journal entries, many of the essays collected in *Brecht on Theatre*, embedded in *The Messingkauf Dialogues* and in various fragments found in *Brecht on Art and Politics*. Brecht's persistent attention to the topic demonstrates its centrality to his philosophy. From these sources, four prominent themes emerge.

First, for Brecht bourgeois ideology serves particular interests, not universal ones. It is not, as is claimed, good for everybody. Particularly it serves the interests of the ruling class at the expense of the working classes. He states, for example, "the question 'what is true' can no longer be resolved without the question 'whom does this truth benefit'" (Brecht, et. al., 2003, p. 111).

Second, Brecht sees the bourgeois worldview as historically and locally determined. Historical conditions create particular worldviews. Specifically, for Brecht this determination results from the particular social relations of an epoch. He states, "people's consciousness depends on their social existence" (Brecht, 1965, p. 35) and "social being determines consciousness" (Brecht, Rorrison & Willett, 1993, p. 231).

Third, Brecht believed that the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* obscures contradiction and seeks to present a unified totality. When discussing the bourgeois theatre, which Brecht argues is simply a reflection of bourgeois ideology, he states, "[t]he bourgeois theatre's performances always aim at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization…None of this is like reality" (Brecht & Willett, 1992, p. 277). Brecht sees this obscuring of contradiction as a means toward bourgeois totalizing. He states, "the society in which we live is such that we are dependent on assimilating things, and thus on methods that specifically turn all things into objects of assimilation" (Brecht, et. al., 2003, p. 104). Brecht envisions a bourgeoisie that seeks to hide itself within the totality, to hide its particular interests. For example,

he says that "our bourgeoisie thinks it is mankind" (Brecht, Rorrison & Willett, 1993, p. 12) and the bourgeoisie is "eagerly and desperately occupied with achieving a new totality" (Brecht, et. al., 2003, p. 97). The reason the bourgeoisie attempts to create a totality is obvious for Brecht; he believes that it is done as an "attempt to give lasting shape to specific proposals of an ethical and aesthetic nature, and to confer on them a final, definitive character, in other words, the attempt of a class to give permanence to itself and to give its proposals the appearance of finality" (Brecht, et. al., 2003, p. 98).

So how does the appearance of finality come about for Brecht? This questions leads to Brecht's fourth characteristic of ideology. Brecht sees the sedimentation of ideology in the language the ruling class uses. Art for example is, according to Brecht, a "skill in preparing reproductions of human beings' life together such as lead people to a particular kind of feeling, thought and action" [sic] (Brecht, 1965, p. 95). Bourgeois art and more generally bourgeois language lead people to certain feelings, thoughts and actions. These feelings, thoughts and actions are of course beneficial to the bourgeoisie and help maintain the bourgeois order. Because of this Brecht believes, as he states in his 'Short Organum' that "[s]ociety cannot share a common communication system so long as it is split into warring classes" (Brecht & Willett, 1992, p. 196). In other words, for revolutionary social change to happen the subaltern classes cannot rely on the language of the exploiter. Elsewhere in the 'Short Organum' Brecht states, "[w]e know that the barbarians have their art. Let us create another" (Brecht & Willett, 1992, p. 189). For Brecht, a new language must be developed—one that is free from the classifications, differentiations, methodological assumptions, assertions, logic, conclusions, etc. of the bourgeoisie's language. It is only by removing the bourgeoisie from language that one will be able to achieve the non-historically determined, i.e. real 'Truth' according to Brecht. It is because of this belief he states, "[e]pistemology must be, above all, critique of language" (Brecht, et. al., 2003, p. 94).

This essay has reconstructed Brecht's thought on ideology. In summary, Brecht conceives of a dominant ideology which: 1) serves the particular interests of the ruling class, not universal interests, 2) is historically and socially conditioned and is, thus, not an innocent reflection of objective phenomenon, 3) obscures contradiction and attempts to project a unified totality and 4) is in part a product of language.

It is hoped that this elaboration of Brecht's thoughts on ideology will assist theatre practitioners and others in understanding Brecht's attempts to shatter the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* and provide a general framework for understanding ideology which can be used along with Brecht's "A Short Organum for the Theatre" when attempting to counteract hegemonic ideologies.

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Mercy Killers: Actor, Writer, Activist Michael Milligan Takes his One-Man Show on the Road

Andy Spencer

Mercy Killers: Written and performed by Michael Milligan

Van Fleet Theater, Columbus, OH
February 20 – March 10, 2013.

Studio Theater, Stella Adler Studio of Acting, New York. Presented by Working Theater and the Harold Clurman Laboratory Theater Company, directed by Tom Oppenheim
January 6 – February 2, 2014.

Performances attended March 2 & 7, 2013 & Feb. 1, 2014

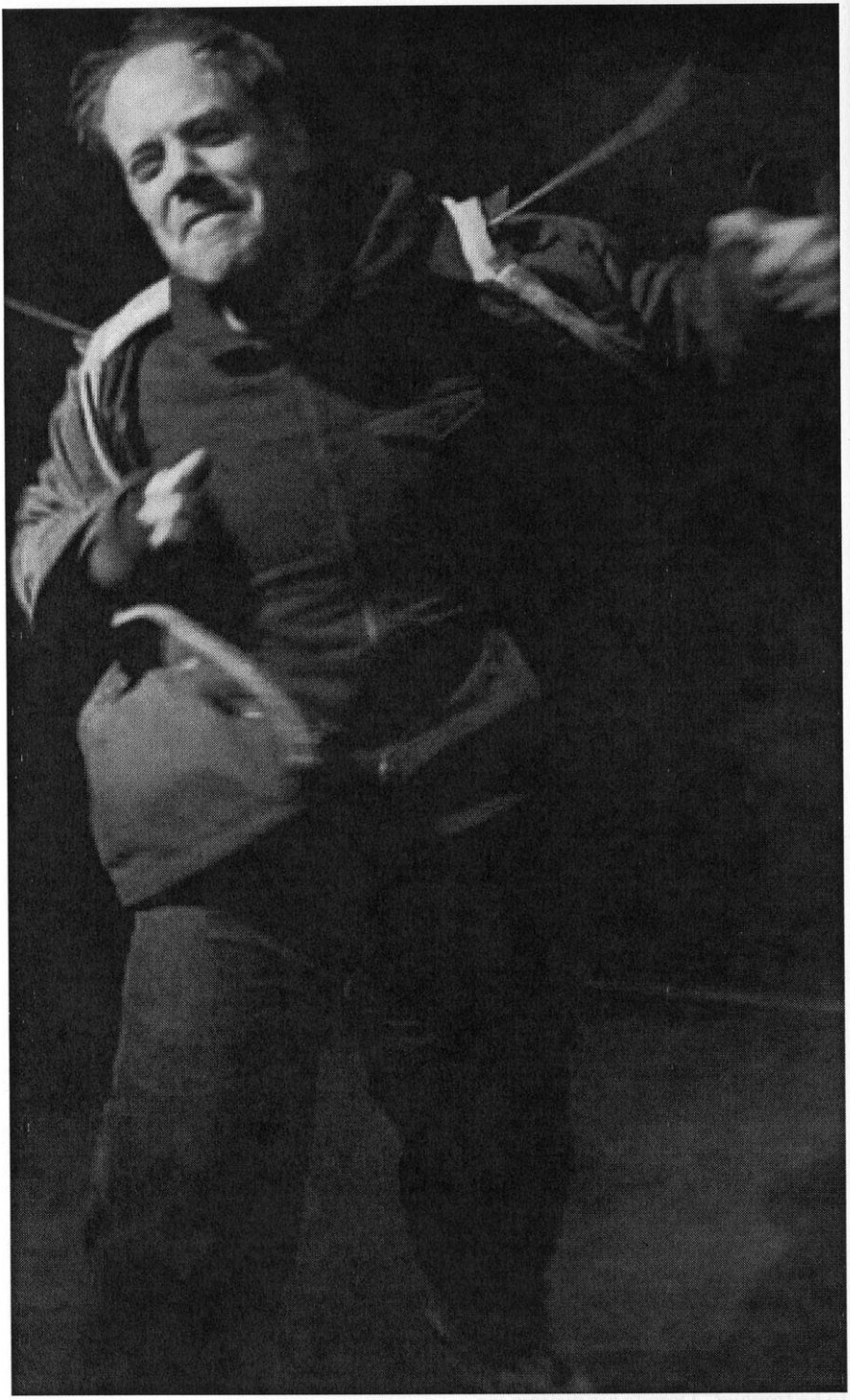
Sometimes things just fall into your lap. On a bleak Ohio evening in early March my wife and I set out to take in a performance of an original one-man play we'd never heard of, performed by an actor/writer equally unknown to us. A couple of hours later, mightily moved by what I'd just seen, I was doing my best to communicate my admiration for the work to the man himself, Michael Milligan, whilst at the same time trying to explain what *Communications of the IBS* was, and prevailing upon him to find some time for an interview. He agreed. I returned for a second performance, we met a few days later, and I wrote the whole experience up. Job done, except that it wasn't, because although I had duly mentioned Michael's hopes for taking *Mercy Killers* to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in the fall, I couldn't know then that not only would he do just that, but that he would be returning from his Hibernian adventure with a five star review from *The Scotsman* in his pocket (a "mesmerizing" example of "theatre distilled to its most basic essentials"), along with a Fringe First Award. Nor could I know, or he for that matter, that almost a year on I would again be sitting in the audience as Michael finished up a four-week engagement at the studio theater in the Stella Adler Studio of Acting on 27th Street in New York, a run which marked the off-Broadway premiere of the work.

Having the opportunity to see the play again after a long interval, to see how it had been tweaked and tuned into an even more powerful work, brought this whole experience full circle for me. In the intervening period I had only been able to keep abreast from a distance, but even so, I felt as though I had been along for the ride, which is why my relief at the final appearance of this article will be tempered by a certain rueful feeling, as this part of the ride is over, for me at least, brought to a halt by a looming deadline. For Michael, on the other hand, the ride promises to go on for a good time to come, such has been the play's resonance. Many is the time that I sat down to revise this, only to have been overtaken by events, to the point that it became obvious that it would be foolish to think that any version could be fully up to date come the time of publication. So this is really more of a snapshot, the original report replete with updates. And a few irresistible additions, such as the following response to the New York production from Mark Rylance, who caught the play on his day off from performing in *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* on Broadway: "At one point during *Mercy Killers* I found myself with my hand to my mouth, and tears in my eyes,

as the tragedy of the play's central character, played so credibly and movingly by Michael Milligan, came to a particular climax. This play is like a classic Greek myth, it could happen to anybody... anybody not rich enough to buy their way out that is. There is a horrifying simplicity, familiarity, to the events that lead to the destruction of this working man's life. You feel a deep brotherhood with him and this is what makes the play so very moving. I recommend it to anyone who enjoys great acting and drama which truthfully and faithfully reflects this world we live in. It will most certainly leave you thinking how did we get here and where are we going to go now."

But back to that March evening in Columbus...

As the lights dim we hear Woody Guthrie's *This Land Is Your Land* before the theatre is pitched into darkness and the ragged voice of the dispossessed gives way to the sound of a police siren and the gloom is slashingly illuminated by hiccupping red light. When the lights go up on the bare stage, furnished only with an institutional desk and chair, we see Joe, already in full agitated flow: "What did you say? I'm in trouble? Thank you officer for letting me know I'm in trouble. Come on, come on man, you gotta be kidding me, like I fucking wet the bed or something, don't give me that shit, like I stole your fucking donut. You don't know what trouble is. Trouble is you got something growing in you, eating out your insides. Trouble is coming home, twelve hour grind from the shop and the bank's put your bed and couch on the front lawn. This is supposed to be trouble, sitting in the slammer getting three squares a day and the doctor's gotta take care of me if I get sick? That's supposed to be trouble?" Despite his distress Joe makes it clear that he's only too ready to cooperate; "but you're gonna get the whole story." And over the course of the next hour the unseen officer in the police station and we in the audience do get the whole story as Joe, a caged-up ball of anger, resentment, remorse and confusion, takes us through events which have led to his arrest and present "trouble". It's an emotionally compelling rollercoaster of a ride, thoroughly convincing in its evocation of Joe, a good-old boy auto-mechanic from small-town south-eastern Ohio who has pretty much always played by the rules, never asked for hand-outs, prided himself on his independence and who has, as his buying into the auto-shop indicates, been fueled all along by his determination to make something of himself for the great love of his life, his wife Jane. Until, that is, Jane is diagnosed with breast cancer and everything starts to unravel. The human cost of this calamitous development is wrenching enough, but the dramatic momentum of the monologue derives from its ringing indictment of the American health-care system, which drives the stricken couple inexorably closer to despair, bankrupting them along the way. Looking to economize in the face of mounting medical bills, they sell their house and move temporarily into a trailer park; encouraged by a broker's promise of a variable-rate mortgage that can't fail, they buy a smaller property only to get saddled with payments higher than ever come the housing crisis; then Jane contracts a staph infection while in the hospital undergoing reconstructive surgery. Unable to keep up with the insurance payments, Jane's care is entrusted to the county hospital. The couple enjoys a brief respite as the illness goes into remission, only to finally sink into the depths of despondency once it returns and the bills continue to pour in. Milligan explores



Joe's feelings of guilt for somehow not having done enough to prevent things unfolding as they have, while Jane can see just one option remaining to her. Only in hindsight does Joe realize that his wife had been thinking about suicide for some time: While he is away trying to sort out the hospital bills, vowing in a particularly heart-rending tirade that he is "going to do it all alone if I have to", she overdoses on pills and then calls him to come home and "help her out", which he does, hence his transfer to the police station. A mercy killing: Joe has "helped her out" because that's what the dying Jane asked him to do. The "mercy killers" of the title, however, are literally the killers of mercy, the faceless corporations and bureaucracies which have brought the couple to this tragic impasse. Corporations may remain faceless, but it is a rare work which gives the consequences of their actions such devastating and palpable form.

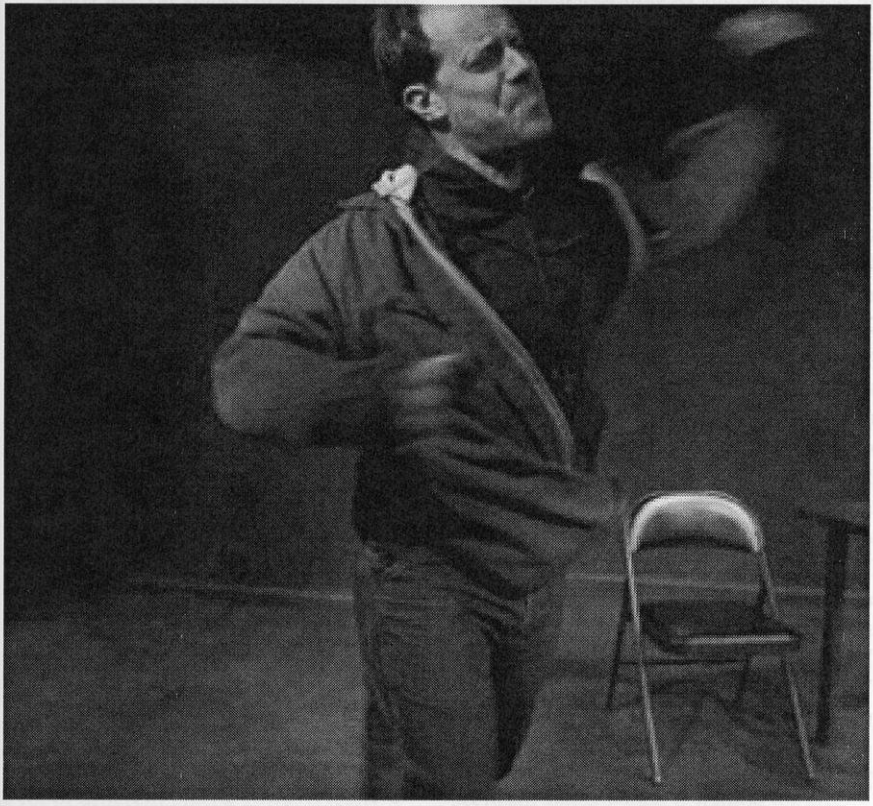
And then, following the free performance, following most performances, a discussion featuring Michael and, depending on the location, a representative of a regional health-care reform advocacy group – in the case of the Columbus performances which I saw, the Single Payer Action Network. Unlike the stilted conversations one sometimes experiences at such talk-backs, the stories and questions flowed as audience members, clearly affected by Joe's story, unburdened themselves of their own tales of horror and wanted to know what could be done to prevent them happening to others. In conversation a few days later, Milligan told me that such stories, of which he's now heard many, can be "alternately very inspiring (...) and sometimes very uncomfortable (...) There have been people in the audience who, during the discussion, bring up something, an example from their personal life, and they might feel very upset and that's uncomfortable for people who might be in the audience who haven't had any kind of experience like that (...) who aren't involved in any way in health care reform or aren't even progressive." The discussions bring together people who might otherwise not have anything to do with each other, maybe not even an interest in theatre - the audiences I was a part of drew equally from theatre folk, activists, and others interested in the subject matter. Evidence for these discussions resulting in a "productive dealing" with the issue was on display both nights that I attended. One example will have to suffice: In the play Michael deftly introduces an element of doubt as to the couple's precise marital status as Joe tells the interviewing officer that although Jane may be his ex-wife on paper, they were married to the end. It later transpires that as the couple's options were reduced to one, namely Medicaid, they were forced to divorce, as otherwise the sum total of their combined incomes, pitiful as it was at this point since Joe had essentially stopped working in order to take care of the avalanche of forms they were being asked to complete and the bills they were trying to pay, would have precluded their eligibility for the benefits program. Unaware as I was, I thought this plot development something of a reach, until during the ensuing discussion the gentleman in front of me told of a close relative of his who had been forced into exactly the same situation and had divorced his wife of over twenty years in order that she might become eligible. Even then they make you wait ninety days, although no illness pays any attention to that detail. The debilitating setbacks which Joe and Jane experience are in no need of invention: Joe's story of how Jane was denied coverage by

their insurer because she had been tardy in returning a routine form requesting information about her recent employment history, a form which they had received late because its arrival coincided with their temporary residence in the trailer-park, likewise comes from testimony, in this case testimony offered before Congress during the health-care debate. Milligan also told me the story of a unionized steel-worker who, following a performance, recounted how the entire labor force at his plant had been laid off, to be rehired with fewer benefits. In the meantime, a colleague had been diagnosed with cancer and was subsequently denied coverage because her illness now constituted a pre-existing condition. The man had become so emotional during the telling of the story that he had to get up and leave. But, and most importantly, the conversation continued in his understandable absence.

The immediate inspiration to write *Mercy Killers* came, as Michael explained during the discussion following the play, when, in the summer of 2012, he found himself suffering terrible pain in the middle of the night. "I diagnosed myself with kidney failure. Then I looked up how much it was to go to the emergency room. It was $8,000, so I stayed home. As I lay there in excruciating pain at 3a.m. I thought to myself, 'Oh, this is what it's like to be uninsured in America' (...) I later found out that I had passed a kidney stone, but for someone else, it isn't kidney stones, it's cancer or something else life threatening. So I had the kernel of the idea for the play before that, but that event triggered me to put it down on paper. I downloaded books and I read everything I could about the health care industry. I talked with people about their health crisis and I talked to doctors so that the material was accurate."

The task that Michael had set himself was to take the statistics and translate them into a performance which "would really spark (...) empathy and outrage". Statistics such as those which tell us that around 60% of all bankruptcies in the US are the result of medical debt, and that at the onset of their health crisis the majority of people who go bankrupt actually have health insurance. That 49% of all foreclosures are related to medical debt. Or the statistics which show us that despite performing poorly in comparison with other industrialized nations when it comes to major health indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and immunization rates, the United States spends more than twice as much per capita ($8,160) on health care. The organization Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP) lays the blame for this squarely on our "patchwork system of for-profit payers" which squanders millions on "overheads, underwriting, billing, sales and marketing departments as well as huge profits and exorbitant executive pay." In other words, on things which have nothing to do with health-care. The catastrophic, dehumanizing effects of such a system are captured poignantly by Michael when we see Joe beating himself up for having made their predicament about the other person, about Jane, for having occasionally played with the idea that it was all her fault: "It's not her fault, but I don't live with AIG." Or when at the end of the play Joe makes the starkly humane plea: "When you're dying you shouldn't be worried about starving, about bringing those around you down."

Attendant upon this, Joe's dawning recognition that the system which he had always championed unquestioningly does not, in fact, work in his best interests, leads him so see through the tissue



of self-deception. Often touted ideals of self-reliance, ideals which Joe himself had routinely parroted prior to Jane's illness, are punctured: When well-meaning friends at church organize a bake-sale to help defray Jane's medical bills they commend themselves on their community spirit, and Joe is grateful, but the $163 which they raise does little to help with medical bills of half a million dollars. The critical situation turns Joe into the sort of auto-mechanic he never wanted to be, adding phantom charges to bills or inventing work that has to be done on customers' cars, playing on their fears: "You wouldn't want the brakes to go out when your daughter's driving would you?" How else to pay the bills? Early in their marriage they had each been able to laugh about the "eccentricities" of the other, Joe and his affinity for listening to Rush Limbaugh in the shop, Jane and her dream of starting an organic garden after the pair had stopped at an Amish farm. But later, when the bills are piled so high that there's no getting out from under them, Jane's desperate attempt to find relief through alternative remedies only embitters Joe's mood: "Course, Jane's trying, you know, some diet thing she read on line. She's like on this crusade, gonna beat it with garlic and peppers and, breathing. How's that, living in the most advanced civilization in world history, trying to beat back cancer with a clove of garlic and bottle of tabasco sauce."

As he begins to tell his story, Joe somewhat sarcastically apologizes to the cop: "I don't mean to bore you – this is my life man. The details are important." The details are indeed important and the way

in which Michael so skillfully weaves them into Joe's story help to give the play its harrowing authenticity.

Mercy Killers is not Michael Milligan's first foray into writing, although it was acting which he studied at university and then at the Juilliard School, where he won the John Houseman Award for excellence in classical drama in 2001. 2005 saw an important breakthrough when he took over from James Urbaniak and T. Ryder Smith in DR2 Theatre's acclaimed original New York production of Will Eno's *Thom Pain*. Broadway roles followed, including 'Little' Charles Aiken in Tracy Letts' long-running *August: Osage County* (2007-09), De Bries in David Hirson's *La Bête* (2010-11), and a "raver" in Jez Butterworth's critical smash *Jerusalem* (2011). All the while, however, he was writing his own plays: "As a professional actor I struggle with the role of a hired gun, with the distance that actors and other creative people have from the inception of a project. You go to an audition, you have an agent, casting directors, you find yourself out in the countryside of the United States of America performing in certain kinds of plays that are the accepted fare of regional theatre and after a while you start asking yourself what is this, this next production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is that really what I want to be doing?"

The writing "really started with Shakespeare at Ohio State, in a class on performing Shakespeare, where the teacher was explaining to us how the average Elizabethan had this amount of words in their working vocabulary and ours is much less and Shakespeare had 60,000 or whatever it was and that Shakespeare's plays were thus a product of that particular culture and that's something which we couldn't really do. For some reason that came as a challenge to me (laughs), almost like an insult to our human potential – you know, the best is behind us. So I wrote a sonnet – we were supposed to memorize a Shakespearean sonnet and recite it to the class, so I wrote my own and tried to pawn it off as a Shakespeare sonnet and her immediate response was "Which one is that? Which number is that?" and I said that's Number One baby (laughs). But it really was an incredible experience, because before I had had an impossible time reading Shakespeare, it took me a long time to develop my ability to read it but the attempt to write a sonnet unlocked it for me and that grew into this project which I spent six or seven years on and which was also inspired by reading Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* – it's based on the myth of Phaeton and it's written in a classical style, observing the unities and in iambic pentameter."

The resulting *Phaeton* was given a reading at the Harold Clurman Lab Theater in New York featuring the talents of such luminaries of the stage as Joanna Lumley, the afore-mentioned Mark Rylance, and David Hyde Pierce, all of whom had starred in *La Bête*: But that's not the end of it: "There's actually going to be a staged reading of that this summer at Shakespeare's Globe in London (laughs), which is the only venue in the world that could be interested in it. I gave up my seat last Christmas on Delta, twice, so I have a thousand dollars in travel vouchers to go hear this staged reading at the Globe!" And while we're on the subject of stars such as Lumley and Rylance, Michael has a further anecdote: When the two arrived in New York following *La Bête*'s run in London, they learned that the New York production company had somehow managed to arrange health

insurance for everybody else in the cast but not for the two stars. When it was explained to them that things were in the process of being worked out but that in the meantime they couldn't go to the hospital they simply stared uncomprehendingly: "What do you mean we can't go to the hospital? What happens if we get sick?" Well, precisely.

Less audacious works than *Phaeton* which have also seen performance include *Heroine, Urgent: Alien*, a musical adaptation of *Aesop's Fables* for Circle in the Square, and an adaptation of Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*. However, it is in *Mercy Killers* that Michael has been able to bring his various interests together: "When I was at Ohio State I was in a show my senior year by Lanford Wilson called Poster of the Cosmos, it's a one-person show and construction-wise I borrow from the conceit of a confession [for *Mercy Killers*], a man talking to the police, and I took that show to the Edinburgh Festival in '95 and I did it in a lot of different places. It was a really important sort of laboratory for me, just trying to figure out the nuts and bolts of acting for myself. As I've developed my own political thoughts on things, *Mercy Killers* is the way that I could combine those three different roles of performer, writer, and citizen. It's also, in addition to the play, and the content of the play, this experience of how the play is being produced and for me that has to do with free space, circumventing the usual layers of things you have to break through to get something in front of people, and in the theatre that has to do with the building (laughs). If you're on Broadway you've got the Schuberts and the Niederlanders and they hire out the space, they rent it out at these enormous prices, so if you're a producer that's front money, so you've got to come up with the money for that, so you've got to pick something that you know is going to... so then you go get your Hollywood star or some other gimmick thing so that you can sell enough tickets in advance so that you can cover yourself. And that leaves the actors divorced from the process, except again as hired-on persons.

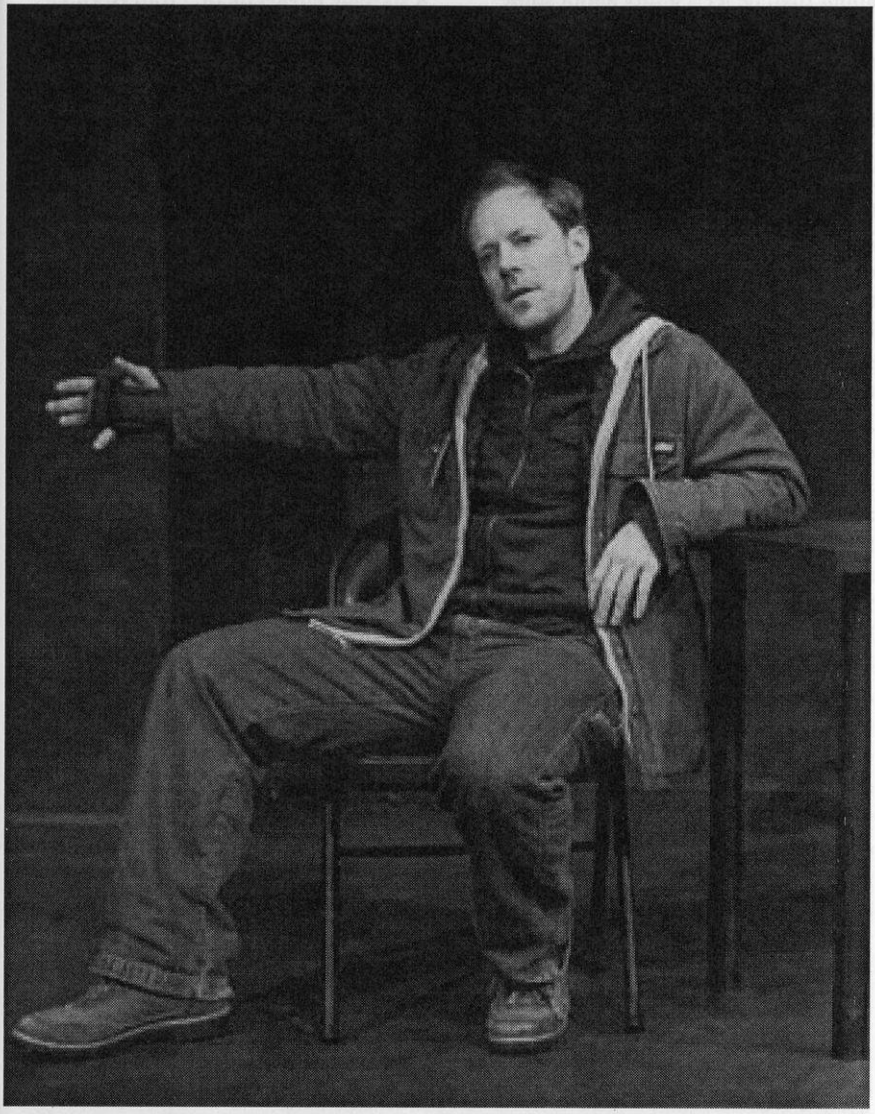
"So this is an experiment, I think, in generosity, and believing in the power of generosity. I started off by saying, here's a free play, I'm offering this free play, and I contacted Single Payer Action Network - I experimented while I was in Minnesota, working there at the Guthrie, I collaborated with the Minnesota chapter of Health Care for All. I was doing a new Christopher Hampton play called *Appomattox*, which deals with the end of the Civil War and then a hundred years later with the passage of the Voting Rights bill, and on my day off I was performing *Mercy Killers*, and the irony was that at the Guthrie I was performing on something called the McGuire proscenium stage, which is named for Dr. William McGuire who was the head of United Health and when United Health went private he ended up with a billion dollars, so it occurred to me that a play which deals with things in as straightforward a way, as *Mercy Killers* does, in terms of indicting certain things in our system... I don't think that it will be offered on the McGuire proscenium stage! When I've been doing these free public performances around Ohio the spaces have been provided for free. I wanted to have a base from which I could travel around so I rented the theatre in Columbus. When I went up to Shaker Heights on Monday, to the community center there, the Single Payer Action Network reserved that space. I played for free and then I passed the hat around at the end, and I can say whatever I want, and if the

audience doesn't like it, they don't like it, they don't have to give me a donation (laughs), no one has to give me a donation but inevitably someone likes it and so you end up with a lot of dollar bills in the donation bucket and then someone's thrown in a hundred dollar bill."

The novel approach has so far yielded encouraging results. The original New York performances in November, 2012, at Harold Clurman, were staged in collaboration with the New York chapter of Health Care Now, but based on what it saw the national organization stepped in and arranged for a performance in Philadelphia and is looking to do the same in Washington DC. Michael is also returning to Rochester, Minnesota, where a planned outing at the Mayo Clinic there in autumn 2012 was cancelled over concerns that the work might be too political. This time around the student PNHP group has organized a protest performance off campus and State Senator John Marty is hosting a special performance for Minnesota State Legislature and Staff: "Very silly business with the Mayo. We don't think of censorship happening in this country, but it does. It's all very polite, no one is beheaded or sent to a camp, but the silence is the same."

And then there's Dayton, Ohio: "A nurse came to a performance in Dayton. She was an activist, but she convinced the CEO of her hospital to come to a performance. He received the message of the play and kept mentioning it to her after the performance, wondering if there was a way he could have a performance for his administration. However, he was concerned about the language. I drop a lot of F-Bombs in the piece and he runs a 7th Day Adventist Hospital! The nurse suggested I imagine the police officer was a woman and then, maybe Joe wouldn't swear so much. I experimented with this in performance and actually found it to be a valid choice: that a part of Joe's conservatism is that he doesn't allow himself to swear. It's interesting, swearing is a natural relief valve - a way we have to release the build-up of tension. So, if Joe doesn't even allow himself that little release, because of his pride, then, that's an interesting choice. Also, I would very much like people who might normally be put off by the language to see the play, I'm not a purist in that regard. I don't believe in the sanctity of my writing, that people have to come into my temple and take what I'm offering. I'll bend my rules a little bit if that will get me in front of people who I think need to see this. Of course, I learned this from Odysseus. The Trojan Horse style of art. Once they let me in the door.... "

Following our conversation in March, *Mercy Killers* was featured in the soloNOVA arts festival in New York in May, the first production of the play to be directed by Tom Oppenheim, the Artistic Director of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting, where Michael moonlights as an instructor in Shakespearean performance. "Tom and I are collaborating on the further development of the piece. Meeting and looking at it, seeing how to continue to shape it, perfect it, both in terms of the acting and the writing. Right now, we're working on really removing anything in the piece that smacks of soap-boxing. Making sure the words and sentiments are Joe's and really making sure I'm not using Joe as a mouthpiece for my own left-wing proselytizing. This requires a kind of faith in the power of Art. Present the unmanipulated truth and let people have their own response. Tom is hesitant to be called the director because I already created the piece and 'directed' it myself. I'm trying



to convince him that the piece has a lot of room for improvement both in terms of the writing and performance and that I would be happy to give him the titular honor of being called the 'director.' Either way, we are collaborating on the piece and it is very much in the spirit of the mission of the Harold Clurman Lab Theater." As exciting as this is, new ideas for the performance are not solely the result of the collaborative process: "Interestingly I feel so bonded with Joe that sometimes [during a performance] he'll say 'Now this is what you've gotta say right now. This is what Joe has to say right now.' So it'll come out differently and then I can't always remember what it was." (laughs) Right now it's the question of Joe's guilt which is fascinating Michael: Joe is being questioned because he's suspected of being guilty of something, "but he doesn't feel guilty

about that, he feels guilty about something else." As he performs the piece in different locations he's looking for ways to get underneath this "guilt", to truly get inside it.

And then after soloNova it was off for the two-week run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August, the success of which did not, of course, go unnoticed in the theatre world, and upon his return to the U.S. a whole slew of performances were quickly lined up by the curious, including a double-bill of Mercy Killers and Lemon Andersen's *County of Kings* at New York's Lucille Lortel Theatre in September, five shows at Chicago's American Theater Company in early November and, as mentioned at the outset, the four-week run at Stella Adler, which was itself followed by a week in the Bronx and a week in Queens. All of this on top of an earlier organized November trip to Nevada, where two performances in Grass Valley were sponsored by Health Care for All, and California, where a fourteen-stop tour was supported by a number of organizations, primarily Campaign for a Healthy California (CHC). In an e-mail, Cindy Young of National Nurses United, the prime mover and organizer of the California tour, described it as a tremendous success, both in terms of the reception accorded the play, and the number of new members CHC was able to sign up. Being back in California also gave Michael opportunity to check in on the progress of the filmed version of the piece, work on which started a week after we spoke. A preliminary filming of the play with a USC film school grad and activist has been completed and it's in the process of being edited.

The first half of March will see Michael touring Colorado and at the end of that month he heads out to West Virginia for a six-date engagement. From April 23 – May 4 he'll be at the Pillsbury House Theatre in Minneapolis. Depending on the progress of legislation, the shelf-life of the play is up in the air: "It can be updated with the same core story; there can be details which shift and change. I can do it for a couple of years, but it can also be the kind of thing that if I get hired to do *Othello* in Washington DC I can go work and get my health insurance weeks (laughs) from my Equity contract and then do the play on my day off and then maybe stay a week or two, do a run of it wherever I might be."

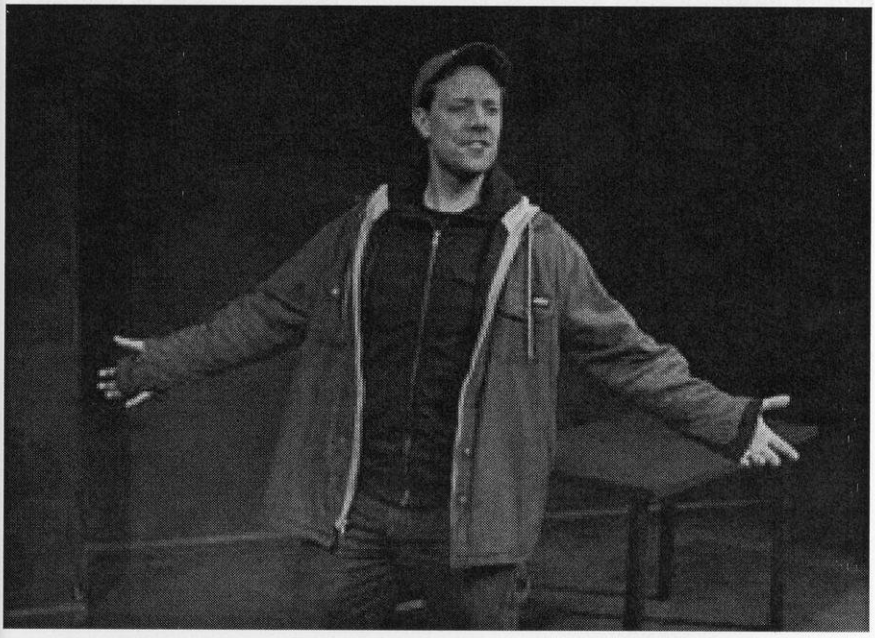
And all of this traveling around has also brought him a newfound appreciation for the home-grown theatre-scenes around the country, such as he's experienced in Chicago, Minneapolis, DC, and in mid-size cities that "are developing their own local voices and local talents". It used to be taken for granted that New York was the logical place to which a young actor needed to relocate, but now Michael is not so sure that that's still the case: "In some ways I think it's tougher to make a living today in New York because the cost of living is so high. And I think that's changed – I think there was a time, in the 70s and earlier, maybe the 80s, when you could decide 'I'm going to go to New York to be an actor', which means you lived in Alphabet City or on the Lower East Side and you had a part-time job and you could meet your costs of living by taking three or four shifts as a waiter, but then you'd have the other time, you'd have extra time to be involved in some avant-garde theatre downtown, whereas now people go to New York after getting their MFA, graduating, whatever, they go to New York and they have a 40 hour a week temp job around which they're trying to have a career as an artist, and we accept that as

being just how you do it, you work hard, you make it, but I don't think so. I think that part of being an artist is free time, having free time and accepting that you have to miss out on other things because you're deciding you want that bohemian lifestyle, but you can't really have a bohemian lifestyle without the availability of low rent. We should have that, if we want really to have artists we should have public housing or something, but aside from public housing there should be some place where you go and you say, 'okay, I'm going to pay 300, 400 dollars a month and live with eight dudes and mice, because it's worth it to me.' But even those opportunities are fewer and farther and farther out of Manhattan so that you're also adding to the sacrifice by having to go through a two hour commute every day. So when do you actually have the time and space to be an artist? If you spend all of your time in a corporate office as a temp worker, when are you actually being an artist? Aside from just on your Facebook page?"

So you can expect to see Michael Milligan in a town near you sometime in the not too distant future, hopefully for *Mercy Killers*, but if not then perhaps for a new work: "I have some other one-man shows on the docket because I enjoy the medium, I enjoy the freedom of it. I've got one in mind that I'm tinkering with about a guy who loses his job, he's a Wall Street guy who loses his job and finds himself on unemployment and each little scene is his week, what he's been doing, he's keeping maybe a web-blog or something like that and he's recording what he's been doing over the course of his weeks off and discovers that he has a soul (laughs), so sort of challenging our puritan work ethic, that actually there's great benefit to leisure time." But whichever play it is that you see, don't overlook the donation box at the end of the evening.

http://mercykillerstheplay.com/

Photos by Lia Chang

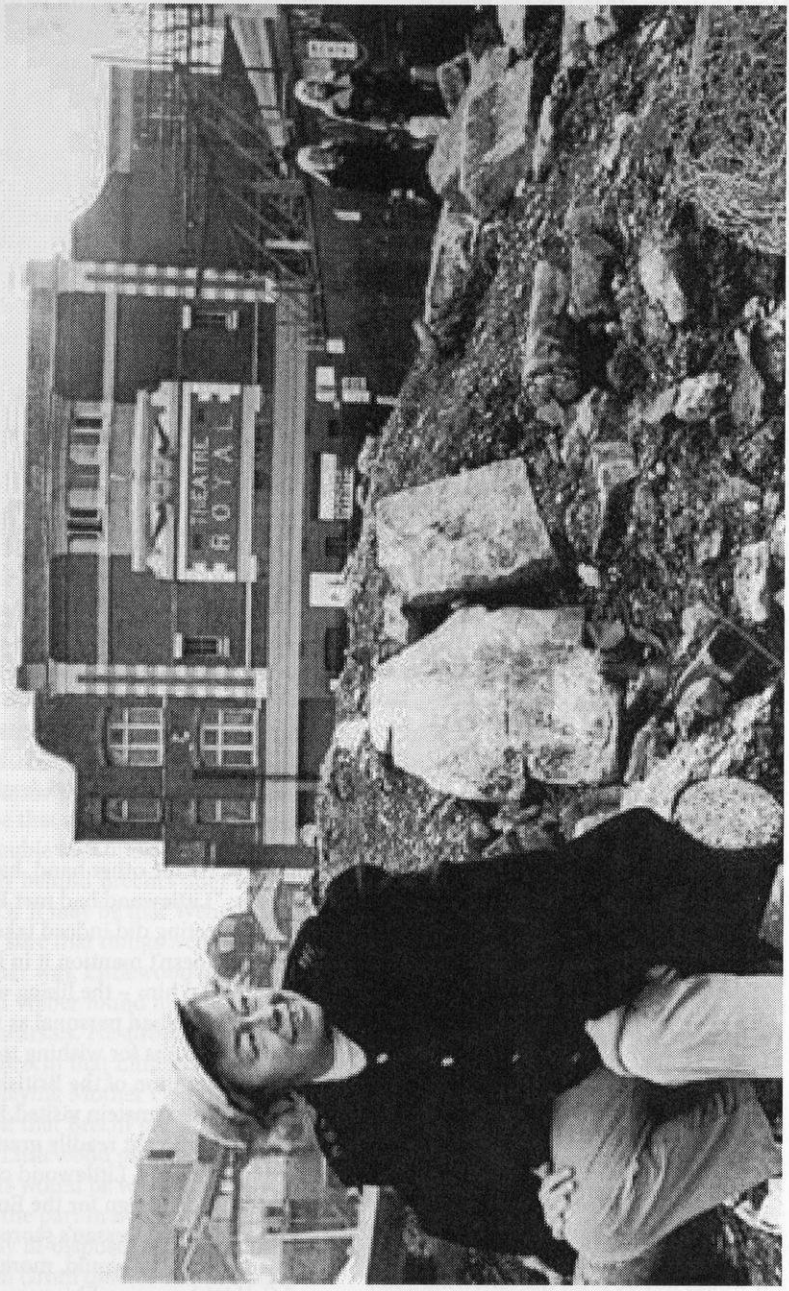


Public Appeal Launched for Joan Littlewood Statue

Andy Spencer

In one of many tributes planned for 2014, the Theatre Royal Stratford East in London's East End is engaged in raising money for a sculpture to honor the memory of renowned theatre director and writer Joan Littlewood, who died in 2002. A towering figure in the history of progressive theatre practice in twentieth century Britain, Littlewood cut her teeth in the agitprop scene of the 1930s as a leading member, along with Jimmie Miller (who would later re-invent himself as the folk-singer Ewan MacColl), of the Theatre of Action and then the Theatre Union. Their activities included working with Ernst Toller during his time in England in 1935, producing Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna* in support of the Spanish Republican cause, staging Hašek's *Good Soldier Schwejk* based on Piscator's adaptation, and creating *Living Newspaper* productions on topics grabbed from the headlines. Following enforced inactivity during the war years, Littlewood refounded the company as the Theatre Workshop Company in 1945. The Workshop travelled relentlessly, performing in halls and theatres the length and breadth of Britain and touring West Germany in 1947, Czechoslovakia and Sweden in 1948, and Scandinavia in 1951, before eventually finding a permanent home in the distinctly unfashionable Stratford East in 1953. Landmark productions followed including revivals of *The Good Soldier Schwejk* (1955), *Volpone* (1955) and *Edward II* (1956), and new plays including *The Quare Fellow* (1956) and *The Hostage* (1958) by Brendan Behan , the "kitchen-sink drama" *A Taste of Honey* (1958) by Shelagh Delaney, and *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T' Be* (1959) by Frank Norman and Lionel Bart. Ever a thorn in the side of the establishment, and perennially denied funding of any kind, the Theatre Workshop was nevertheless invited to the International Festival of Theatre in Paris in 1955, 1956, 1959 and 1960, and to Zürich and Moscow in 1957. Numerous productions developed at Stratford were transferred to the West End, a double-edged sword in the long run as it increased the pressure on the company to create "hits", never one of its guiding principles.

2014 is a particularly auspicious year as not only would it have marked Littlewood's 100th birthday, but it is also, of course, the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, and it is the work which Littlewood created about that conflict which will forever be associated with her name: 1963's *Oh, What a Lovely War!* Hugely popular, the play transferred to Wyndham's Theatre in the West End and toured internationally – surely one of a very small number of plays to have been performed in both East Berlin (at the Maxim-Gorki Theatre) and on Broadway (Broadhurst Theatre). In 1965 it shared the Paris International Drama Festival prize with Peter Brook's production of *King Lear* and won the Evening Standard award. The 1969 star-studded film version, directed by Richard Attenborough, did not meet with Littlewood's approval and she had her name removed from the credits – interested parties would be better served tracking down *Sparrers Can't Sing* (1963), the film which Littlewood directed based on the Theatre Workshop's production of the

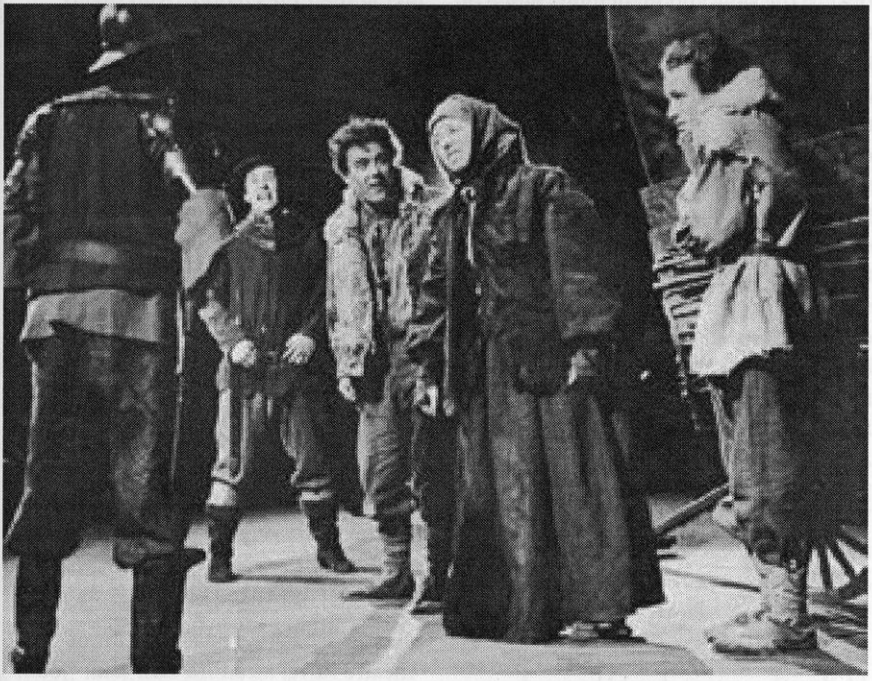


Stephen Lewis play. Revivals of *Oh, What a Lovely War!* and *Fings Ain't Wot They Used T' Be* (both under the direction of Terry Johnson) are scheduled for February/March and May/June 2014 at Stratford East, while the National Theatre is producing *A Taste of Honey* in March and April, starring Mike Leigh alumnae Kate O'Flynn and Lesley Sharp.

More than any other, it is *Oh, What a Lovely War!* which has prompted many a commentator to talk of the Brechtian influence in Littlewood's revue-style, montaged work, although the director herself was always careful to maintain a distance from Brecht, citing as her greatest influences the movement theories of Rudolf Laban and his ideas on the naturalistic preparation of actors, agitprop theatre of the 1920s and '30s, and 16th century Italian commedia dell'arte. In her hugely entertaining, but doubtless equally unreliable memoir, *Joan's Book*, Littlewood recalls discussions as to possible productions in 1947: "[Set designer] Bill Davidson suggested Brecht's *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* but Brecht, like Sartre, never seemed to know exactly what he was saying. *Round Heads and Pointed Heads*, as the argument collapses, becomes almost anti-Semitic. In *Mother Courage* his admired heroine is nothing but a cheap Jack, profiting from the country's war. Better to use Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the war over the way you crack your egg, for instance. Make a play from that." Nevertheless, a mere eight years later, in July 1955, Littlewood, perhaps influenced by having seen the Berliner Ensemble in Paris in either 1954 or '55, was the first director to bring Brecht's work to the English stage, mounting a Theatre Workshop production of that very same *Mother Courage* at the Devon Festival in Barnstaple. The experience was not a good one for Littlewood; "dreadful" is how she described the production thirty years later to the writer Peter Thomson. The play was seen by very few people and soon withdrawn from the repertoire - it would not be until the following year, when Brecht's own production came to the Palace Theatre in London, that *Mother Courage* really came to the attention of the British theatre-going public. (1)

Preparations for the Theatre Workshop production had been inauspicious: On the eve of the trip to Devon two of the company's leading men had been lured away by the bright lights of the West End, leaving a distinctly bitter taste in Littlewood's mouth and forcing her to reorganize the company's future program. Thus it was that she gave up the plan of both directing the play and playing the lead role: "I gave Mother Courage to a good actress and got on with the job." The problem was that Brecht had granted performance rights on the understanding that Littlewood would be playing the role and when he heard of developments he threatened to withdraw permission: "I took over twenty-four hours before curtain up. I had no choice." In typical fashion, Littlewood attributes her lackluster performance to a distinctly down-to-earth reason: "I might have got away with it but for that ****-**** hen. I had to pluck it in the first scene and it was stinking. The smell from its backside turned my stomach. Mother Courage had to stop herself vomiting for wellnigh half the play."

Thompson, on the other hand, has his own ideas: "Littlewood had met Brecht [if such a meeting did indeed take place, Littlewood doesn't mention it in her memoir], liked him – the liking was mutual – and so had personal as well as political reasons for wishing to bring him to the attention of the British public. When Oscar Lewenstein visited Berlin on her behalf, Brecht readily granted performance rights. Littlewood could make use of the design for the Ensemble production and of Dessau's score, he volunteered; and he would, moreover, send Carl Weber, one of his young directors, to assist with the production." So far, so good, but here opinions begin to differ as to the reasons for the falling-out - Thompson goes on: "Both



Lewenstein and Brecht were acting on the understanding that Littlewood herself would be playing the title role. That had, indeed, been her original plan; and it may be that an awareness of the scale of the double task of director and leading player lay behind Brecht's offer of Carl Weber. Or it may be that Weber was sent to make sure that things were done properly. Either way, Littlewood wanted none of it, and Weber found himself excluded from rehearsals. He also had to report back to Brecht that Littlewood was no longer playing Mother Courage. It was at this point that Brecht put his foot down – either Littlewood played the part or the rights would be withdrawn. Forced to learn the part in a hurry, and temperamentally ill-disposed to such authoritarianism (from outside the company, at least), Littlewood was ill-prepared and probably resentful. Her own stubborn survivalism put her in touch with an ambiguous aspect of the character she played, but she could neither sing the part nor, in the event, pace it. The fourteen-strong company that made the trip from Stratford East to Barnstaple met with the kind of cool reception that has been all too common in British productions of Brecht's plays.

"The fairy-tale outcome of the Theatre Workshop production of *Mother Courage* would probably have been rave notices for Littlewood and a national tour. A socialist theatre ensemble would then have been responsible for forcing the British theatre establishment to take notice of Brecht. Such an outcome was unlikely from the start. It is perilous enough to undertake *Mother Courage* with a cast of only fourteen. To undertake it in the headlong fashion that was Littlewood's forte is to court disaster. Theatre Workshop rehearsals were explosive, volatile and, at best, inspirational, but they were not discursive. The atmosphere was more often confrontational than reflective – an extreme con-

trast to the slow and meticulous mode of rehearsal at the Berliner Ensemble, with their long pauses for discussion and the apparent detachment of the creator-director. *Mother Courage* is altogether too deliberate a play to benefit, in the normal way of Theatre Workshop productions from Littlewood's interventionist theatricality. Given better conditions and more time, she might have made it work. She was, after all, a magnificent manipulator of improbable theatre. But she was at her best when working towards rather than from a text, certainly a text as monumental as that of *Mother Courage*. (...) *Mother Courage* was the only Brecht play performed by Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, and it was much more the idea than the practice of Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble that permeated her work at Stratford East."

Despite the unhappy encounter with *Mother Courage*, it should be mentioned that one positive by-product was that it was probably responsible for securing Littlewood's first invitation to East Berlin's Maxim-Gorki Theater to direct Miller's adaptation of *Lysistrata, Operation Olive Branch* (Unternehmen Ölzweig) in 1957. This proved a much more gratifying experience and Littlewood's recollections of the time spent in East Berlin in *Joan's Book* are again the source of some wonderful one-liners: On working methods: "I'd always wondered what a dramaturg did for a living and I soon found out. He undertakes the research which in the Workshop involves the whole company. The result is handed to the actors with a strong suggestion as to how the work should be interpreted." On the Text: "Certainly improvising was a lot easier than cutting the script. 'The text' was sacred and every word of Jimmie's draft had been conscientiously translated. What's more, the slightest cut was resisted; you'd have thought I was taking their life's blood." And finally, on sex: "The theatre of East Berlin was rather serious at that time and not very sexy. Brecht kept sex where it belonged – in the covered wagon. So Myrrhine giving her husband a sponge-down with cold water, when he desperately wanted to make love to her, brought the house down."

With or without the Brecht connection, the opportunity to celebrate the memory and legacy of Joan Littlewood is hopefully one which theatergoers, and not just those in London, will take to heart. The Theatre Royal has commissioned artist Philip Jackson to create a bronze sculpture, based on the iconic photo of the legendary director sitting on rubble outside the theatre, to go in nearly the same spot as where the photo was taken.

Kerry Michael, Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Stratford East said: "Joan Littlewood brought theatre to the people of East London and revolutionised the international theatre landscape with her bold and powerful productions. She was an inspiration to many and it's important that we recognise the significance of her work and build upon her success to inspire future generations. We're grateful to all those who have helped us raise nearly 60% of the funds required to commemorate her with a statue in Theatre Square and urge the public to get behind this important campaign."

Members of the public can pledge their support to the campaign and donate online at www.joanlittlewood.com

Photos: courtesy of Theatre Royal Stratford East Archive

1. Peter Thompson. *Brecht: Mother Courage and Her Children*, Cambridge, 1997.

Laban Revisited

While Joan Littlewood and Rudolf Laban were contemporaries, visual artist Jean Kirsten wasn't born until after the dancer's death. Nevertheless, Laban's legacy has influenced Kirsten's work of the last few years and in what follows the artist describes his investigations into the potential of Laban's ideas for the visual arts.

Jean Kirsten

Rudolf Laban: Visual Art and Dance

As a visual artist I have always been interested in knowing how other artists work with themes like rhythm, shape, and space. Since my studies in the '90s at the University of Fine Arts in Dresden, I have investigated intensively the works of the composer Carl Orff, the theater artist Einar Schleef, music pedagogue Jacques Dalcroze, who opened a school for rhythmic gymnastics in Dresden-Hellerau in 1911, and dancer Rudolf Laban.

Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was one of the most important and most charismatic personalities of German *Ausdruckstanz* or "expressive dance". He was a dancer, educator and choreographer, movement researcher, and inventor of the dance notation system which has been named after him - Labanotation. The list of his students includes famous names like Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, Lola Rogge and Dussia Bereska. Laban developed a system which enables us to identify various aspects of movement, to analyze and express them and to notate them in symbols. Today his movement principles build the basic repertoire for every dancer, choreographer, dance teacher or dance movement therapist. Laban combined his interest in the visual arts and architecture with his fascination for movement and the expressive potential of the human body. He examined the relationship between movement and space. Especially in the *neuer künstlerischer Tanz* ("the new artistic dance") movement, he was looking for regularities of inner motivation and outer expression.

From 1913 to 1919 Laban conducted summer courses in the artists' colony on the Monte Verita in Ascona in the Swiss canton of Ticino. It was during these years that, with the help of his wife Maja Lederer and pupils such as Katja Wulff, Suzanne Perrottet and Mary Wigman, he developed *Ausdruckstanz*. Perrottet and Wigman had already worked with Émile Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau. In Ascona Wigman first discovered the new expressive possibilities of "free dance" which, taking as its foundation Laban's visionary idea of movement, of the "tensions of gestural energy" unfolding harmoniously in space, would point the way forward into the modern age. (Giovanni Lista, *Occultism and Avantgarde. From Munch to Mondrian 1900-1915*. Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, edition terium, 1995.)

Inspired by the five platonic solids (tetrahedron, octahedron, cube, icosahedron and dodecahedron), Laban undertook inquiries into the moving body and its relationship to space. He called these studies "Choreutics", by which he means "Space Harmony", proceeding from the principle that movement in 3-dimensional space follows certain rules and that space and movement always build a harmonious unity. The first German edition of Laban's *Choreutik – Grundlagen der Raumharmonielehre* ("Choreutics – The Fundamentals of the Teachings of

Space-Harmony", in the U.S. as "The Language of Movement. A Guide Book to Choreutics") appeared in 1991. Therein the editor writes: "Of particular interest is the connection between the clearly presented grammatical and syntactical aspects of the language of movement, and their notation. We see how this language is of value not only for the dancer, the actor and the singer, but that it can also be of great use for the architect, the painter and the sculptor."

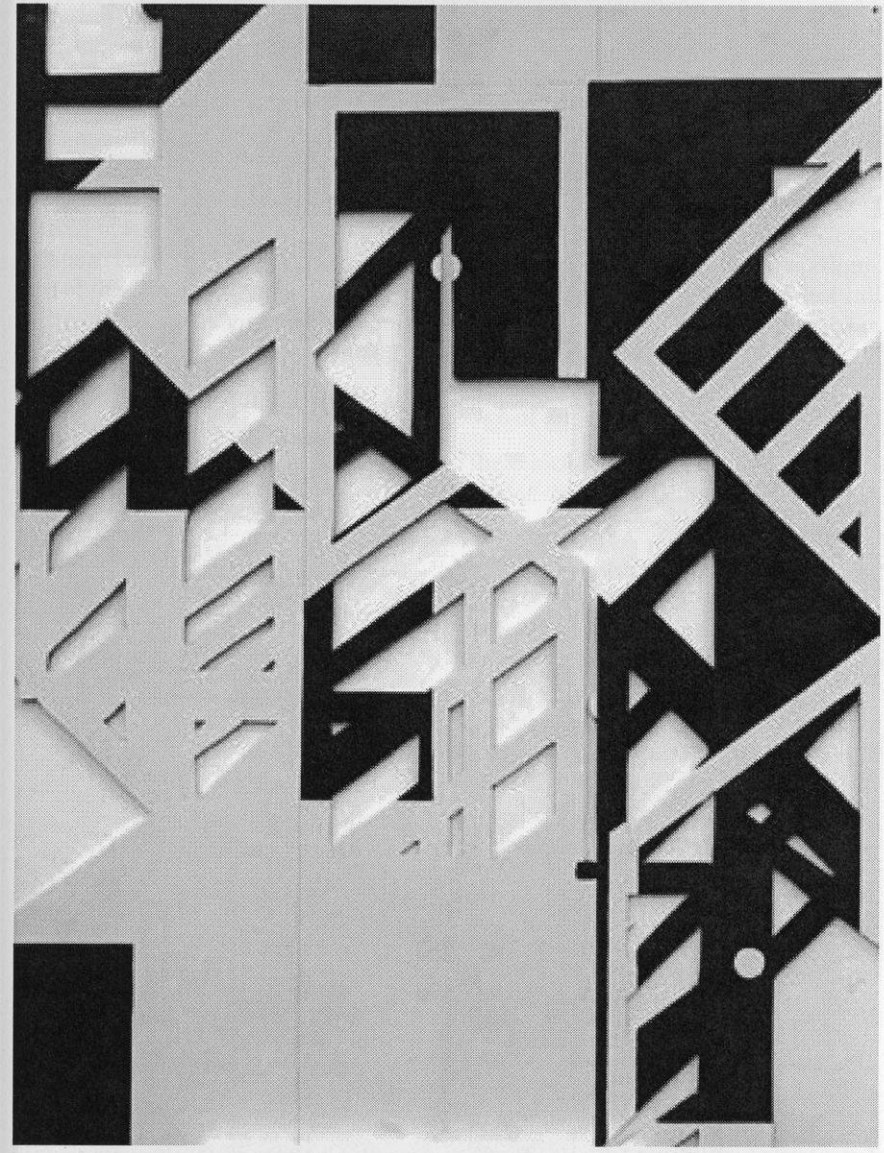
The Series *For L.*

In the field of "Eukinetics", the study of "harmonious movement", Laban inquired after the dynamics of movement. They can be structured in the components of flow, time, spatial orientation and the degree of muscular tension or relaxation, the strength ("weight") that a dancer needs to perform a certain movement. The space surrounding the mover will determine the movement and will therefore serve as an external stimulus to which the body will be required to adjust. Contrasting to the surrounding space is the "inner space" of the dancer. Here is where impulses and emotions exist and where "inner movement" originates. This inner movement is manifest in physical dynamics. Hence inner motivation will find an outer form that uses the space, but also has to adjust to regularities and the laws of gravity. Movement always happens between opposite poles of mobility and stability, between activity and pause, between exertion and relaxation, between symmetry and asymmetry.

Spatial orientation is provided by the dimensions, different directions and levels, planes and diagonals which build a challenging terrain for the dancer. Both inner sensation and outside space offer inspiration and take shape in the design and dynamic expression of the moving body.

In 2009 I met dancer, dance teacher and Laban specialist Sabine Fichter. She invited me to come to London and to visit her lectures in Laban Movement Analysis at the Metropolitan University. During this time I took more than 400 photos of the dancers and the group of students and I also started to read a lot about Laban's theories. For an exhibition in 2011 (*S. Tanzt*) I tried to use the photos like sketches for pictures. I worked in the medium of screen printing but also experimented with new techniques. I was looking for titles for the works in the exhibition and decided to use the space signs of Labanotation to describe the main movements in the pictures. I was so impressed by the decorative shapes of these signs that I started my series *For L.*

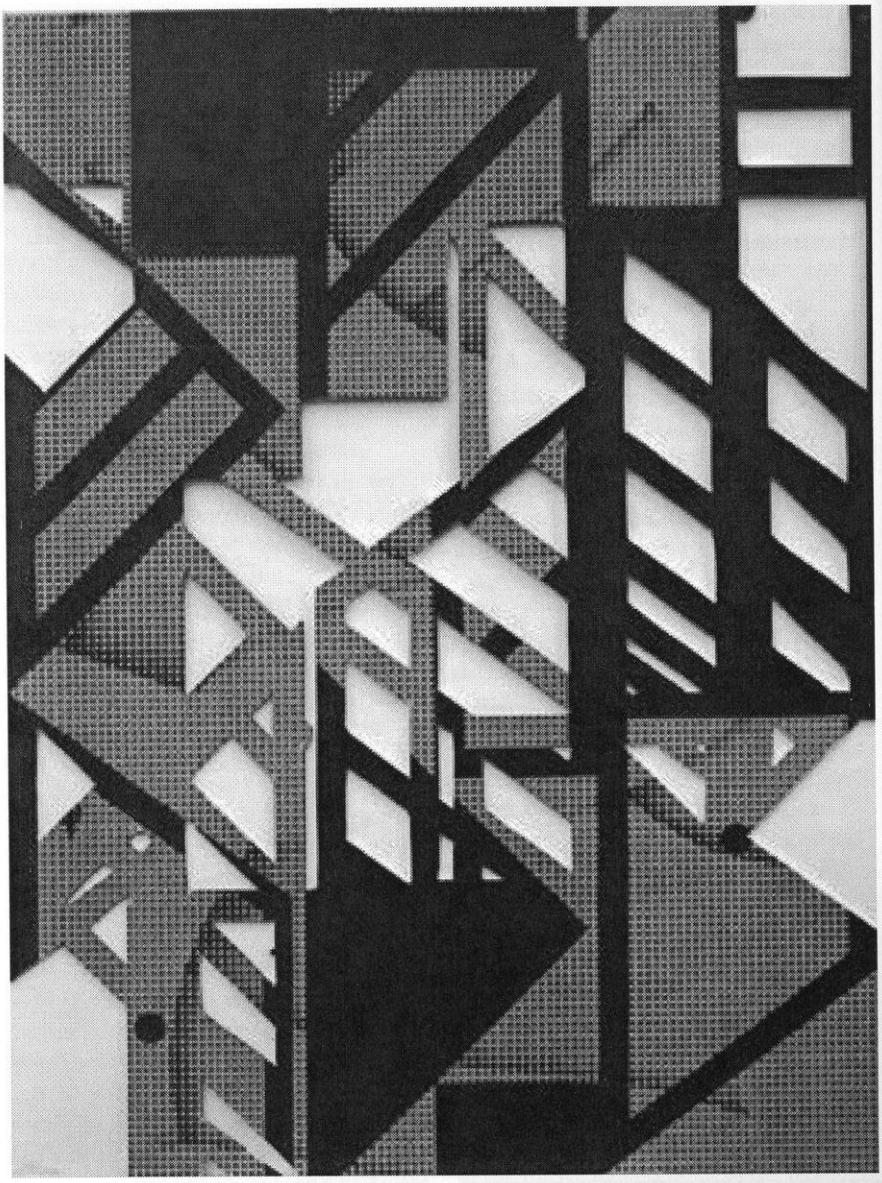
Working only with the space signs, I arranged the prints, drawings, paintings, reliefs and sculptures. At first glance these works look like abstract paintings, but people who know something about Labanotation will also find information about spatial orientation in them. For the R.L. project Sabine Fichter transformed the symbolized information of one of my paintings and created a dance piece. Since the symbols represent information on specific points in space they provide a frame work or "scaffold" for a sequence of movements, whereas the dynamic of the movements is open to the free interpretation of the dancer, as is the form of the movement itself. Thus, the visual art work is transformed back into its initial medium and the source of its inspiration, the dance. The project aims to unite two different art forms. It emphasizes the fact that perception and perspectives vary against the background



Works from series *For L.* 2011, ink, acrylic and screen print on hard board, (above, #34, 100 x 70 cm).
Images (ã VG Bild-Kunst Bonn)

of specific knowledge, experience or expertise in a certain medium, while the very essence of the art work remains the same. Therefore the process of transformation opens up new ways of seeing and perceiving the art.

In April, 2012, I exhibited *Serie für Rudolf von Laban* at the Galerie am Blauen Wunder in Dresden and later that year, at the invitation of John Yeadon, a painter from Coventry, England, who wanted to initiate an Arts Exchange with Dresden, I staged the exhibition *For R. Laban* at the Roots



Gallery in Coventry. When Laban left Germany for England in 1937 he sold most of his archive to Plauen. These materials are today in the Dance Archive Leipzig, in the university library on Beethovenstrasse, but while in England I took the opportunity to meet with some members from the Laban Guild for Movement and Dance and to visit the archive of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, where I had a chance to see Laban's own three-dimensional Choreutic models as reconstructed by Jeffrey Longstaff from the study of photographs of models made by Laban and Beatrice Loeb for the First Dancers' Congress held in 1927 in Magdeburg, Germany. Subsequently

to that, as part of the *Laban Event 2013*, in October of that year, I exhibited *For L* at the place where it all began, in the Sala Balint at Monte Veritá near Ascona. A month later Sabine and I were in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where *For L.* was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) in conjunction with a lecture/ demonstration which we mounted as part of the II. International Seminar in Strategies for Art and Education in Museums and Cultural Institutions.

In February, 2014, I will be staging an exhition at Weltecho Galerie in Chemnitz which will, in many respects, represenst a sort of summation of my work on Laban to date - Title: *Analyse* (Analysis). I am excited that Evelyn Dörr, author of *Rudolf Laban: The Dancer of the Crystal,* will be speaking at the opening.

Below: Sculpture for L.

Exhibited (parked outside) the 20th Annual Leipzig Exhibition in Westwerk, Leipzig, June, 2013.

Sculpture for L.

The vehicular form of Sculpture for L. is inspired by Laban's idea of Kinetography, or Labanotation. In this work I have used only the directional symbols of this dance notation. The seemingly abstract shapes on the glass surfaces actually describe a movement in space. Inside the vehicle are five objects which refer to the five platonic bodies. Together these form the basis of Labanotation: The dancer is imagined to be standing inside one of these bodies. At the same time directional symbols fix each of the individual points in space.

The vehicle, as a mobile object, is in no need of driving directions via GPS; its route is, as it were, pasted onto its skin.

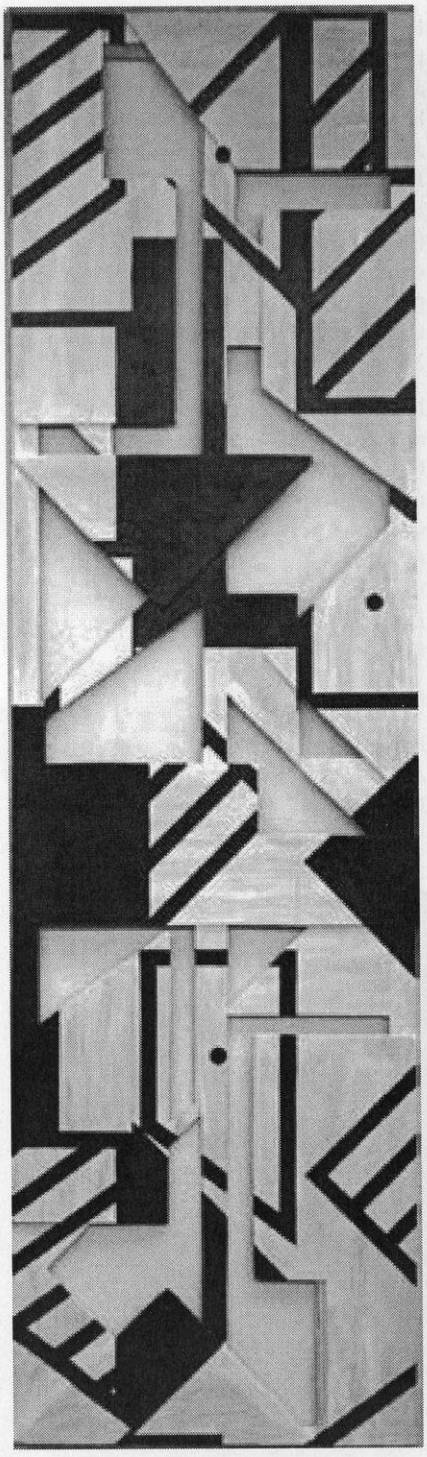
Jean Kirsten was born in Dresden in 1966. From 1990 to 1995 he studied painting and graphic art at the Dresden University of Fine Arts, followed by two years of postgraduate studies (Meisterklasse). From 1998 to 2004 he was an Assistant Professor at the same university. He has had more than 40 solo shows and participated in 50 group exhibitions in Germany and worldwide.

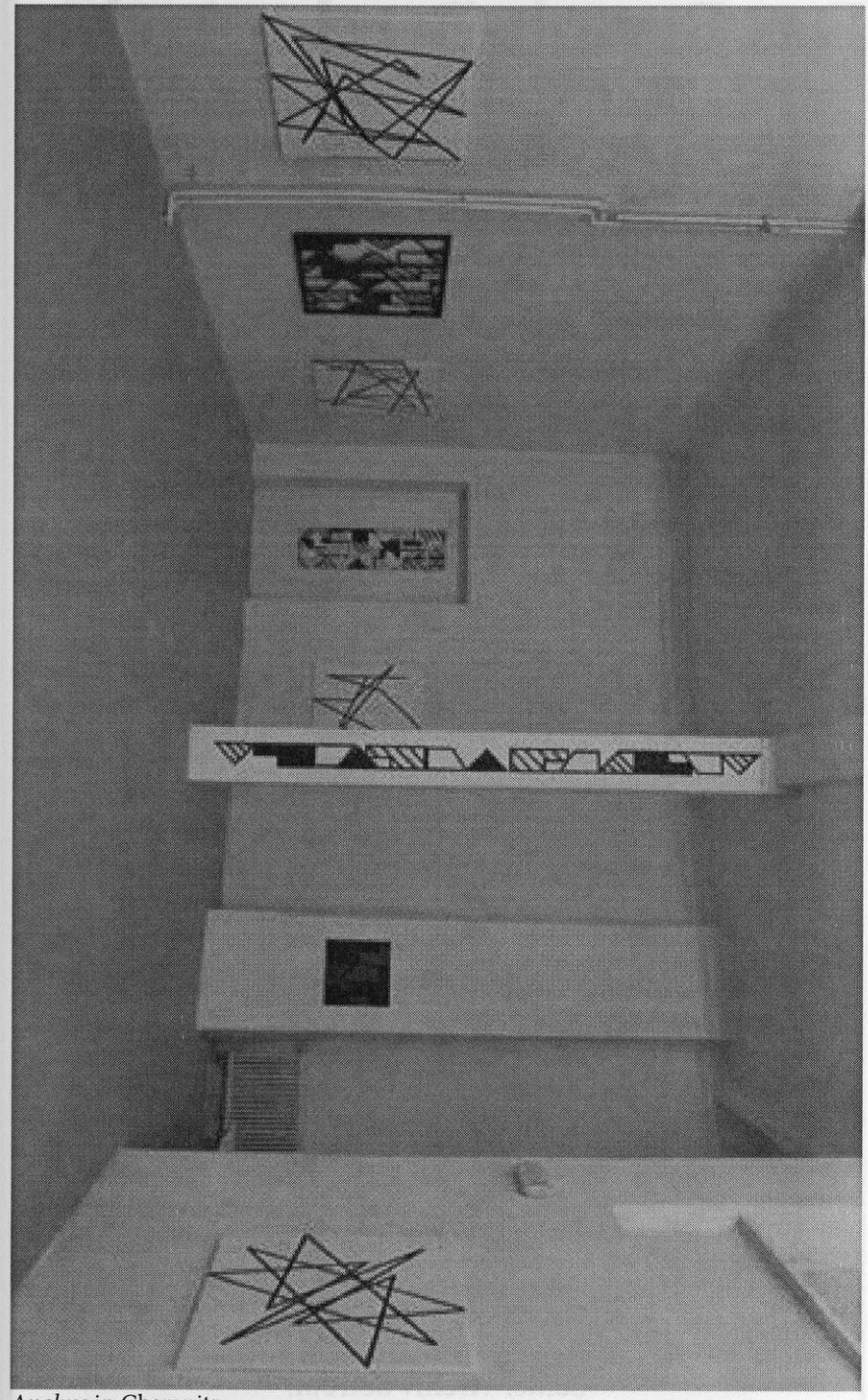
Sabine Fichter studied modern and contemporary dance in Düsseldorf, Berlin and at the European Dance Development Centre in Arnhem (Netherlands). She has danced with companies such as Neuer Tanz, Frey Faust Dance Company, Telos Dance Company, and Exis Dance, and presented her own choreographic work in Berlin, Kiel, Bremen and Dresden.

Certified as a Movement Analyst (CMA) by the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies (LIMS, New York) in 1997, she is now a guest teacher of European CMA training. In 2004 she received her Master's Degree in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and Somatic Studies from Surrey University, UK. Since September, 2004, she has taught somatic based movement classes, composition, and LMA at London Metropolitan University, the University of Limerick, Ireland, and the Palucca Dance University in Dresden, where she has also worked as a research associate for InnoLernenTanz. For the past 14 years she has been working as a somatic practitioner/movement therapist with children and adolescents at the Psychiatric Dept. of the Carl Gustav Carus Hospital, Dresden. Her main focus is on body oriented therapy for patients with eating disorders.

In 2012, Sabine was named director of the dance program at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy, where she teaches Laban based movement classes to dance and theatre students.

This text has been compiled from conversations with the editor, artist statements, and includes passages from an article I originally wrote for the Laban Guild's *Movement, Dance and Drama* magazine volume 32 no. 1 Spring 2013.





Analyse in Chemnitz

Das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv

Dr. Erdmut Wizisla, Leiter des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs der Akademie der Künste Berlin

Das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv wurde am 1. Dezember 1956 von Helene Weigel gegründet. Es beherbergt den umfangreichen Nachlass des Schriftstellers und Regisseurs. Eine Sammlung zur Rezeption ergänzt den Bestand fortlaufend. Der Gesamtbestand umfasst weit mehr als eine Million Dokumente.

Zum Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv gehören der Bereich Handschriften (Nachlass und Sammlung, mit Werkmanuskripten, Drucken, Tage- und Notizbüchern, Arbeitsmaterialien, Korrespondenz, fremden Manuskripten u. a.), die Archivbibliothek als Spezialbibliothek mit den Nachlassbibliotheken von Brecht, Weigel u. a., das Foto-Archiv mit Brecht- und Weigel-Fotos, den Archiven von Hainer Hill und Vera Tenschert sowie dem Foto-Archiv des Berliner Ensembles, die Theaterdokumentation mit Aufführungsmaterialien und Modellbüchern sowie Ton- und Filmdokumente.

1974 wurde das Helene-Weigel-Archiv gegründet. Am gleichen Standort werden außerdem das Hans-Dieter-Hosalla-Archiv, das Isot-Kilian-Archiv und das Gerhard-Seidel-Archiv betreut.

Gespräch mit Gisela Schlösser

Leiterin des Archivs am Berliner Ensemble von 1961 bis 1999

11. Juli 2013 bei Gisela Schlösser zu Hause in Eichwalde

Margaret Setje-Eilers

Gisela Schlösser (*GS*)
Margaret Setje-Eilers (*MSE*)

"Ich bin kein Archivar. Ich habe immer alles nach Lust gemacht!"

Gisela Schlösser macht das Gartentor für mich auf und erklärt schmunzelnd auf dem Weg zum Haus: "Das ist ein Naturschutzgebiet". Es schaut wahrhaftig malerisch aus, und ich bin neugierig auf das Gespräch. Im Haus auf einem kleinen runden Tisch im Wohnzimmer liegen ausgebreitet, in keiner bestimmten chronologischen Ordnung, viele Briefe an sie von namhaften Intendanten, Dramaturgen und Regisseuren. Auch von Helene Weigel, für die sie *die Schlösserin* war. Ich bin erstaunt, wie viel Geschichte vom Berliner Ensemble sich in diesem Raum befindet, vor allem im Gedächtnis und in den Erzählungen von Frau Schlösser. Ruth Berghaus, sagt sie, hängte oft in den 70-80er Jahren einen Schuh an meine Tür, was immer hieß, mach dich fertig, wir gehen spazieren. Gisela Schlösser hat über einen Zeitraum von fast 40 Jahren für die verschiedensten Theaterleute recherchiert - Ruth Berghaus, Manfred Wekwerth, Peter Zadek, Fritz Marquardt, Heiner Müller, Benno Besson bis Claus Peymann. Von 1961 bis zum letzten Arbeitstag am 4. Juli 1999 hat sie oft unter zeitlichem Druck Arbeitsmaterialien für Inszenierungen und Programmhefte recherchiert und zusammengestellt.

Für *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* hat sie Zeitungsartikel über den Fleischmarkt in Chicago gesammelt. Auf Wunsch von Heiner Müller sprach sie mit Obdachlosen in einem Berliner Keller, notierte ihre Gedichte und Geschichten, stellte Fragen über die Liebe und das Leben. Als Vorarbeit für eine Berghaus-Inszenierung befragte sie Leute quer durch alle sozialen Schichten: was bedeutet Geld für sie?

MSE: Ich bin heute mit Frau Gisela Schlösser in Eichwalde bei Berlin. Frau Schlösser, Sie waren Archivarin von 1961 bis 1999 am Archiv des Berliner Ensembles (BE). Wie und wann und von wem wurden Sie eingestellt? Wie kamen Sie überhaupt zum BE?

GS: Mein Wunsch war es, dort zu arbeiten, wo Bertolt Brecht mit Helene Weigel gearbeitet hat. Das Buch von Brecht, *Die hundert Gedichte* (1951) habe ich immer bei mir gehabt und daraus überall rezitiert, "An meine Landsleute": "Ihr, die ihr überlebtet in gestorbenen Städten". Ich hatte eine Kindheit im Krieg, ich kann mich gut an brennende Städte und an Trümmer erinnern. Und ich wollte helfen, dass es eine freundliche Welt gibt. Ich habe gedacht, ich muss an das Berliner Ensemble, es wäre gut, wenn ich da arbeiten würde. 1961 habe ich mich bei Helene Weigel beworben. Sie saß an ihrem großen runden Tisch mit freundlichen Augen und ich wollte meine Zeugnisse ausbreiten. Sie sagte: Das kannst du alles wegpacken. Das interessiert mich nicht. Wir wollen *Die Tage der Commune* inszenieren. Was interessiert dich? Ich arbeitete in der Stadtbibliothek in Leipzig und war Gast am Literatur-Institut. Die Weigel sagte mir: Du wirst alles zusammentragen über *Die Tage der Commune*, Marx, Engels, Lissagaray und auch die, die böse über die Commune geschrieben haben. Ich habe davon noch

ein Exemplar. Da habe ich mich hingesetzt, gesammelt, und habe dann alles der Weigel vorgelegt und sie war ganz begeistert. Tag und Nacht habe ich daran gearbeitet, mit einer kleinen Schreibmaschine alles abgeschrieben. Da sagte sie, du bist ein Schatz für unsere Inszenierung und du kannst hier arbeiten.

MSE: Das war die Probe? Was Sie über die Commune herausfinden konnten?

GS: Ja, über die Commune in Frankreich.

MSE: Sie haben als erste Aufgabe über den Hintergrund der historischen Commune recherchiert?

GS: Ja, als Hintergrundmacher.

MSE: Wurden Sie gleich Leiterin des Archivs? Was waren ihre Aufgaben?

GS: Oh, das weiß ich gar nicht mehr. Ich habe immer das getan, was mir am meisten Spaß gemacht hat, muss ich sagen. Das Archiv, das war … ich habe mit Helene Weigel vor riesigen Bergen von Mappen und Modellbüchern *(in diesen wurden die Aufführungen fotografisch dokumentiert)* gestanden und mich gefragt, was soll daraus werden? Die Weigel sagte, wir beginnen mit der *Mutter Courage,* der ersten Brecht-Inszenierung, dann kommt der *Puntila* und so chronologisch weiter. Das muss alles griffbereit sein. Man muss die Mappe nehmen und man muss alles von den ersten Überlegungen bis zum Endresultat finden: die Probennotate, das Hintergrundmaterial, die Fotodokumente, die Presse. Das hieß "wissenschaftlich arbeiten." *(Sie lacht.)*

MSE: Als Sie angefangen haben, waren es nur Berge von Papier?

GS: Naja, Dr. Hans Bunge hatte schon einmal versucht, dem Archiv eine Ordung zu geben, andere Mitarbeiter auch. Aber das für mich interessanteste Material, das im Archiv lag, waren die Notate. Die Frauen vom Brecht haben während der Proben mitgeschrieben. Die Theaterarbeit dokumentiert. Fotokopien lagen im Berliner Ensemble.

MSE: Wo?

GS: Bei uns im Archiv. Aber erstaunlich war, dass so viele Leute aus der ganzen Welt, aus der kapitalistischen Welt, ins Berliner Ensemble kamen, um sich die Proben und Aufführungen anzuschauen, um mit Regisseuren und Schauspielern zu sprechen und auch um im Archiv zu sitzen, im kleinen Stübchen ohne Fenster saßen sie alle und haben studiert, was die Frauen aufgeschrieben hatten, die Notate, und haben sich die Modellbücher angeguckt. Ich musste später Riesendokumentationen machen, zu Oppenheimer, über Atombomben über Hiroshima. Zu jeder Inszenierung, auch zu *Tage der Commune* habe ich alles an Bildmaterial und interessanten Texten herangeschleppt. Das kam dann in die Mappe und wurde unter dem jeweiligen Stück abgelegt. Dort konnte man dann darüber nachlesen.

MSE: Das war sehr wichtig für die Inszenierung, als Hintergrundunterlagen. Sie mussten wissen, wo alles zu finden war. Ich bin neugierig zu hören, was Sie vorher in Leipzig gemacht haben, bevor Sie ans BE gekommen sind.

GS: Da war ich an der Bibliothekar-Schule, habe mein Staatsexamen als Bibliothekarin gemacht. In der Kreisbibliothek Königs Wusterhausen musste ich dann nach meinem Abschluß drei Jahre als Bibliothekarin arbeiten. Ich habe 10 Stunden gearbeitet, wollte aber lieber die Literatur aufs Land tragen.

Ich habe Gespräche mit Schriftstellern geführt und selbst Lesungen gemacht.

MSE: Sie sind also schon für die Stelle am BE gut ausgebildet gewesen.

GS: Für Literatur ja. Ich habe an mehreren Bibliotheken in Leipzig gearbeitet, hatte aber immer den Wunsch, ans Berliner Ensemble zu gehen.

MSE: Manche Schauspieler aus der frühen Zeit am BE haben mir gesagt, dass die Probenzeit schon sehr lang war, und dass sie viele Materialien über das Stück und den historischen Hintergrund bekommen haben. Haben Sie das vorbereitet?

GS: Ja, also nicht alleine, mit den Dramaturgen zusammen. Aber ich habe, wie soll ich das sagen, das erste Fundament gelegt.

MSE: Wo haben Sie gesucht?

GS: Ich hatte Verbindungen überall in der Welt. Studenten, die im Archiv gearbeitet haben, haben mir Literatur mitgebracht, und Helene Weigel hat selbst, wenn Sie im Westen war, Bücher eingekauft und hat mir diese gegeben oder ausgeliehen.

MSE: Haben Sie im Westen angerufen?

GS: Ja. Ich hatte auch gute Beziehungen zum Suhrkamp Verlag. Deshalb bin ich jetzt so traurig, dass es alles so kaputt geht. Wir waren irgendwie besessen. Ich habe es nicht als Arbeit angesehen. Es war wie eine Droge (*lacht*). Man wollte alles Mögliche zusammentragen. Auch zum *Coriolan*. Und das ging ja über die Jahrzehnte hinweg. Die Jahrzehnte verschwanden im Handumdrehen.

MSE: Sie haben auch viel bei der Buchhandlung Marga Schoeller bekommen.

GS: Ja, aber erst nach der Wende. Aber vorher hatte ich auch gute Beziehungen zu den Universitäten im Westen. Ich habe dort einfach angerufen, meine Fragen gestellt und die haben mich immer unterstützt. Ich weiß auch nicht, wie das alles ging.

MSE: Sie haben mir auch einen Brief aus Freiburg im Breisgau gezeigt. Eigentlich haben Sie wie ein Detektiv gearbeitet.

GS: (*lacht*) Das stimmt.

MSE: Wo war das Archiv damals?

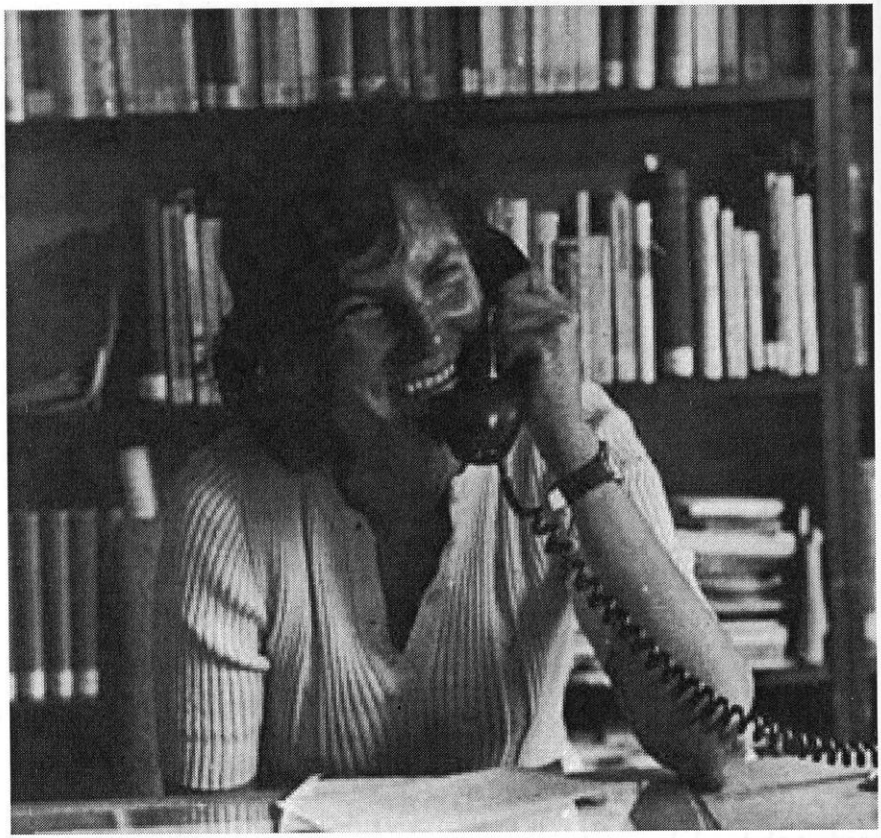
GS: Waren Sie schon im Archiv? Es ist ja alles umgebaut. Es war im Nebenhaus. Unten war Karl-Heinz Drescher mit seinen Plakaten. Das war unser Graphiker. Ganz unten war die Kantine und oben war zuerst die Dramaturgie, die Sekretärin, dann die Vera Tenschert mit ihrem Fotolabor. Am Ende des Flurs lag mein Zimmer und ein ganz winzig kleines Stübchen ohne Fenster, vollgestopft mit Aktenmappen. Auf einem schmalen langen Tisch konnte alles ausgebreitet werden, daran saßen Gäste aus der ganzen Welt und studierten die Arbeit des Theaters. Wo liegt das Foto, das hatten wir gerade hier.

MSE: Das Foto vom Archiv ist hier.

GS: Ja, es war alles voll mit Büchern. Am Schreibtisch gegenüber arbeiteten Dramaturgen. Also ich saß da nicht alleine. Hier saß lange Zeit Jochen Ziller, Dramaturg. Auch andere.

MSE: Sie haben mir heute so viele Briefe von Helene Weigel, von Dramaturgen und auch von Autoren und Intendanten gezeigt, von Leuten wie Heiner Müller. Sie haben viele Lobwörter für Sie gehabt.

GS: Das hat mir am meisten Spaß gemacht, mit Heiner Müller. Er hat mir



ganz nebenbei irgendetwas auf einen Bierdeckel geschrieben, und ich habe wie eine Besessene so lange recherchiert, bis ich das Richtige fand. Deshalb wurde ich von vielen geliebt und geschätzt. (*Sie sucht, findet und liest ein Blatt*) "Hier haben inszeniert Bertolt Brecht, Benno Besson, Egon Monk, Peter Palitzsch, Manfred Wekwerth, Ruth Berghaus, Heiner Müller, Fritz Marquardt, Peter Zadek, Einar Schleef, Horst Sagert, um nur einige zu nennen".[1]

MSE: Warum haben Sie so gern für Heiner Müller geforscht?

GS: In hundert Jahren, wenn die Welt noch existieren sollte, da wird man sich an Brecht und an Heiner Müller erinnern. Die anderen werden vergessen, bestimmt. Heiner Müller hat die ganze Grausamkeit in dem Menschen von der Antike bis heute, dieses gegenseitige Niedermetzeln, die ganze Brutalität beschrieben.

MSE: Aber er war, Sie sagten vorhin, ein ganz bescheidener und verletzlicher Mensch.

GS: Ja, er war ein ganz Bescheidener, der an seiner Zigarre zuppelte, was die Leute mit ihm in Verbindung bringen, und an seinem Whiskyglas, aber er war auch voller Ängste und auch voller Zärtlichkeit. Es gab so lustige Sachen mit ihm. Er war auf der Bühne und hat seine Texte vorgelesen, und plötzlich hatte er eine Lücke. Da fehlte ihm irgendwas. Er hat eine kurze Pause gemacht, mich

angerufen und gesagt: ich suche einen Text von mir, ich weiß nicht mehr, wie er heißt, er war in der Zeitung, vielleicht im "Freitag" oder ... Ich wollte den Text für ihn finden. Ich habe noch am Abend recherchiert und den Redakteur ausfindig gemacht. Der hat ihn gefaxt. Dann bekam Heiner Müller kurz vor dem Ende seiner Lesung den gesuchten Text (*lacht*).

MSE: Am gleichen Tag? Welcher Text war das?

GS: Das war in der gleichen Nacht. Er hat ihn dann noch vorgelesen: "Thrakischer Sommer".

MSE: Ein Beispiel Ihrer Arbeit für Heiner Müller ist der Bierdeckel, den Sie mir vorhin gezeigt haben. Es war nur ein Wort von Heiner Müller darauf und Sie sollten recherchieren. Was war das Wort?

GS: Bunraku. Es hat mir Spaß gemacht, so zu arbeiten. (*sucht und findet den Bierdeckel*) Hier, gucken Sie mal: Bunraku.[2] Das war nicht das einzige. Einmal wollte er ein Lied finden, dass sein Großvater ihm vorgesungen hat, als er ein kleines Kind war und auf dem Schoß von seinem Großvater gesessen hat. Aber er erinnerte es nicht mehr. Er wusste nur noch, dass irgendetwas vorkam mit dem Wort *Schmied*.

MSE: Was? Er hat nur ein Wort gewusst und Sie haben das Lied gefunden? Das war lang bevor man im Internet suchen konnte. Sie haben mir auch schon gesagt, dass Sie auch noch keine Karteikarten hatten.

GS: Ja. "Mit jedem Hiebe, mit jedem Schlag zerbersten Ketten". Das hat ihn als Kind so aufgeregt. Und da habe ich überall in den westlichen Literaturarchiven recherchiert und sie haben alle bereitwillig mit gesucht. (*lacht*)

MSE: Hier ist ein Zettel von einer Bibliothek. Darf ich ihn vorlesen?

GS: Ja, sicher.

MSE: (*liest vor*) "Liebe Frau Schlösser [Name nachträglich eingefüllt], leider habe ich mir Ihren Namen nicht gemerkt. Hier sind die versprochenen Kopien. Wenn Herr Müller noch etwas mehr zum Inhalt des Liedes vom Großvater erzählen kann, würde ich es vielleicht erkennen. Mit freundlichen Grüßen...". Das Lied ist aus den Arbeiter- und Freiheitsliedern, "Wir sind die Schmiede; der Zukunft Schlüssel, mit unseren Hämmern schmieden wir. Lasst lustig kreisen die schweren Hämmer, schwingt auf den Feind sie für und für". (Russisches Kampflied).[3] Es steht oben auf dem Blatt mit der Hand HM geschrieben. Haben Sie das auch geschrieben?

GS: Es war für Heiner Müller. Ich habe es notiert.

MSE: Hier ist noch ein Bierdeckel. Es steht darauf: "Kunsthalle. Ipousteguy".[4]

GS: Er schrieb mir ein Wort auf und ich musste erstmal raten, was das sein kann, welche Bedeutung das Wort hat. Manchmal konnte ich es auch nicht entziffern.

MSE: Das war teilweise ein Rätselspiel, was Sie mit ihm gemacht haben. Sie mussten wissen, was er gemeint hat.

GS: Ja, ein Detektiv war ich. Ipousteguy hat Zeichnungen und Skulpturen gemacht.

MSE: Das gehörte zu den Aufgaben, die Sie schnell lösen mussten. Es ist für die Leute, die mit dem Internet aufwachsen, fast unmöglich sich vorzustellen, wie man ohne digitale Medien suchen und finden konnte. Sie haben ein ganz be-

sonderes kreatives Vermögen zum Problemlösen entwickelt, oder schon ins BE mitgebracht.

GS: Interessant war, dass Helene Weigel mir gesagt hat, dass [Wolfgang] Harich im Zuchthaus sitzt.[5] Wir müssen ihm helfen. Sie sagte, du musst dich sofort hinsetzen und eine Literaturliste über Jean Paul zusammenstellen. Das fand ich so gut, dass sie sich über alles so hinwegsetzte.

MSE: Hier auf Ihrem Tisch liegt noch etwas Bemerkenswertes, von Elisabeth Hauptmann 1971, eine handschriftliche Notiz vom 23.9.71 an Sie: "Liebe Schlösserin, hier sind endlich zurück 6 Ezra Pounds, 3 Wedekinds. Danke fürs beschaffen. Ihre E.H.".

GS: Ich habe Elisabeth Hauptmann noch kennen gelernt und ich war jedes Mal begeistert, wenn ich in ihrer Wohnung war. Ausgewählt schöne Möbel und zwei riesengroße Katzen. Sie kam nicht an die Tür ohne Schuhe anzuziehen. Nicht in Latschen oder barfuß, sondern in Schuhen. Sie hat sich immer ein bisschen die Lippen geschminkt und war voller Freundlichkeit und Wärme.

MSE: Was fällt Ihnen spontan zu Weigel ein?

GS: Ich fand sie so schön, ihre Bewegungen, ihre Disziplin, ihre Umsicht. Sie hat sich um alles gekümmert.

GS: Ich machte manchmal Abenddienst, weil ich dann Katrin, mein Kind, mitnehmen konnte.[6] In der Kassenhalle

begrüßte ich besondere Gäste, die etwas über die Inszenierung wissen wollten. Die sollten nicht irgendwie herumstehen, die sollte ich begrüßen. Das hat mir natürlich Spaß gemacht.

MSE: Sie haben mir einige Briefe zum 1. Mai mit Anerkennung und Dank für Ihre Arbeit im Archiv über viele Jahre gezeigt. Darf ich einen zitieren? Hier ist eins vom 1969: Berlin, 1. Mai 1969. "Liebe Gisela Schlösser, wenn wir Sie heute zum 1. Mai auszeichnen, dann wollen wir in erster Linie Dank sagen für die Arbeit, die Sie neben Ihrer qualifizierten Tätigkeit als Bibliothekarin und Archivirin unseres Theaters leisten. Nicht nur, dass Sie die Verbindung zu allen wissenschaftlichen Büchereien der DDR aufgenommen haben, um unsere Mitarbeiter mit allen möglichen gewünschten Materialien zu versorgen, helfen Sie darüber hinaus, auch der Parteigruppe und der BGL, wenn noch Schulungs- und Arbeitsmaterial verlangt wird... Wir freuen uns, Ihnen mit einer Geldprämie unseren Dank abstatten zu können". Der Brief ist unterschrieben: Intendanz H.W. Frau Schlösser, ich sehe viele solche Briefe auf Ihrem runden Tisch liegen. Hier ist noch ein Brief vom 1. Mai 1967: "Liebe Gisela Schlösser! Wir freuen uns, Sie zum 1. Mai mit einer Prämie auszuzeichnen. / Ihre Mitarbeit bei Vorbereitungen zu Inszenierungen, bei der Sie weder Mühe noch Zeitaufwand noch..." Bevor ich fertig lese, drückt mir Frau Schlösser noch ein Schreiben in die Hand: (ohne Datum) "Liebe Gisela Schlösser! Die Mitarbeiter der Regie und Dramaturgie haben vorgeschlagen, Sie am 1. Mai 1963 auszuzeichnen. Ihre Hilfe bei den Vorbereitungen unserer Inszenierungen z.B. *Tage der Commune* und jetzt *Coriolan* ist zu einem großen praktischen Arbeitsmittel geworden - historisches, literatur- und theatergeschichtliches Material wird von Ihnen sorgfältig und weitgehend selbständig besorgt. / Wir danken Ihnen alle für Ihr Interesse und Ihre Initiative". BGL Intendanz (Hier steht in blauer Tinte handschriftlich: 100, - Mark).[7]

GS: Und ich fand es aufregend, dass reiche Kapitalistensöhne an das Berliner Ensemble kamen, Aufführungen und Proben besuchten und im Archiv arbeiteten. Das waren menschliche Begegnungen. Keine Spur vom Klassenfeind. Sie haben mir heimlich für mein Kind Apfelsinen und Pampelmusen mitgebracht. Manche brachten für Katrina auch ein Blüschen zum Anziehen. Das stand dann immer in meiner Kaderakte. Die wussten das alles. Aber interessant für mich war auch Ruth Berghaus. Sie wollte das ganze Haus revolutionieren, mit einem ganz neuen Schwung und ganz neue Ideen ins Haus bringen.

MSE: Was für neue Ideen?

GS: Ruth Berghaus kam von der Palucca Schule.[8] Sie hat die Uraufführung von Heiner Müllers *Zement* (1972) ins Berliner Ensemble gebracht. Das hat sie durchgesetzt. Das war sehr schwer Anfang der 70er Jahre.

MSE: Wie war diese Inszenierung?

GS: Das war eine neue Sicht auf Klassenkampf, Revolution und die Menschen. Christine Gloger als Dascha in *Zement* war großartig. Ich habe Materialien gesammelt, aber mich haben immer die Leute interessiert. Ich wollte den Eindruck der Inszenierung haben. Jeder Regisseur hat eine andere Auffassung vom Theater, ein anderes Handwerk. Ruth Berghaus war sehr mutig. Zum Beispiel hat B. K. Tragelehn mit Einar Schleef die Inszenierung Strindbergs *Fräulein Julie* 1975 mit Jürgen Holtz und auch Frank Wedekinds *Frühlingserwachen* (1974)

unter der Intendanz von Ruth Berghaus gemacht, außergewöhnliche Inszenierungen.

MSE: Ja, Herr Holtz hat mir viel darüber erzählt und ich habe mir die Fotos im Bertolt Brecht Archiv angeschaut.

GS: Oh, er war hervorragend. Das ist eine Inszenierung, die im Kopf bleibt und in mir drin ist, die mich nicht verlässt. Die war so gut und wurde dann abgesetzt. (*Liest vor*) "1992. Die künstlerische Leitung des Berliner Ensembles übernehmen die Regisseure Matthias Langhoff, Fritz Marquardt, Heiner Müller, Peter Palitzsch und Peter Zadek. 1993 beginnt die Arbeit des Berliner Ensembles als GmbH. Die erste Inszenierung unter der neuen Leitung hat im Januar Premiere: Shakespeares *Pericles* in der Regie von Peter Palitzsch."

MSE: Hier ist ein Zettel, den Sie auch aufbewahrt haben, eine Liste von Brecht-Texten in der Auswahl von Heiner Müller: "Über die Auswahl der Bestien", "Vom armen B.B.," "Der erste Psalm", "Aus dem Lesebuch für Städtebewohner", "Episode aus einer früheren Fassung der 14. Szene vom *Leben des Galilei*", "Aus *Die Mutter* nach Gorki Schauspielfassung 1933", "Beim Lesen des Horaz" aus den *Buckower Elegien*".

GS: Diese Texte hat Heiner Müller unter anderen aus den Werken Brechts für eine Lesung ausgewählt.

MSE: Diese zweite Liste ist handschriftlich und Sie haben hier die Titel durchgestrichen und abgehakt.

GS: Vielleicht hat er neben mir gesessen, und ich habe gesagt, das haben wir nicht, das haben wir. Es ging immer um Minuten bei Heiner Müller. Ich musste klar denken, habe auf einem Zettel alles notiert, was ich heraussuchen musste, ganz schnell.

MSE: Hier steht auf der zweiten Liste unten: "Alles kopieren, alle Titel aufschreiben. Matinee. Mit Quellen". Ein Auftrag von Heiner Müller.

GS: Ja, für den *Arturo Ui* , der hatte am 3.6.95 Premiere.

MSE: Was haben Sie für *Arturo Ui* gesammelt?

GS: Ohhhh, ganz viel. Während der Proben ergaben sich Fragen. Ich möchte aber nur ein lustiges Beispiel nennen: das ist die Geschichte von der Blutwurst und der Leberwurst: "Die wunderliche Gasterei" aus den Grimms Märchen. Aber ich will jetzt auch noch zu Fritz Marquardt, den man nicht vergessen soll, sagen, dass er so schöne Sachen gemacht hat, zum Beispiel *Villa Jugend* (1991) von Georg Seidel.

MSE: Frau Schlösser, schönen Dank für das Gespräch. Ich hoffe, wir können uns noch einmal treffen, denn ich habe den Eindruck, dass wir heute nur den Anfang gemacht haben, über ihr überaus erfahrungsreiches Leben zu sprechen.

Zum Schluss zeigt mir Frau Schlösser ihr Exemplar von Heiner Müllers *Krieg ohne Schlacht - Leben in zwei Diktaturen: Eine Autobiographie* (1992). Auf der Titelseite steht eine rätselhafte Widmung von Heiner Müller:

Für die Schlösserin
ein freundlicher Satz:
Man kann einen Menschen
mit Büchern totschlagen,
ein Buch kann man nur verbrennen.

Berlin, 3.7.92

Heiner Müller

Anmerkungen

1. Alle Zitate von Frau Schlösser sind mit freundlicher Genehmigung aus Unterlagen im Privatbesitz von Gisela Schlösser.

2. Bunraku ist ein traditionelles japanisches Puppentheater vom 17. Jahrhundert.

3. *Wir sind die Schmiede* (Russisches Revolutionslied)

"Wir sind die Schmiede; der Zukunft Schlüssel / mit unseren Hämmern schmieden wir / Lasst lustig kreisen die schweren Hämmer / schwingt gen den Feind sie fuer und fuer.

Wir die Schmiede; der roten Zukunft / dröhnt unser Hammer Schlag auf Schlag. / In allen Stunden sind wir am Werke. / Vollendet wird's, es kommt der Tag.

Mit jedem Hiebe, mit jedem Schlage / zerbersten Ketten, bricht das Joch. / Wenn auch der Völker gequälte Scharen / noch zögernd steh'n, wir schaffen's doch".

4. Jean Robert Ipoustéguy (1920-2006) eigentlich *Jean Robert*) französischer Bildhauer, Zeichner, Aquarellist und Schriftsteller.

5. Wolfgang Harich (1923-1995): 1957 wegen "Bildung einer konspirativen staatsfeindlichen Gruppe" zu zehn Jahren Gefängnis verurteilt.

6. Katrin Schlösser ist Professorin für kreative Film- und Fernsehproduktion an der Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln. Nach ihrem Diplomabschluss als Film- und Fernsehwirtschaftlerin an der Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen "Konrad Wolf" hat sie als Filmproduzentin an mehr als 60 Filmen seit 1990 gearbeitet, z.B. *Sonnenallee.*

7. BGL: Betriebsgewerkschaftsleitung.

8. Die Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden wurde 1925 von Gret Palucca in Dresden gegründet.

Exkurs: Vera Tenschert

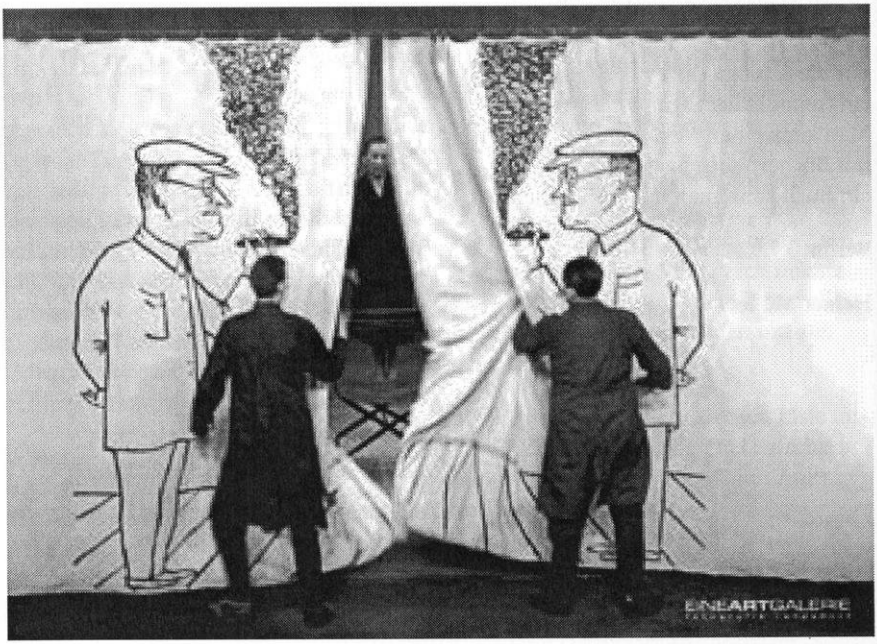
Ausstellung & Edition: *VORHANG AUF bei brecht.*

Fotografien von Vera Tenschert

Helene Weigel und das Berliner Ensemble auf und hinter der Bühne

Einr-Art-Fotogalerie in Rangsdorf/Brandenburg

Vom 28. April bis zum 16. Juni 2013 zeigte Vera Tenschert, Fotografin des Berliner Ensembles 1954 bis 1991, eine kleine, feine Auswahl ihrer tausende Fotografien aus fast vier Jahrzehnten Theatergeschichte. Ausgebildet als Fotografin an der renommierten Lette-Schule in Berlin-Schöneberg fand sie 1954 durch eine zufällig in einer Berliner Zeitung entdeckte Annonce zum BE. Sie war 18 Jahre alt, als Brecht dem jungen Mädchen erlaubte, bei Proben zu fotografieren. Zwei Jahre später, nach Brechts Tod, übernahm Helene Weigel das Zepter, und für die junge Fotografin Vera Tenschert begann eine faszinierende Arbeit, die schließlich zur Lebensaufgabe wurde. Sie dokumentierte als Fotografin über die Jahrzehnte hinweg alle Inszenierungen des BE, nahm an zahllosen Proben teil, porträtierte Schauspieler, Regisseure, Dramatiker, Dramaturgen, reiste bei Gastspielen mit um die Welt. Das Bemerkenswerteste aber: Sie porträtierte die Weigel und ihre Theatergemeinde nicht nur auf der Bühne, sie begleitete sie auch im Privaten – die Weigel beim Pilze putzen, Kochen, in Gesprächen mit Gästen und beim versunkenen Grübeln, die Künstler hinter der Bühne, in der Garderobe, in der Kantine. In ihrer Rezesion der Austellung schrieb Ingeborg Ruthe in der Berliner Zeitung: "Die Aufnahmen der Weigel, so als Gouverneurin im "Kaukasischen Kreidekreis" und in anderen markanten Stücken, bleiben furs Bildgedächtnis vom Geist dieses Theaters, als herbe,



unverschnörkelte, doch fast magische Schwarz-Weiß-Aufnahmen, darin wie eingebrannt die Facetten des kreativen, familiären Weigel-Matriarchats. Vera Tenschert durfte mit ihrer Kamera auch dicht heran ans Private: Die Weigel beim Lesen, beim Sinnieren, die Prinzipalin in Hauslatschen, beim Pilze-Sammeln und sogar beim legendären Kochen. Es war wohl die stille, sachte, unaufdringliche Art der Fotografin, ihre Suche nach dem Wesentlichen eines Menschen, was die sonst so nervöse, manchmal abweisende Weigel so gut ertrug, sogar anzog. Tenschert durfte die spröde Chefin sogar "Heli" nennen." Aus dieser fotografischen Schatzkiste wählte Vera Tenschert gemeinsam mit den Galeristen der Eine-Art-Galerie eine kleine Anzahl von Kostbarkeiten für die Ausstellung in Rangsdorf aus. Bereits berühmte Aufnahmen und noch unbekannte Bilder waren zu sehen, unwiederbringliche Momente, ohne Effekthascherei und aufgesetztes Pathos. Die Fotografien von Vera Tenschert zeigen das Schlichte, das Einfache, das die Größe der Weigel und des Brechtschen Theaters ausmacht.

Anlässlich der Ausstellung bietet die Galerie eine Edition mit Fotografien von Vera Tenschert zum Kauf an: in limitierter Auflage von jeweils fünf Exemplaren, handsigniert, Silbergelatine auf Barytpapier, bzw. Fine Art Print auf Hahnemühle Papier, in den Größen ca. 30 x 40/40 x 40cm, bzw. 50 x 75cm, zum Preis von 350€ bzw. 400€. http://eineartgalerie.de/2905/neue-edition-helene-weigel-und-das-berliner-ensemble-fotografien-von-vera-tenschert

Die historischen originalen Handabzüge der Ausstellung stehen ebenfalls zum Kauf bereit.

Gespräch mit Petra Hübner

Leiterin des Archivs am Berliner Ensemble

9. Juli 2013, Archiv des Berliner Ensemble

Margaret Setje-Eilers

Margaret Setje-Eilers: MSE
Petra Hübner: PH

MSE: Frau Hübner, Sie sind seit Anfang der Intendanz von Claus Peymann Leiterin des Archivs beim Berliner Ensemble. Als ich heute zu Ihnen kam, um mit Ihnen über das Archiv und Ihre Arbeit zu sprechen, hatte ich auch eine sehr spezielle Frage über *Hans Pfriem oder Kühnheit zahlt sich aus* (Regie Käthe Rülicke, 1954) sowie Marionetten, die Sie sicher nicht erwartet haben. Dennoch haben Sie aber sofort die Unterlagen zu dieser Inszenierung mit Programmheft und Kritiken gefunden. Es erstaunt mich, wie schnell Sie an die alten Unterlagen gekommen sind. Im Archiv scheint alles sehr organisiert zu sein, und die Materialien sind griffbereit. Frau Hübner, wie kamen Sie dazu, das Archiv am Berliner Ensemble zu leiten?

PH: Vor mir hat Gisela Schlösser dieses Archiv geleitet. Sie ist zu Beginn der Direktion von Herrn Peymann in Rente gegangen. Seit dem Jahre 2003 leite ich das Archiv. Herr Peymann hat am 8. Januar 2000 seine neue Direktion am Berliner Ensemble mit dem Stück *Die Brecht-Akte* von George Tabori (2000), das George Tabori extra für das Berliner Ensemble (BE) geschrieben hatte, begonnen.

MSE: Was haben Sie vor dieser Zeit beruflich gemacht? Sind Sie Bibliothekarin?

PH: Ich bin keine Bibliothekarin. Ich habe nach dem Abitur an der Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen in Potsdam Babelsberg studiert, konnte aber dieses Studium aus politischen Gründen nicht beenden. Danach war ich als Regieassistentin an Theatern in der ehemaligen DDR, habe in Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt), in Gera, an den Landesbühnen Sachsen gearbeitet, und ich war am Deutschen Theater in der Requisite und auch beim Fernsehen als Regieassistentin tätig. Dann habe ich an der Volksbühne, an der damals auch Heiner Müller war, hospitiert. Ich habe auch das *Spektakel 2* miterlebt (1974). Das war für mich sehr interessant, weil es ein neuer Blick auf das Theater war, was Manfred Karge und Matthias Langhoff unter der Intendanz von Benno Besson in der Volksbühne gemacht haben. Es wurde auf mehreren Bühnen parallel gespielt, so dass die Genossen vom Ministerium gar nicht dazu kamen, alles zu begutachten und zu kritisieren. Es gab ja eine relativ starke Zensur.

Jetzt komme ich zu Ihrer Frage zum BE zurück. Ich bin seit dem 5. Oktober 1993 am BE, feiere also am 5. Oktober 2013 mein 20. Jubiläum. Von 1993 bis 1999 war ich die Assistentin von Gisela Schlösser, die dieses Archiv aufgebaut hat, und der ich viel zu verdanken habe. Ich habe sehr viel von ihr lernen können. Zu Ihrer Frage, weshalb ich das Stück so schnell gefunden habe, ich bin einfach lange Zeit hier, wie gesagt, und in zwanzig Jahren, glaube ich, habe ich einen relativ guten Überblick über den Bestand im Archiv bekommen.

MSE: (schaut auf die vielen ordentlich aufgereihten Ordner auf den Regalen) Es sind ja sehr viel Materialien hier. Was ist eigentlich der Zweck des Archivs am Theater? Warum hat das Berliner Ensemble ein Archiv?

PH: Das Berliner Ensemble ist ein traditionsbehaftetes Haus. Ihr Haus, das Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, wurde 1892 von Heinrich Seeling und Ernst Westphal erbaut, und 1893 fand hier die berühmte Weber Uraufführung statt. Dann hat von 1903 bis 1906 Max Reinhardt die Bühne übernommen — sie hat er übrigens für 50.000 Mark gekauft — und hat im Jahre 1905 hier seinen legendären *Sommernachtstraum* von Shakespeare inszeniert. Er hat gleichzeitig hier eine Drehbühne eingebaut und damit war das Regietheater entwickelt, oder erfunden, wie man es auch nennen will. Es wurden erstmals Regiebücher geführt. Max Reinhardt hat, wie gesagt (ich will nicht zu weit ausführen), auch das illusionistische Theater perfektioniert. Da war Wald, auf der Bühne rauschten Blätter, der Wald duftete noch. Der Puck wurde von einer Frau, Gertrud Eysoldt, gespielt, was auch neu war. Es war also eine, sagen wir mal, sehr illustrative Inszenierung und mit einer Konzeption, was es vorher nicht gab.

MSE: Das war also dann Regietheater?

PH: Ja, letztendlich wurde das Regietheater durch Max Reinhardt hier am Haus begründet. Das war das erste Regiebuch, so weit ich weiß, das es überhaupt gab. Dann hat später, unter der Intendanz von Ernst Josef Aufricht, Erich Engel *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928) von Bertolt Brecht hier inszeniert.

Bevor das Berliner Ensemble ins Theater am Schiffbauerdamm kam, war es am Deutschen Theater zu Gast, unter der Intendanz von Wolfgang Langhoff. Dort ist die legendäre Inszenierung von *Mutter Courage* entstanden. Mit dieser Inszenierung sind sie auch im Ausland gewesen, waren in Paris, und da ist das Ensemble überhaupt berühmt geworden. Jetzt zurück zur Frage, warum es ein Archiv gibt. Also, das BE ist ein traditionsbehaftetes Haus und es gab viele großartige Inszenierungen am Berliner Ensemble und das sollte dokumentiert werden. Das heißt, Brecht hat damit begonnen und hat Modellbücher von seinen Schülern anfertigen lassen, die die Inszenierungen dokumentiert haben, zum Beispiel mit Fotos von den einzelnen Szenen und darunter dem Text der Rolle. Das wurde wie ein Film praktisch aufgenommen und fortgehend, vom Anfang bis zum Ende der Inszenierung dokumentiert. Seine Schüler klebten die Fotos und die Texte, sie schimpften fürchterlich — es waren auch manchmal Strafarbeiten — aber sie taten es dann doch, weil es damals noch keine Aufzeichnungsmöglichkeiten gab. Die Modellbücher hatten den Sinn, das Brecht-Theater oder seine Auffassung vom Theater und auch die Arbeit an diesen Stücken zu dokumentieren. Dann gab es die Fortführung in Form von Sammeln von Texten, von Inszenierungstexten, von Dramaturgie-Texten, von Schauspielermaterial, was am Anfang nicht so ausgebildet war. Später, weil es Aufzeichnungsmöglichkeiten gab, geriet dieses Dokumentieren ein bisschen in den Hintergrund. Diese Modellbücher gingen vielleicht bis Anfang der 70er Jahre. Danach gab es keine Modellbücher mehr, weil Aufzeichnungsmöglichkeiten da waren.

Viele Theater haben Archive, aber das hier hat eine besondere Bedeutung, weil das Berliner Ensemble letztendlich ein Theater ist, das viele Umbrüche erlebt hat. Also zum Beispiel die Zeit von Brecht bis zum Tode von Helene Weigel, die nach dem Tode von Brecht noch fünfzehn Jahre das Theater fortgeführt hat. Sie hat gewünscht, dass Ruth Berghaus das Theater führt, und das war

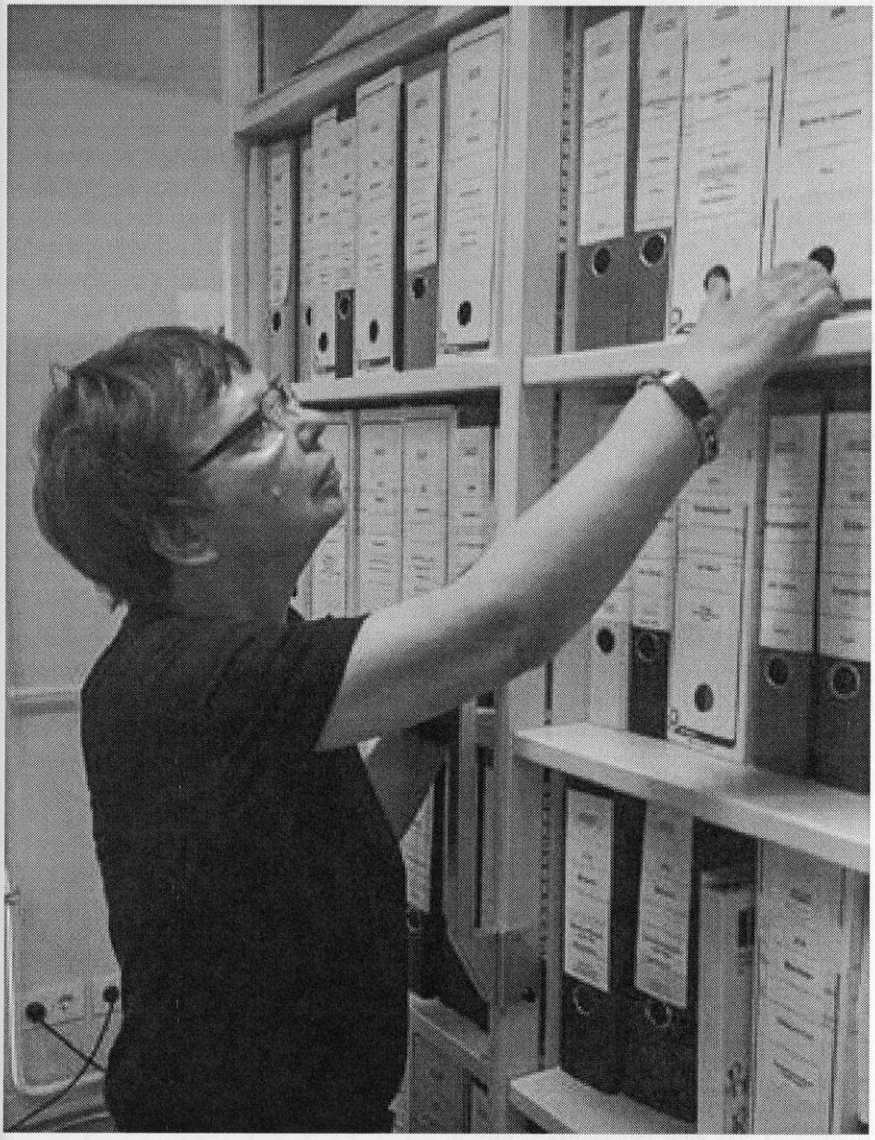
schon ein Bruch, weil Ruth Berghaus vom Spielerischen, vom Tänzerischen an die Umsetzung von Stoffen gegangen ist. Ruth Berghaus hat Heiner Müller ans Haus geholt und hat *Zement* von ihm inszeniert (1973). Heiner Müller war 1992 dann fest hier angestellt, war 1992 bis zu seinem Tode 1995 Mitintendant und auch 1995 Alleinintendant dann, nachdem diese große Gruppierung, wir sagen Viererbande, auseinanderging. Ich bin übrigens durch Heiner Müller ans Berliner Ensemble gekommen, weil ich seine Arbeit sehr verehrt habe, seine Stücke und auch seine legendäre Inszenierung von *Arturo Ui* (1995), die immer noch auf unserem Spielplan ist, die 1995 Premiere hatte, und immer noch vor voll ausverkauftem Haus bei uns gespielt wird, die schon viele Gastspiele erlebt hatte. Heiner Müller war und ist mein großes Vorbild, was die Autoren des deutschsprachigen Theaters nach Brecht betrifft, weil für mich nach Brecht Heiner Müller der größte deutschsprachige Autor oder Dramatiker ist.

MSE: Danke für die ausführliche Antwort auf die Frage, warum das BE ein Archiv hat. Übrigens, als Leiterin des Archivs teilen Sie mit Ihrer Vorgängerin Gisela Schlösser Ihre große Verehrung für Heiner Müller. Diese Frage ergibt die nächste, nämlich für wen das Archiv ist. Wer hat Zugang zum Archiv? Ist es nur theaterintern?

PH: Also Zugang zum Theaterarchiv haben natürlich in erster Linie erstmal die Mitglieder des Theaters, die Dramaturgen. Aber es ist ja ein öffentliches Archiv und es ist ganz selbstverständlich, dass Wissenschaftler aus aller Welt mit ihren Fragen zu Brecht oder zu Brecht-Inszenierungen zu uns kommen. Sie haben die Möglichkeit sich per E-Mail bei mir anzumelden oder mich auch anzurufen. Über das Internationale Theaterinstitut (iTi Germany) gibt es eine Seite, auf der meine Kontaktdaten zu erfragen sind. Ich bin bereit, also jedem Wissenschaftler, so weit ich es kann, mit dem Material, das wir hier über die Jahrzehnte gesammelt haben, zu helfen. Dann haben wir auch Fragen von Schülern, von Gymnasiasten, von Studenten, die einen Vortrag über Brecht halten und sich da sehr schwer tun und den ganzen Vortrag lieber von mir machen lassen möchten, was ich natürlich nicht mache, sondern nur konkrete Hinweise gebe und ein bisschen Material schicke. Und es gibt auch Fragen von Angehörigen von Schauspielern, oder Enkel oder Urenkel, die fragen, in welchen Rollen hat mein Opa gespielt, oder ich habe jetzt erfahren, dass er am Berliner Ensemble war, haben Sie noch Fotos? So was gibt es auch. Ja, es ist doch relativ interessant, was ich für Fragen hier bekomme. Ich bemühe mich, wirklich jede Frage zu beantworten, auch wenn sie auch auf den ersten Blick so albern erscheint, wie eben was der Opa hier gemacht hat.

MSE: Das ist sehr lieb und gewissenhaft, und sicher freuen sich die Enkel sehr über Ihre Antworten. Etwas anderes jetzt, damit wir einen Eindruck von Ihrem Alltag bekommen, wie sieht Ihr Arbeitstag aus? Was sind Ihre Aufgaben?

PH: Mein Tag sieht folgendermaßen aus. Also ich komme morgens gegen neun, schaue erstmal in den Computer und gucke nach den E-Mails, die ich bekommen habe, also Anfragen zu Archivproblemen oder zu Archivsachen, mit denen ich helfen kann. Dann meldet sich die Dramaturgie parallel dazu. Ich habe die Aufgabe, die Sekundärliteratur zu den Inszenierungen nebenbei zu beschaffen, auch Filme, soweit sie ausleihbar sind. Da habe ich auch aufgrund meiner jahrelangen Erfahrung auch ein paar Geheimtipps, wo ich sie bekomme, was



ich nicht verrate. Ich möchte noch ein bisschen hier bleiben! (lacht) Ich besorge auch Musik oder Rundfunkmaterial. Das war für mich sehr interessant. Heiner Müller hat *Arturo Ui* inszeniert und er hat mich gebeten, Musik und Daten vom D-Day vom Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv zu besorgen. Und da ich mal, wie gesagt, beim DDR-Fernsehen gearbeitet habe, konnte ich auch mit Schnürsenkeln, so nannte man diese dünnen Magnettonstreifen, umgehen, und habe ihm das aus dem Rundfunkmaterial zusammengeschnitten. Er hat sich wahnsinnig darüber gefreut. Aber na, wie es am Theater so ist, heute wird es gefragt, gestern muss es da sein und übermorgen wird es nicht mehr gebraucht. So ist es am Theater. (lacht) Ich muss schnell arbeiten; ich muss es bringen und wenn

es gebraucht wird, freue ich mich und wenn nicht, sage ich mir, ich habe etwas dazu gelernt.

MSE: Sind Sie auch verantwortlich für die Programmhefte? Ich glaube, die Mappe zum 10. Todestag von Thomas Brasch ist unübertroffen (*Thomas Brasch. 19. Februar 1945 — 3. November 2001, No. 133*). Das ist eine erstaunliche und sehr schöne Sammlung mit vielen Texten und Materialien zu Brasch.

PH: Nein, ich mache keine Programmhefte. Die Programmhefte fertigen die Dramaturgen an. Ich liefere nur das Material zu den Programmheften, also zum Beispiel in der bildenden Kunst, wenn der Dramaturg zu einer bestimmten Inszenierung, die in einer bestimmten Zeit spielt, Bilder haben will. Dann ist mein relativ, sagen wir mal, gutes Wissen in der bildenden Kunst gefragt und da suche ich Bilder oder Fotos oder Gemälde oder je nachdem, was gesucht wird, zu diesem Thema heraus, und der Dramaturg entscheidet, was er tatsächlich nimmt. Ich biete nur die große Auswahl und der Dramaturg entscheidet, was nehme ich, was gefällt mir. Er gibt mir eine Richtung an, in der ich suchen soll.

MSE: Gehen Sie außer Haus?

PH: Ja, ich gehe außer Haus, ich gehe in Bibliotheken. Es ist nicht mehr wie früher, dass man an einem gedruckten Zettelkatalog steht und mühselig und systematisch den Katalog durchkämmt, zu den einzeln Epochen, sondern jetzt ist es so, man setzt sich an den Computer und man gibt in etwa ein, was man sucht. Man kann es erst mal googeln, ganz allgemein. Wenn in etwa klar ist, was man haben möchte, gibt man es ein und da haben die einzelnen Bibliotheken so Sinnlos-Computer, nenne ich das immer. Man gibt Titel, Autor ein und die sagen, ob es ausgeliehen ist oder nicht. Dann kann man das bestellen und abholen. Also gehe ich außer Haus, wenn ich den Titel weiß. Weiß ich ihn aber nicht, gehe ich in die Bibliotheken. Meistens ist es in Berlin die Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek, weil die einen großen Freihandbereich hat, was die bildende Kunst und die Fotografie betrifft. Ich gehe also in die Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek und guck mich da um, was ich so finde an Material zu den gefragten Sachen und die beschaffe ich dann. Die bringe ich dann und der Dramaturg sucht aus und er sagt, das und das kann ich gebrauchen und macht dann auch Vorschläge, vielleicht guck noch da mal nach. Das ist so meine Beschäftigung neben der Arbeit im Archiv.

MSE: Wie viel Zeit haben Sie für solche Recherchen?

PH: Die Frage beantworte ich so: heute gefragt, gestern gebraucht, morgen wird nicht mehr gebraucht.

MSE: Also müssen Sie springen?

PH: In der Regel ist es am Theater doch so, dass es sehr schnell gebraucht wird, weil es ja sehr schnelllebig ist, das Theater. Es ist so, dass heute eine Idee auf die Bühne kommt und dann wird gesagt, jetzt brauchen wir dieser Idee entsprechend die und die Kostüme, obwohl schon Kostüme vorbereitet sind, aber da ändert sich was und wir brauchen also dazu für einen Schauspieler zur Ansicht meinetwegen den Film. Da kann ich nicht sagen, den habe ich erst in drei Wochen, wenn die Schauspieler ihn zu der Inszenierung sehen sollen. Da muss ich mich auf die Beine stellen und loslaufen und gucken, wo finde ich den Film.

MSE: Sie müssen so viele Quellen im Kopf haben.

PH: Ich muss wissen, wo ich was finde. Berlin hat circa 50-60 Bibliotheken, Videotheken, und so weiter. Den groben Überblick habe ich sowieso. Ich muss schon wissen, wie es geht, bei vielen Bibliotheken kann man es gleich mitnehmen — bei der Staatsbibliothek ist es erst in drei bis vier Stunden da, manchmal in fünf Stunden. Dann gibt es noch Außenmagazine, da haben die Bibliotheken also ältere Bücher oder nicht so wichtige gelagert und dann muss man zwei Tage warten. Und das muss man alles wissen.

MSE: Dass Sie nicht falsche Hoffnungen machen?

PH: Ja, das geht nicht. Ich kann auch nicht sagen, das habe ich erst in drei Wochen. Wenn ich es da nicht finde, suche ich es dort. Also bemühe ich mich, immer alles heran zu schaffen, was gefragt ist.

MSE: Sie sind auch Marathonläufer!

PH: Da habe ich aber eine sehr gute Lehrerin gehabt, das war Frau Schlösser. Sie hat gesagt: "Geht nicht gibt's nicht." Und daran halte ich mich.

MSE: Ist es noch immer so, dass Schauspieler Hintergrundsmaterialien oder Information über die Dramaturgie bekommen?

PH: Das hängt von dem jeweiligen Regisseur und Dramaturgen ab, aber es ist in der Regel schon so, dass Schauspieler auch selbst zu mir kommen und sagen, ich möchte das und das dazu wissen. Können Sie nicht mal gucken? Ich besorge das dann auch, aber es hängt immer von der jeweiligen Inszenierung und vom Dramaturgen ab. Ich glaube, so wie es zu bestimmten Zeiten in der Form war, dass es so wohl nicht mehr ist. Zum Beispiel, ich kann mich daran erinnern, als Peter Zadek *Antonius und Cleopatra* (1994) inszeniert hat, hat er es in die Zeit von Lawrence von Arabien gelegt. Es gab fast kaum Hintergrundwissen bei den Schauspielern, und da hat Dramaturgin Bärbel Jaksch von mir viele Materialien — Texte und Fotomaterial — über diese Zeit beschaffen lassen. Das habe ich für die Schauspieler hundert Mal kopiert. Aber in dieser Form erlebe ich das nicht mehr so sehr, dass ich so viel Schauspielermaterial kopiere oder besorge, sondern ich glaube, das wird heute mehr auf den Leseproben verbal vermittelt. Ich habe noch nie an einer Leseprobe teilgenommen und kann es nicht so sagen, aber ich denke mal, dass es den Schauspielern doch irgendwo vermittelt wird, auch bei den Proben selbst. Also, so wie früher, wie ich es durch Bärbel Jaksch kennen gelernt habe, ist es eigentlich nicht mehr.

MSE: Ja, das habe ich ebenfalls von einigen langjährigen Mitgliedern des Ensembles gehört, dass man damals auch längere Probenzeiten und mehr Materialien zur Hand hatte. Jetzt eine Frage zur Organisation des Archivs. Ich bin immer noch erstaunt, wie schnell Sie so schnell auf meine Frage über eine Inszenierung aus dem Jahr 1954 antworten konnten. Sie haben mir die Mappe von *Hans Pfriem oder Kühnheit zahlt sich aus* sofort zeigen können. Es müsste hunderte von Ordnern hier sein. Wie viele sind es eigentlich?

PH: Also, es sind zweihundertsiebzehn Ordner, also Produktionsordner, Ordner, die einzelnen Stücken zugeordnet sind. Sie sind chronologisch sortiert. Das erste Stück ist *Mutter Courage* (Uraufführung am 11.1.1949), weil die am Deutschen Theater war und es wurde mit übernommen. Molierès *Don Juan* (Benno Besson,

1954) in der Bearbeitung von Brecht war zur Eröffnung am Haus am Schiffbauerdamm. Dann ist es chronologisch fortlaufend von Frau Schlösser aufgebaut worden. Sie hat letztendlich die Produktionsordner, die Stücke, die Texte, die Textfassungen — es gibt immer viele Fassungen — zu den einzelnen Inszenierungen, akribisch gesammelt.

MSE: Was meinen Sie mit "akribisch"?

PH: Das heißt sehr genau. Ich habe das Archiv von Frau Schlösser übernommen. Es gibt ein Findbuch, da sind Inszenierungen von der ersten bis zur letzten, das sind zweihundertsiebzehn, alle enthalten, so dass ich da nur nachschauen brauche. Suche ich zum Beispiel von

Heiner Müller *Germania 3 Gespenster am Toten Mann*, das ist unter 193, das sehen Sie hier. Ich weiß, da finde ich das gesamte Material zu Heiner Müllers *Germania 3*.

MSE: Sehr gut.

PH: Gleichzeitig gibt es noch Ordner für die Gastspiele, die das Berliner Ensemble gemacht hat. Und das hier wird immer von Wissenschaftlern sehr gefragt, meine heilige Ecke, da lasse ich niemanden so schnell hereinschauen. Das sind die Protokolle von den Dramaturgie- und Leitungssitzungen, aus den 50er Jahren bis zum Ende der Intendanz von Ruth Berghaus 1977. Dann gibt es die Abendprotokolle, die Abendberichte.

MSE: Was sind das, Abendberichte?

PH: Abendberichte, das sind von den Assistenten aufgeschriebene Änderungen oder Vorschläge oder Begutachtungen an den Abenden bei einzelnen Vorstellungen, die zu den Inszenierungen stattfinden. Was hat sich verändert, was müsste man in Proben wiederholen, was ist total schleifend. Das sind die Abendberichte, in denen man nachvollziehen kann, wie die Inszenierung ausgesehen hat.

MSE: Ah, das finde ich spannend, weil ich mich früher für die kleinen Änderungen in den einzelnen Vorstellungen zur DDR-Zeit interessiert habe. Da gab es eine versteckte Kritik, ohne dass die Zensur (das Ministerium) sie unbedingt mitbekommt. Ich dachte dann, es ist zu schwer, konkret zu erforschen, wo ein Schauspieler etwas gesagt hat, was nicht im Text ist, oder was er dem Text nach nicht hätte sagen dürfen. Wären solche Momente hier zu finden?

PH: Sie meinen die Extempores? Nein, ich glaube, die sind nicht in dem Buch enthalten. Es ist tatsächlich schwer, das nachzuvollziehen. Ich weiß nur, dass bei Jürgen Gosch in der Volksbühne, als Beispiel jetzt, ein Extempore kam, und zwar in seiner wunderbaren Inszenierung *Leonce und Lena* von Büchner (Jürgen Gosch, 1978). Valerio sagte, der Staatsrat ist versammelt, und da kamen auf die Bühne lauter ganz alte Herren, mit Stöcken und wackelnden Köpfen, also der Staatsrat der DDR. Ich habe die Inszenierung gesehen.

MSE: Es gab in der Inszenierung auch viele Südfrüchte, habe ich gelesen.

PH: Ja, es gab in der DDR keine Südfrüchte, und Valerio hat Bananen und Apfelsinen auf die Bühne gebracht. Es gab einen Riesenlacher im Publikum, weil es das bei uns alles nicht gab. In den Anspielungen hatte das Theater eine Möglichkeit etwas abzulassen, und konnte, im begrenzten Maße natürlich, Kritik üben.

MSE: Wäre so was nicht in den Abendberichten enthalten?

PH: Ich glaube nicht. In den Abendberichten geht es vorwiegend doch um die Erhaltung der Inszenierung. Also ich denke mal, dass es wichtig war, die Inszenierung so wie sie konzipiert wurde, auch aufrecht zu erhalten, was Arrangements und Textgenauigkeit betraf. Wenn Umbesetzungen waren, konnte man auch in die Abendberichte schauen. Aber wichtig war, dass man bemerkte, der Schauspieler hat sich da und da entwickelt oder er lässt das schleifen. Oder wenn ein Vorfall war, dass irgendwas passiert ist, das wurde auch in den Abendberichten festgehalten.

MSE: Das jemand stürzt, zum Beispiel?

PH: Ja, das kann man nachvollziehen, sicher auch, aber nicht vorwiegend.

MSE: Also zusammenfassend, wenn ich es richtig verstanden habe, hat das Archiv vier Teile: Inszenierungen, Gastspiele, Protokolle und Abendberichte.

PH: Dann gibt es noch Ordner mit Literatur über Brecht und Müller und noch die Drucksachen, die Heiner Müller herausgegeben hat, auf die ich auch sehr stolz bin, dass ich — und Herr Peymann und Herr Wündrich vor allen Dingen — sie gerettet haben. Es gibt auch zur Geschichte des Hauses einiges an Materialien, weil dazu auch sehr viele Fragen gestellt werden, die ich dann beantworte.

MSE: Und auch die Programmhefte?

PH: Die Programmhefte habe ich natürlich alle hier gesammelt. Also das Archiv des Berliner Ensembles hat Material vom Einzug von Bertolt Brecht, Helene Weigel und das Berliner Ensemble 1954 in das Haus am Schiffbauerdamm bis heute. Wobei das Material, das bis 1999 gesammelt wurde, hier ist, und ab 2000, das ist in der Dramaturgie im Haupthaus, im Bühnenhaus gegenüber.

MSE: Die Programmhefte, sagten Sie vorhin, werden hier nicht zusammengestellt.

PH: Nein, ich arbeite zu, als Zulieferbetrieb.

MSE: Wenn die Dramaturgen mit bestimmten Fragen zu Ihnen kommen, auch zu den Materialien für die Programmhefte, was für besondere Aufträge sind Ihnen in Erinnerung?

PH: Es kommen die unterschiedlichsten Fragen, aber schwierig in dem Sinne... Frau Schlösser hat gesagt: "Geht nicht gibt's nicht." Ich habe wirklich versucht, alles zu lösen. Also zum Beispiel die Frage von Herrn Karge, ob ich eine gute Dolmetscherin kenne, die eine Interlinearübersetzung zu *Vassa Shelesnowa* von Maxim Gorki anfertigen kann. Er hat bei uns am Haus *Vassa Shelesnowa* inszeniert und suchte eine Dolmetscherin aus dem Russischen ins Deutsche (Karge, 2012). Die habe ich gefunden. Sie kam nicht aus Berlin; sie war sehr weit von Berlin entfernt. Eine andere Dolmetscherin, selbst Russin, hat sie mir empfohlen. Sie hat Herrn Karge eine Interlinearübersetzung für *Vassa Shelesnowa* dann angefertigt. Es gibt wirklich die unterschiedlichsten Aufgaben, die ich bekomme. Also das Suchen nach einem Film, den es "eigentlich" nicht gibt. Den muss ich irgendwie auftreiben, was ich dann auch gern mache, weil ich so ein bisschen herausgefordert werde. Es entspricht nicht so dem täglichen Stereotyp, also nun das und das Buch, dann weiß ich, das habe ich in der Bibliothek zu suchen. Heißt es, den Film suchen wir, und den haben wir im Haus nicht, suche ich dann. Das ist ein besonderer Ansporn für mich. Ja, ich bin so ein bisschen Detektiv. Es ist manchmal so, dass viele Inszenierungen parallel laufen, und ich muss für alle Inszenierungen die Sekundärliteratur beschaffen. Da war einmal so viel zu beschaffen, dass ich mal zum Dramaturgen Holger Teschke gesagt habe, ich komme mir vor wie eine Vogelmutter, die ihre immer hungrigen Jungen füttern muss. So komme ich mir manchmal vor. Ständig kommt irgendwo einer, das und das suchen wir, das brauchen wir. Aber im Prinzip macht es mir Spaß. Ich mache die Arbeit gern.

MSE: Ja, das spürt man. Wie ist die Vorlaufzeit bei neuen Produktionen? Plötzlich am letzten Tag der Saison stehen die neuen Plakatschilder für die nächste Saison draußen am Haus. Haben Sie schon lange vorher Materialien für die neuen Inszenierungen gesucht?

PH: Also in den meisten Fällen, da ich nicht weiß, in welche Richtung die Gedanken des Dramaturgen gehen, warte ich, bis ich angesprochen werde, weil es von der Konzeption abhängt. Im Allgemeinen warte ich ab, was der Dramaturg sich vorstellt, was er haben möchte und dazu kann ich Material besorgen. Nein, ich mache keine Hausaufgabe im Voraus. Ich muss gestehen, die Zeit habe ich gar nicht, wenn der Betrieb am Laufen ist. Es muss alles sehr schnell gehen und wie gesagt, habe ich nebenbei auch noch das Archiv hier zu betreuen.

MSE: Es schaut hier alles absolut ordentlich aus.

PH: Ja, da lege ich auch großen Wert darauf. Man sagt zwar, das Genie beherrscht das Chaos, aber ich habe lieber die Ordnung. (lacht)

MSE: Sie haben Ihren eigenen Arbeitsstil gefunden, aber in all den Jahren am BE haben Sie mit vielen Dramaturgen gearbeitet, das heißt mit den unterschiedlichsten Arbeitsmethoden.

PH: Ich habe schon sehr viele Dramaturgen am BE erlebt, auch viele Intendanten. Als ich hierher kam waren Peter Zadek, Peter Palitzsch, Heiner Müller, Fritz Marquardt (die Intendanten). Das waren erst fünf Männer, dann hat Matthias Langhoff das BE verlassen und es waren diese vier Intendanten, die sich dann aber auch als Gruppe auflösten. Dann wurde Heiner Müller Intendant und er hat das Theater bis zu seinem Tode am 30. Dezember 1995 geführt. Danach war es eine kurze Zeit Martin Wuttke, der aber auch die Intendanz niederlegte. Dann war es Stephan Suschke als Interims-Intendant bis Herr Peymann das Theater übernahm und es letztendlich auch zu einem der führenden Theater in Berlin gemacht hat. Das würde ich schon sagen.

MSE: Jeder Intendant hat Dramaturgen; jeder Dramaturg hat Fragen an das Archiv. Einige der Mitarbeiter am BE sind auch schon sehr lang am Theater, nicht?

PH: Also Manfred Karge ist Regisseur und Schauspieler. Ich habe in der Arbeit nicht all zuviel mit ihm zu tun gehabt, aber wenn er einen Buchwunsch hat, den erfülle ich in der Regel immer, einfach weil ich Herrn Karge sehr verehre. Als Regisseur und Schauspieler ist er in meinen Augen ein linker Regisseur, der mich hier bei einer Veranstaltung sehr berührt hat. Er hat "Die Kinderschuhe aus Lublin" vorgetragen (Johannes R. Becher). Es hat mich so berührt, dieses furchtbare Geschehen damals in Lublin. Die anderen, die bei dieser Veranstaltung aufgetreten sind, habe ich alle vergessen, aber an die "Die Kinderschuhe aus Lublin" von Manfred Karge kann ich mich erinnern. Ich finde, es war auch großartig, wie er bei uns Brecht inszeniert. Ich sagte, für mich ist Heiner Müller der größte Autor, aber auch Brecht. Also Manfred Karge ist ein Brecht-Regisseur und hat auch andere Stücke inszeniert, aber vorwiegend Brecht, würde ich sagen, soweit ich mich jetzt erinnere. Ich bedauere es sehr, dass ich mit ihm nicht näher zusammengearbeitet habe. Er ist Regisseur und Schauspieler und hatte Dramaturgen. Ich arbeite mehr oder weniger mit den Dramaturgen zusammen.

MSE: Er ist auch Autor.

PH: Natürlich ist er auch Autor, *Jacke wie Hose* (1982), *Die Eroberung des Südpols* (1986), *Killerfische* (1991), auch andere Sachen, *Alter Mann und Jungfrau* (2013). Wie gesagt, ich bewundere seine Arbeit.

MSE: Auch ich finde die Arbeit Manfred Karges großartig. Zum Beispiel neulich seine Inszenierung, *Flüchtlingsgespräche* von Brecht (Juni 2013) und sein *Alter Mann und Jungfrau* anlässlich seiner 75. Geburtstagsfeier (1.3.2013). Noch sehe ich in meiner Erinnerung die gigantische Projektionskulisse mit dem Stadtpark als Hintergrund für das Lesestück. Das bringt mich zu der Frage zurück, die ich vorhin stellen wollte, haben Sie auch Fotos hier im Archiv?

PH: Die Fotos sind an das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv übergeben worden, die Negative. Ich habe hier noch vereinzelt Positive, aber wenn ich Fragen zu Fotos habe, leite ich die weiter an das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv.

MSE: Manchmal sehe ich, dass eine Vorstellung aufgezeichnet wird. Haben Sie hier im Archiv Videos von jeder Produktion?

PH: Ich habe keine Aufnahmen hier. Die hat unser Ton-Archiv unter der Leitung vom Ton-Ingenieur Alexander Bramann.

MSE: Oh! Wie viele Archive gibt es denn am Haus?

PH: Es gibt das Theaterarchiv hier und dann gibt es ein Ton-Archiv. Ich habe keine Möglichkeit Videos zu archivieren, abzuspielen und zu demonstrieren. Ich kooperiere immer mit Axel Bramann, wenn ich von einem Wissenschaftler eine Frage zu einer Inszenierung bekomme, die er dokumentiert haben will. Dann frage ich Herrn Bramann, weil man die Videos einfach so nicht herausgeben kann, es sei denn der Wissenschaftler schaut sie sich hier an. Aber viele Wissenschaftler sind auch im Ausland und wollen die Videos zugesandt haben. Ich muss immer sagen, es hängt doch mit den Rechten an den Inszenierungen zusammen. Man kann nicht einfach jedes x-beliebige Video herausgeben, nur weil sich jemand jetzt dafür interessiert. Ich meine auch Privatpersonen, von denen ich auch Anfragen habe, die ein Stück nicht gesehen haben und ein Video von mir haben wollen. Diese Anfragen habe ich auch. Ich muss immer sagen, nein, ich kann aus rechtlichen Gründen diese Videos nicht herausgeben. Es liegen Autorenrechte, wie bei Bertolt Brecht zum Beispiel, bei Heiner Müller, und diese Rechte haben den Vorrang. Da kann ich mich nicht einfach darüber hinwegsetzen und die Videos herausgeben.

MSE: Sie bekommen die Anfragen aber zuerst, dann leiten Sie sie eventuell weiter.

PH: Ja, ich bekomme alle und ich wende mich je nach Einzelfall an Herrn Bramann. Er sagt mir, das haben wir mitgeschnitten, also die Aufzeichnung haben wir, aber das entscheidet auch noch für eine Inszenierung Herr Peymann und die Dramaturgie. Ist das ein Mitschnitt, eine Totale, oder ist es mit dramaturgischen Gesichtspunkten geschnitten, also Nahaufnahmen oder Großaufnahmen, Kamerafahrt, und so weiter? Sind es nur Totale, dann entscheiden Dramaturgen meistens, dass es nicht für wissenschaftliche Zwecke zur Verfügung gestellt wird. Das habe ich bisher so erlebt, muss ich dazu sagen. Es gibt auch Ausnahmen. Es wird aber auch entschieden, dass bestimmte Aufzeichnungen an die einzelnen, sagen wir Interessenten, weitergegeben werden. Ich kann das nicht so ad hoc machen;

ich muss mich mit der Dramaturgie in Verbindung setzen, mit Herrn Peymann, und ich muss mich auch mit Axel Bramann in Verbindung setzen, der ja das Tonmaterial und das Videoarchiv inne hat.

MSE: Sie sind also die Verbindung zwischen dem Wissenschaftler und dem Videoarchiv. Sie haben auch eine Bibliothek im Haus Wie ist es mit den Büchern dort? Bestellen Sie regelmäßig neue? Wie wächst der Bestand?

PH: Wir bekommen sie einerseits bei Lesungen, als Belegexemplare, andererseits aber ist es so, dass wir zu Inszenierungen auch Bücher kaufen, die dann in unsere Bibliothek einfließen. So vergrößert sich eigentlich die Bibliothek. Auch wenn wir zum Beispiel zu bestimmten Autoren alles haben wollen, alles, was sie geschrieben haben. Wir kaufen die Bücher, sofern es sie zu kaufen gibt, auch antiquarisch oder auch im Großhandel.

MSE: Machen Sie diesen Kauf selbst?

PH: Ja, den Auftrag bekomme ich. Ich habe auch die Aufgabe, die Signaturen einzutragen, also sie für unsere Bibliothek zu archivieren.

MSE: Im Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv gibt es eine sehr große Bibliothek zu Brecht. Sie arbeiten sicher auch öfters mit dem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. Können Sie die Zusammenarbeit beschreiben? Bekommen Sie manchmal Anfragen vom Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv oder suchen Sie etwas dort? Die zwei Archive liegen räumlich nicht weit auseinander.

PH: Es ist so, dass das Gewicht bei den Anfragen doch mehr auf meiner Seite liegt, was die Anfragen an das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv betrifft. (lacht)

MSE: Gibt es Materialien, die in beiden Archiven vorhanden sind?

PH: Nein, das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv hat Handschriften. Die haben Material, das wir hier nicht haben, und Dr. Erdmut Wizisla hat ein sehr spezifisches Wissen über Brecht. Auch seine Mitarbeiter Frau Helgrid Streidt und in der Fotoabteilung die neue Kollegin Frau Anett Schubotz. Ich habe ein gutes Verhältnis, würde ich von meiner Seite aus sagen, zum Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. Es kommen zu mir natürlich auch Fragen vom Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, also zu den Inszenierungen, zu denen das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv kein Material hat. Das habe ich dann hier und ich gebe dann die entsprechenden Auskünfte. Aber in der Regel liegt das Gewicht der Anfragen mehr bei mir.

MSE: Dieser Austausch von Informationen zwischen den Archiven ist spannend und wäre auch ein gutes Forschungsprojekt. Für jetzt möchte ich mich sehr für das Gespräch bedanken. Wie Sie sich mit so viel Begeisterung und Wissen den unterschiedlichsten und schwierigsten Aufgaben zuwenden, ist einfach bewundernswert.

The Good Person of Setzuan 15-17, 20-22 February 2013

Vanderbilt University Theater Director: Wendy Knox, Frank Theater, Minneapolis

When Wendy Knox came to Nashville to direct a production of *The Good Person of Setzuan*, Margaret Setje-Eilers sat down to talk to her about the experience

It is no secret among Brecht scholars that *The Good Person of Setzuan* inquires into the problem of being good in our imperfect world. Staging the play in a university setting raises even more pressing questions: Will spectators, who may have no particular understanding of Brechtian theater, be able to recognize the overarching critique? And on stage, will student actors who have not had much exposure to epic theater get a feel for what they are doing? Having a university theater as the setting and non-professional actors who confront, grapple with, and engage with a text are promising, yet daunting ingredients for an enactment of Brecht's aesthetic. Wendy Knox, of the Frank Theater in Minneapolis and Fred Coe Artist-in-Residence at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN) took on and met the challenge with a bedazzling production in February 2013.

From the way the staging transmitted the contradictions and jarring paradoxes of the text, it was evident that the production was not Wendy Knox's first experience with Brecht. I found that Ms. Knox has an impressive production history of Brecht's works. Her production company, Frank Theatre (www.franktheatre.org), has established a reputation for its Brecht work: *The Threepenny Opera* (1999); *Arturo Ui* (2001), staged in a former munitions plant; *Mother Courage* (2006) in another abandoned warehouse; *Puntila and his Hired Man* (2008) in the former City Public Works warehouse. The Frank Theatre has also done other productions that show Brecht's influence, such as *The Cradle Will Rock* and *Cabaret*. Wendy Knox has worked frequently with students at colleges and universities, and she is also a teaching artist in the public schools in Minnesota. She has directed at her alma mater Grinnell College in Iowa and a number of other institutions, including Syracuse University, Macalester College, The University of Minnesota, Hamline University, and The University of Northern Iowa. She kindly agreed to answer some of my questions on what was an elaborate theatrical event for Vanderbilt University.

MSE: Wendy, during the intermission I overheard some students in the audience discuss what they thought Shen Te had done wrong and why she wasn't successful after she had received the reward from the gods for her good act of taking them in. The student spectators debated on the level of the characters ("If she had, then..."), chewing on the notion that good is useless, bad is useful, not yet considering the world and its need for change instead of leaving it up to non-existent heroes. I asked one of them to write me a comment after she had seen the whole play:

I thought that the production succeeded in merging farce and social critique to leave the audience both entertained and edified. By compelling the audience to arbitrate the plot's resolution, the play challenges the audience members to revise their basis for assigning culpability in a world where conflicting social and unseen pressures control the actions of the individual.

Based on what she said, you got through to her. I don't think you left out much of

the text in your almost three-hour performances. How did the student actors keep the energy going for so long?

Wendy Knox: They were troopers! Especially Laura Payne, in the role of Shen Te, who doesn't get much of a break! Actually, I did cut about a half an hour from the text, and still felt I needed to cut more because I HATE three-hour plays! But we didn't get to it and as long as we were coming in under three hours, I could live with it. It was a tight rehearsal schedule, though, especially as we approached tech week. We had only three hours to rehearse, so that meant a run through with no time for notes or additional rehearsal. The students worked very hard, and most of them took the commitment really seriously and that's what allowed us to get the show together to the degree that we did.

MSE: The water seller Wang (Beau Bassewitz) and Shen Te/Shui Ta (Laura Payne) were on stage for almost all three hours. Many of these students are double majors in fields such as economics and history. Peter McNally, one of the spotlight operators under the guidance of Matthew Stratton (Technical Direction), is an electrical engineering major. The students' production confidence was exceedingly strong. How did these students manage to pull off a major production like this? In other words, I wonder how the student cast responded to Brecht.

Wendy Knox: I think that Brecht was an entirely new experience for most of them. And like many students - like me, when I worked on my first Brecht play as an undergrad - I think much of the theory and many of the reasons why I approached the piece the way I did, may not have sunk in. I assured them that every time I read a Brecht play, I feel totally stupid and keep asking myself "What's this thing about?" But get into a room with a bunch of actors, and read it, and ask questions, and realize that all of the "rules" about how to do Brecht can be completely reinvented as his ideas have already impacted so much of contemporary theatre. I tried to make my own understanding of many of Brecht's ideas as clear as possible, but I also was totally free with inventing our own approach. The students were very game to try things in learning about approaching a Brechtian style, but it takes several romps with the material to trust it. In Minneapolis, I have a somewhat informal company of actors, some of whom I have worked with for nearly twenty years. As a group, we've learned, taught ourselves, and developed ways of approaching Brecht's work and other pieces similar to his. I think of how long it has taken us to get comfortable with the process - in fact, really developing our own process. The Vanderbilt students were very game for trying things. I left the experience really thinking about how you train students to do this kind of work in a fairly short rehearsal frame, and how you teach this kind of style to students who may not have had that much exposure to a broad range of style and aesthetics. It's an interesting challenge that I am still contemplating.

MSE: Your actors understood well what they were doing, with groups of characters freezing into tableaus, sound effects like two visible pieces of wood clapped together to make a quotation of a knock on a non-existent door, a cash register ringing, walking steps, and actors who directly address the audience. In particular, I thought Shu Fu the barber (Sam Mallick) carried off a parody of his role exceptionally well. He managed to inject a lot of irony by wiggling his eyebrows and using exaggerated gestures. He revealed something else besides his role. Did you encounter resistance among

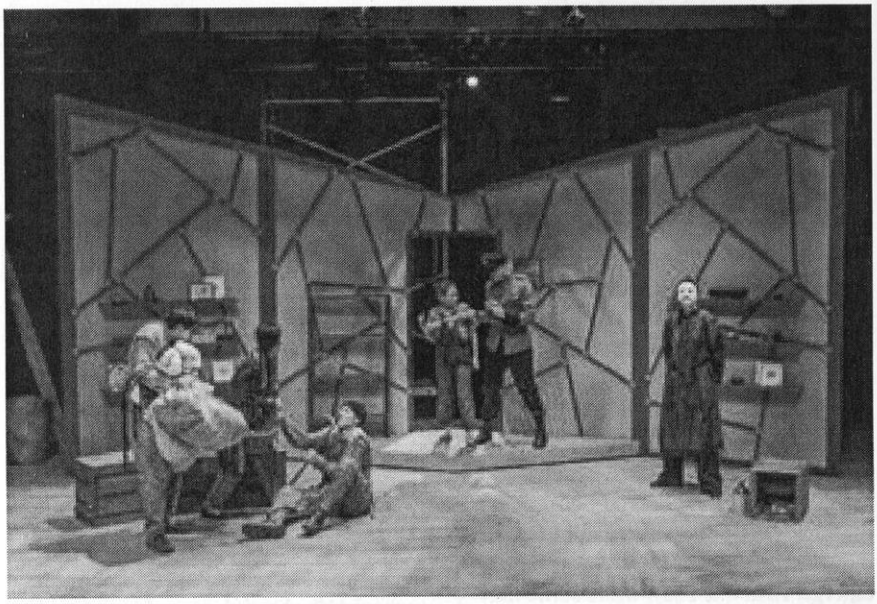
the student actors to Brecht's famous concept of the alienation effect?

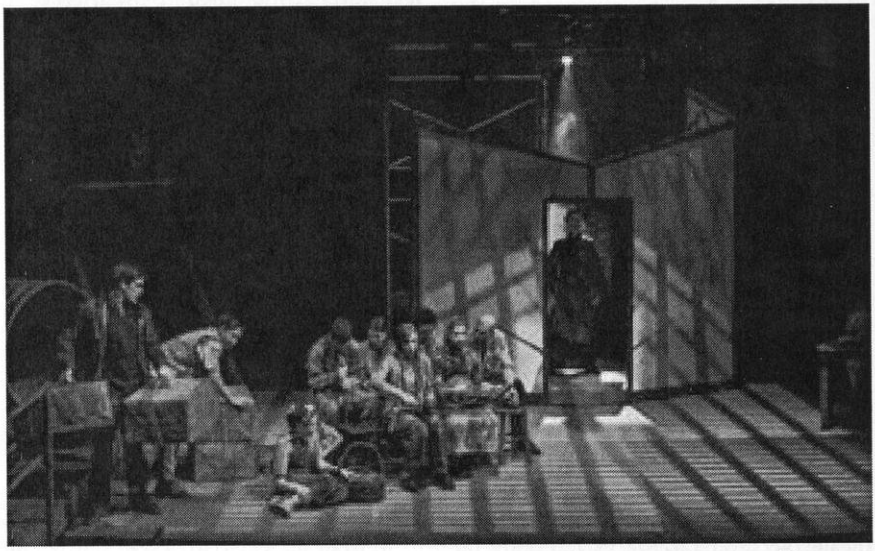
Wendy Knox: I encouraged them to exaggerate, make fools of themselves, saying that we could always pull it back. Once one of them began to take it out there, others began to tiptoe in the same direction. With Sam, we found certain things like "What if he loved to rub his belly?" or "What if the barber constantly combed his hair?" and from those things I think Sam did find a great sense of the style. I'm not sure the whole idea of "alienation effect" sunk in. We discussed it, but then I just began asking certain things of them, and I am sure that they thought I was crazy, but as they did them, a sense of the style began to emerge. And like I say, while some may not have sunk in totally this time, it takes a few times around the block to begin to understand it in your bones. They worked hard at some of the ridiculous things I asked them to do.

MSE: I noticed early on that I was not hearing Paul Dessau's music. What you've done with the music is admirable and daring. What made you decide to have a student compose the score? When I discussed the show recently with one of the directors at the Berlin Ensemble, he commented that he found the idea of new compositions remarkable. The music seemed quite contemporary, a mixture of gospel and other styles. Since music is one of the three elements of theater, according to Brecht, it is bold to add new settings, for example of the song "The Day of Saint Never-to-be," presented by Sun (Seth Friedman). Can you say something about the process of composition? Are the rights to the music included with the rights to stage the text? How did it work to have someone compose new music? Have you done this before in your other Brecht stagings?

Wendy Knox: The rights to the music are NOT included with the rights to the texts. Not always. So we have had various arrangements, including using original composition. With *Mother Courage*, we used a score by Jonathan Dove. With *Arturo Ui* and *Puntila*, we had a composer write the music. With *Good Person*, I asked for a composer right away. The music was composed by Noah Fram, a student who was recommended by the faculty. The musical arrangements were done by Noah's advisor, a musician in Nashville named Paul Binkley, who was musical director for *Cabaret*, now playing at the Tennessee Repertory Theatre. He has also worked a few times with Leah Lowe (Chair of Theatre at Vanderbilt). The lyrics were all included in the text, and Noah set them to his original music, with Paul's guidance.

MSE: Your production spilled out into the area on each side of the stage, down one aisle, and you used all three levels of the theater, including two levels of balconies. The set changes were quick, agile, and accompanied by something that reminded me of Asian flute music. The set was quite realistic in a Brechtian way, with the tobacco shop and an impressive willow tree made from what looked like a huge sun umbrella frame with string hanging on it. Many productions I've seen in Berlin have practically no set, and even *Mother Courage* uses a sparse set (Claus Peymann, 2005). Recently, actors performed Friedrich Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena* at the Berlin Ensemble on and around rows of about fifteen chairs in a small theater space, set up to reflect the chair setup on the other three sides of the room (Nicole Felden, 27 Feb. 2013). Some spectators initially sat down on the chairs, then they had to move. I imagine that this abstractness would have been hard for students to work with. Can you say something about





your decisions for the set and your work with Phillip Franck (Lighting and Scenic Design)?

Wendy Knox: Phillip Franck knows that space much better than I do, so I relied on his sense about many things, including how to orient the audience and the relationship to the playing area. In Minneapolis, when we often perform in empty warehouses or abandoned historically significant buildings, we have the luxury (and the work!) of creating what we want that relationship to be. It was similar with the Vanderbilt production - we could choose what setup we wanted to use. If there are levels in the theatre, I'm inclined to use them and to use as much of the space as we can. As far as

the design, we all talked about where and how to set the play. I was of the mind that, while the play is clearly set in Szechuan, that location is an overlay - the time and the place could be something of our making. So there are classic elements in the costume and set design, but they are juxtaposed to something ridiculous, like the umbrella hats on the gods. The set needed to be flexible and the changes were a huge challenge, but I think that the production was visually gorgeous at many moments.

MSE: Yes, I agree, and the lighting played a crucial role. The costumes of the gods were particularly stunning in red, green-yellow, and blue. (see inside cover) All three gods wore masks and long, sumptuous, glittery arm-piece hangings, little upturned golden shoulder wings, and hats that involved the tops of umbrellas. As the play went on, their costumes became more and more disheveled through their experiences in the world. My visual memory also recalls baskets, some decorated with fruit, on the heads of the homeless (later tobacco factory workers) and on several other figures. They were marvelously imaginative, and as Alexandra Sargent Capps (Costume Design) explained, there was a concept behind using "found" materials. The baskets drew together and identified a whole class of people, and at the same time, they revealed playful inventiveness and constancy that surpassed the "mere" glitter of the gods. Did you use a model? How did you end up with these creations?

Wendy Knox: We didn't use a model, but Alexandra Sargent Capps is wonderfully creative! I am somewhat spoiled by a more than twenty-year relationship with a costume designer in Minneapolis (Kathy Kohl) who, like Alex, comes up with AMAZING things from found objects. Alex did a lot of research and wrestled with my refusal to place the play either in East or West, modern or classic times, but she hung in there with me and, as I had hoped, created a unique sense of time and place through her choices. The basket hats were a delight. The first day, the students all came in, mostly just with plain baskets on their heads. Then I asked what was going to happen to them, and then gradually they took on individual shapes and personalities of the wearers, and I loved what she did.

MSE: What is next? Will you continue to stage Brecht? Can you give us a glimpse of what might come to the Minneapolis area?

Wendy Knox: Right now, I'm in rehearsals for a play by Irish playwright Enda Walsh, called *Misterman*. I would love to come back to Vanderbilt. I had a great time here - the students were great, the faculty was great, and Nashville is a fabulous city! I LOVE to work on Brecht. My company, Frank Theatre, is celebrating its 25th anniversary next year. We staged *The Threepenny Opera* in 1999, our first Brecht piece. We've learned a lot working on his material over the years. We're contemplating another staging of *Threepenny* next spring that will give us a chance to have another run at the play after gaining experience over the years on his other work.

MSE: Good luck, Wendy! Your answers help us to understand some of the intriguing strategies you have developed over the years to *work on* Brecht, as you put it, especially in an academic theater environment. I hope you will come back to Vanderbilt soon.

Photos on these pages and inside cover: Phillip Franck

The Good Person of Szechwan
Bertolt Brecht
Public Theater, New York
October 18-December 8, 2013
Directed by Lear deBessonet

Guest Commentary:
Laura Caparrotti, founding artistic director of Kairos Italy Theater in New York, went to the Public Theater in early November to see the heralded Foundry Theatre Production of *The Good Person of Szechwan*. She too came away a convert.

A country quartet - or at least what appears to be a country quartet – welcomes the audience members who slowly fill the house, looking for their seats, checking their neighbors, deciding where to put their bag or jacket. At the entrance, the usher has diligently alerted everyone that "programs will only be given out at the end of the show". People smile, accepting the first rule of a game that seems to have started already.

The passage from pre-show to the show is smooth: the band moves to the back of the stage and Wang the water-seller enters. He's funnily dressed and he speaks to the audience like he's the host of the evening. Slowly, the set is unveiled. A little town of small cute houses with little roofs and one or two windows. Everything is made from cardboard and the entire view looks like a sketch from a cartoon. Wang narrates the story we are about to see. It's a fairy-tale, with Gods, bad and good people. It's just a nice fable. Or at least, it seems to be. Even the characters, presented to us by Wang, are all unique and amusing. The Gods are in white; it is the only white in the play. They are light, they are powerful, they are wise. Shen Te is in red, the color of sex and of vice. Shui ta, her cousin, is in a grey suit and bowler hat, like a Magritte man going to work. Visually, the play is essentially like a Chinese painting peopled with satirical caricatures. Even the movements that each actor creates are precise and again essential to the play.

The entire action takes place on the stage in front of the set. It's a cabaret, it's a circus. It's pure Brecht. In the recent past, productions of Brecht plays have focused on the set, on the appearance of the characters, on everything else but the words and the story. Here, his words are the absolute protagonists. The direction makes clear that we need to enjoy the story to understand the message. Brecht wrote that his ideal performer "acts in such a way that nearly every sentence could be followed by a verdict of the audience and practically every gesture submitted for the public's approval." He also stated "A theater that makes no contact with the public is a nonsense". In the show at the Public Theater, Brecht is then alive in every aspect. The actors are delivering the lines to the audience. There are no tricks, there is a society, as painted by Brecht, which is clearly presented in front of our eyes, so we can't turn our face away and if we do, we know we don't want to see. And this is Brecht. The beauty and strength of this particular production seems to be the care that the director, the cast and the entire production put in wanting to pay homage to the work of the author.

The cast is brilliant. They carry their stories on a stage that becomes a room, a house, an office, a garden. The terms Vaudeville or German cabaret come to mind. The work of Karl Valentin, of

Buster Keaton, and of the old tradition of theater troupes touring from town to town influence the staging of the play. The casting of Taylor Mac, "whose gender is performer, and who goes by the gender pronoun, judy" as Shen Te and Shui Ta is absolute genius. Mac, who's used to working as a pastiche artist, bringing different sound, forms and tropes together and mashing them to make something new, creates two characters who have elements of clownishness and of drama, of melodrama and of realism. And yet, they are us. Shen Te is the correct one, she follows the rules, she helps others, she

is open and caring. She is us believing in what's right and in giving without necessarily receiving. Shui Ta is what we become when we cannot live in the world just by being nice: we need to defend ourselves and his cynicism is the answer. Shen Te is beautiful, classy, smiling, colorful. Shui Ta is angular, still, serious. There is no space for a smile or a caress. Shen Te trusts the same people Shui Ta dislikes and doesn't trust. Taylor Mac plays them as the two sides of the some coin. The entire cast creates caricatures that are human and dramatic. This is the great lesson of Brecht: he depicts a world that easily turns out to be a big tragic comedy. Who among us hasn't felt him or herself to be living in a world like that at one time or another? Lear deBessonet, director of the play, talks in the program about "drawing from a smorgasbord of theatrical forms – including commedia dell'arte and musical theater - our attempt is to strip away the conventions we have come to associate with Brecht so that we can get to the core of his urgent, revelatory, dangerous play and ask anew, can a person be good and yet live in this world?" At the end of the show, the actors, deBessonet and Brecht himself leave us with this question. We can decide to bring it home or ignore it.

In the meantime, you finally have your program… maybe to remind you that you have a question to answer.

With: Vinie Burrows (God #1), Mia Katigbak (God #2), Mary Shultz (God #3), Kate Benson (Mrs. Shin), Ephraim Birney (the Nephew), Clifton Duncan (Grandfather/Yang Sun), Jack Allen Greenfield (Boy/Priest/Carpenter's Son), Brooke Ishibashi (the Woman), Paul Juhn (the Man/Mr. Shu Fu), Lisa Kron (Mrs. Mi Tzu/Mrs. Yang), Taylor Mac (Shen Te/Shui Ta), David Turner (Wang the Water Seller/Waiter) and Darryl Winslow (Carpenter/Policeman/ Unemployed Man).
Photos: Carol Rosegg

Entertainment Offensive: *The Threepenny Opera*, *Life of Galileo*, and *The Parasite* at the Staatsschauspiel in Dresden, June 2013

Reviewed by Andy Spencer

A century ago, on September 13, 1913, King Friedrich August III of Saxony, not a man noted for his love of the dramatic arts, put aside his prejudices for the evening and attended the opening of the New Royal Theater in Dresden. In hindsight, this may not appear to have been a particularly auspicious moment to embark on a new cultural venture, but on that evening the King was welcomed into his box, as tradition would have it, with Carl Maria Weber's *Jubel-Cantata*, and the mayor led the crowd in cheers for the monarch. His Royal Highness was sufficiently flattered to stick around for the first half of the evening's entertainment, Kleist's fragment *Robert Guiskard*, but left before Otto Ludwig's *Torgauer Heide* (Torgau Heath), a one-acter apparently chosen for its rousing patriotism and devotion to the troops. After that the leaderless revellers decamped to the Hotel Europäischer Hof for a slap-up banquet.

I know this because I have Peter Michalzik's essay on the history of the theater open on the table in front of me, or rather an excerpt from the longer text which appeared in the 400-page historical overview *100 Jahre Staatsschauspiel Dresden* (edited by Wilfried Schulz and Harald Müller, Theater der Zeit, 2012). The excerpt can be found in *100 Jahre Staatsschauspiel Dresden. Das Sonderheft* ("Special Edition"), a glossy fifty-page freebie I nabbed in the lobby. Pardon the repetition, but I think it underscores the fact that much is being made of the anniversary. And rightly so, a hundred years is a long time, and Michalzik has a good deal on which to report, including the first real scandal in the life of the new theater when Reinhard Goering's expressionistic depiction of the absurd horror of war, *Naval Encounter* ("Seeschlacht"), was premiered in a closed performance in February, 1918, i.e. a full nine months before the end of hostilities. This time the King was having none of it and that Sunday-morning matinee remained the one and only performance in Dresden. Not long afterwards the King was out of a job but the show went on, albeit following name changes for both the theater and the country.

But such an anniversary is in and of itself not necessarily enough to warrant another round of back-slapping here unless, well unless good things are afoot in 2013, one hundred years later, and according to Christine Wahl of the *Berliner Tagesspiegel*, they are: "From a dramatic standpoint the Saxon state capital is (...) excellently positioned in this jubilee year. Since Wilfried Schulz took control in autumn 2009 (...) the theater has consistently notched up record audiences. And invitations to the Berlin Theater Festival and to the Müllheim Theater Days, the most important German-language contemporary drama festivals, point to the city's return to theater's premier league. Schulz does indeed seem to have been successful in productively engaging with the oft-cited Dresden sensibility – a mixture of above average cultural interest on the one hand, and an equal

devotion to tradition on the other."

So far so good, but, I hear you cry, there are plenty of good theaters, what does this all have to do with Brecht? Patience: the above is taken from the preamble to Wahl's review of the production chosen to open the gala-year, namely *The Threepenny Opera*, of which Wahl writes: "An entertainment offensive with the stamp of conceptual quality: The season opening could (...) hardly have turned out better."

And with that we arrive at the meat of the matter as, having had the opportunity over the past three weeks to see three of the productions premiered during the past season, I can only say that what is afoot is an entertaining, provocative, and decidedly stimulating playing out of the debate as to the place and possibilities of, for want of a better term, traditional, big-stage theater in the face of seemingly limitless cultural options, not to mention a fundamental questioning of the whole enterprise in the form of such wildly popular but critically divisive genre-busting, theatrical experimentation as Punchdrunk's latest take on site-specific "immersive theater" in London (*The Drowned Man*), or New York City's Nature Theater of Oklahoma performing its *Life and Times* marathon over fifteen hours (barbecue included) as part of the *Berliner Festspiele*. That the productions in Dresden have in their own way provoked no small amount of heated debate is attested to by the critical responses, more of which below; that they have met with popular resonance, by the record attendances mentioned above by Wahl. That two of the three productions I saw were Friederike Heller's *The Threepenny Opera* and Armin Petras' *Life of Galileo* makes of the whole thing fodder for *CIBS*.

That's Entertainment. Whose Entertainment?

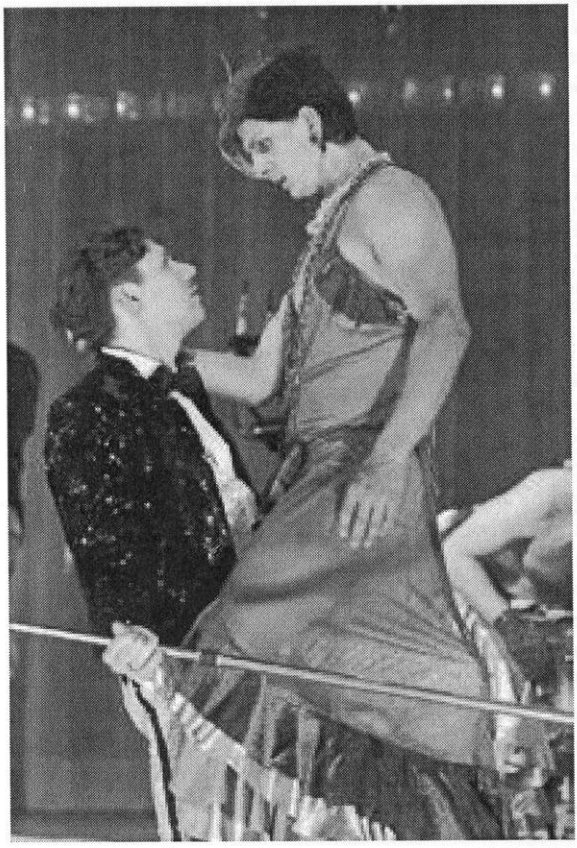
In their responses to all three productions under review here, the third being Stefan Bachmann's revival of Schiller's comedy *Der Parasit oder Die Kunst sein Glück zu machen* ("The Parasite or the Art of Making One's Own Happiness"), the critics can certainly not be accused of fence-sitting; either rapturous or damning, the reviews leave the reader in no doubt as to where the combatants stand. These responses are, of course, conditioned in large part by the very different types of play under discussion here, and the expectations coupled to productions of them: Universal praise for *The Parasite* for entertaining its audiences, as a comedy should; a parting of the ways when it comes to *The Threepenny Opera* as to entertain harbors the danger of "missing the point", although the play does admittedly contain some jolly songs; and downright hostility in the case of *Galileo* because, as far as I can tell, it's not supposed to be entertaining. While the first two could possibly lend themselves to ruminations on what it means to entertain, the third most certainly doesn't. Put simply, the camps divide along the lines of those who would use the epithet "entertaining" as a cudgel to beat a production for pandering, and those who see the productions as attempts to ask questions about that most slippery of notions.

Heller, whose previous work with Brecht includes a 2010 production of *The Good Person of Szechwan* at Berlin's Schaubühne, is seen to be taking *The Threepenny Opera* (premiere in Dresden, September 14, 2012) back to its 1928 roots when, it should be remembered, the "Canon Song" was met with such thunderous applause that it had to

be repeated. The playfulness and contemporary references of the revue-style production, its advocates argue, are nothing if not consistent with the intent of the original: The evening's tone is set from the very outset when the "Moritat" is sung not by a balladeering street-singer, but rather by the whole cast in turn, who then finish the song as a kicking chorus-line, a choreography which will be repeated for the "Jealousy Duet". The titles are not swung in from the wings but rather spray-painted onto various surfaces by a masked graffiti-artist. (As an unintended consequence of which I couldn't help but be reminded of the production when, a couple of weeks later, I saw "NSA = Stasi" dotting the Berlin landscape.) The members of Mackie's gang wear muppet-heads and at one point the Peachums are transformed into Statler and Waldorf, interrupting and commenting from their loge. I could go on but these examples will suffice for now.

With regard to the last-mentioned, critic Christian Rakow writing for *nachtkritik.de* wants to draw a parallel between the Muppet Show and the "theater-revolutionary Brecht". The TV show, Rakow argues, was itself an example of estrangement, of laying bare the workings, a show about putting on a show, but crucially for Heller it is also an example of a cultural product which began life as something radically new but which over time became safely mainstream. Seen in this light, the production faces up to the capacity of the culture industry to effortlessly defang everything, including not just the Muppets but, of course, Mackie and Polly. Heller looks back in order to capture the ebullient spirit of the original but does so in such a way that she confronts the contemporary audience with the question of what to do with the canonized work when the shelf-life of much popular culture can be measured in mouse-clicks and product-placement advertising revenue. Critics like Rakow, the above-cited Wahl, and Esther Slevogt of the *taz* concur in adjudging the production to have shifted the emphasis away from the emerging societal critique of the original, without eliminating it entirely, but are happy to take this in stride because of the skilful way in which Heller pushes the play into a different direction, and one which bears rich fruit. Not all agree: In his review of the Dresden company's guest appearance at the Augsburg Brecht Festival 2013, Stefan Dosch (*Augsburger Allgemeine*) is not buying it, accusing the "Entertainment-Show" of passing over all critical aspects. He is full of praise for the cast, in particular Sebastian Wendelin who plays a transvestite Jenny and is indeed a revelation, Christian Friedel (who some will recognise from Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon*) as Mackie, Sonja Beißwenger as Polly, and Thomas Eisen as Peachum, but only because they transcend the "anti-psychological delineation of the performing characters". It's only at the end of his review that Dosch concedes that maybe Heller is after something else in her production, only to then dismiss the idea, as to mount an entertaining production in order to critique our entertainment-saturated cultural landscape is akin to applauding one's own failure. I would better be able to empathise with Dosch if it were Heller's aim to decry, for then she really would be charging at windmills, but the production is far too knowing to fall for that. The aim here is to expose.

Dosch misses the "bite" of the original but he also misses, perhaps intentionally, what Heller adds, and nowhere is this more evident than in his praise for



Above: Christian Friedel as Mackie with his muppet-gang

Left: Sebastian Wendelin as Jenny serenades Mackie

Photos: David Baltzer

Wendelin's pensive rendition of the "Solomon-Song". Despite his enthusiasm for the singer's performance, Dosch ignores the staging, which sees Mackie in a spotlight behind Jenny striking the classic Michael Jackson moonwalker-pose, and just as we know what became of Solomon, of Caesar, of Mackie, so too do we know what became of Jacko, and by confronting the erstwhile hit of the Berlin stage with the one-time King of Pop Heller alludes, as Rakow perceptively points out, to the oh so speedy passing from radically new to passé, to something your grandmother might like. What to do?

Also missing is any discussion of the extensive use of masks and the transformations which they bring about. Perhaps Dosch sees this as nothing more than entertaining pantomime, but the slippage between the roles played by the characters is surely fundamental to Brecht's play (and not just this one), and Heller emphasises this by exposing the process of transformation: Thomas Braungardt as Filch needs only a hat to become a police constable; absent their muppet-heads Mackie's thugs become beggars in zombie-masks (*Thriller* anybody?), or policemen, or prostitutes. And in a further twist Heller turns her (and our) attention to the world "outside" of the play by positioning a souffleuse off to the side, who in addition to performing her role of prompting faltering cast members, is also pulled up onto the stage to become a cast member herself. This is a world of shifting identities and appearances, of poses and attitudes adopted and discarded, a world of theater and role-playing, and Heller never lets her audience lose sight of that.

While Heller may not yet be a household name, although since her 2005 recognition as *Theater heute*'s young director of the year she is certainly no unknown, the same cannot be said for Armin Petras, House Director at the Maxim-Gorki Theater in Berlin for the last seven years. This year, however, sees him moving to Stuttgart. No quiet send-off for him, rather, with a nod to Stefan Heym, *5 Tage im Juni: Das Abschluss-Spektakel der Intendanz Armin Petras am Maxim Gorki Theater* ("5 Days in June: The Spectacular Finale to Armin Petras' Directorship of the Maxim Gorki Theater"), seventeen premieres in and around the theater brought to the stage(s) by thirteen directors who have been the face of the theater during Petras' time in office, including Sebastian Baumgarten, Jan Bosse, Josinde Dröse, Sebastian Hartmann, and Jan Neumann. And Petras himself, of course, with productions of *Der Hofmeister/Der Hals der Giraffe* (Lenz & Schalansky), and Werner Bräunig's *Rummelplatz*. Quite the way to go out, but not, technically, the final curtain, as there was still the matter of the very last performance for this season of Petras' staging of *Life of Galileo*, a co-production with the Staatsschauspiel Dresden. The doors may have been bolted and the windows shuttered in the capital, but the four-strong Gorki-half of the cast had one more trip to make before heading for the beach.

Galileo had premiered in Dresden on March 9 and in Berlin on May 25, and sifting through the reviews of the Berlin production in particular it quickly became apparent that this last big Petras production had also provided opportunity for the critics to engage in one final settling of accounts, and on balance it certainly read as though Petras' credit on the Spree had run out. Charged with gimmickry, gag-making, cute effects, vagueness and superficiality

resulting from the lack of a clear concept, things were not stacking up well. Yet at the same time the colleagues from the fourth estate were unanimous in acknowledging the entertainment value in Petras' work, even if Dresden reviewer Tomas Petzold placed that on the red side of the ledger too, going so far as to charge Petras with trying to attract young people into the theater. Where will it end? A love-hate relationship then, and nobody likes to lose a whipping-boy, especially not to Stuttgart.

For my part, I can see where the critics are coming from (except Petzold), but I still left the theater mightily impressed because of the freshness of the ideas. It's a theater of moments, of connecting the dots, an approach to the subject matter rather than a production for the ages. Petras does not provide a thoroughly consistent interpretation of the play, but I don't think that was ever his aim, rather he invites you along for the ride, shooting off ideas as he goes, suggesting possible re-imaginings, which are sometimes convincing and sometimes less so, but nevertheless always provocative.

The question which bedevils the performance is whether the provocation is an end in itself, in which case Dosch's critique of Heller's production could indeed apply here. Dosch has allies: Andreas Schäfer of the *Tagesspiegel* is of the opinion that Petras' style per se usually makes for an enjoyable evening which doesn't demand too much of its audience, and which is ultimately somewhat self-referential with little connection to the text. Ina Beyer of *SWR* diagnoses a "firework-show of images" (*Bilderfeuerwerk*) which provides only superficial analysis, lacks substance; and Doris Meierheinrich of the *Frankfurter Rundschau* goes so far as to accuse the production of "lazy thinking" (*denkfaul*).

The danger here is, I think, that you might not like the fireworks, but smothering them with a wet blanket only re-enforces the stubborn prejudice against Brecht(ian) works with which we are all too familiar. Charles Isherwood confronts that prejudice head-on in his review of the Foundry Theater's "sublime" production of *Good Person of Szechwan* in the *New York Times* of October 30. After describing the production as "a highlight of the last theater season, when it opened in February at La MaMa, and now (...) a highlight of the current one, having reopened (...) at the Public Theater", he goes on say: "I hope that all the Brecht-o-phobes out there haven't already stopped reading, because this frisky production, directed by Lear DeBessonet, could make a convert of just about anyone. If you associate Brecht with heavy-treading, messagemongering nights at the theater, you may be taken aback to find how purely entertaining his work can be when it is delivered with invention and a spirit of inquisitive exuberance, as it is here."

One could likewise go to the very source for vindication and bear in mind what Brecht himself communicated to the Berliner Ensemble company before it left for a series of performances in London in August 1956, the same month as the writer's death. He warned his charges that they would be playing for an audience beset by the "long-standing fear that German art (...) must be terribly heavy, slow, laborious and pedestrian." Brecht enjoined the company to be "quick, light, strong", to infect its performances "with quiet strength, with our own amusement. In

Above Peter Kurth as Galilei
Photos: Matthias Horn

Below Julischka Eichel as Virginia

the dialogue the exchanges must not be offered reluctantly as when offering somebody one's last pair of boots, but must be tossed like so many balls. The audience has to see that here are a number of artists working together as a collective (ensemble) in order to convey stories, ideas, bits of art to the spectator by a common effort."

Almost sixty years later it would not be going too far to see Brecht's specific concerns of the 50s as the general lot of traditional theater today. Which is not to say that his advice from the 50s is the only option left to us, but it is advice which Petras has clearly heeded. If we are prepared to cede that much, to see "inquisitive exuberance" where others see "lazy thinking", then there is much to admire here.

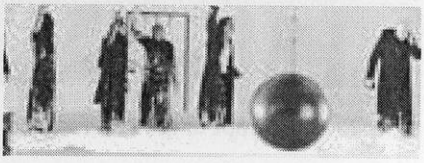
Carsten Nicolai's visually stunning, mirrored set is dominated by a huge swinging pendulum; the eight actors, most of whom are onstage almost the entire time, must make accommodation. At points the suggestive power of the elephant in the room (never is it referred to) gives visual expression to events unfolding – it stops swinging when the inquisition threatens and starts up again when the Pope dies – but at other times it remains, literally, heavily ambiguous. Vague? Perhaps. Irritating, intriguing, even inspiring? For sure: Petras loves a good tableau and when that works in this production it works beautifully because it's then that the pendulum swings back into view and you suddenly become aware of it again, only now it's different, inviting you to rethink what you've been taking for granted to this point.

Expectations are also challenged by the ensemble-style blocking, the on-stage character configurations, the very physicality of the acting: there are times when the purist inside rears up and wonders what these non-participants are doing onstage observing action to which they are usually not privy. But then the

choral, call-and-response, and physical interaction provides an unexpected perspective which can, if you can quell the righteous indignation, intrigue and expand one's vision of the play. To cite one of the quieter examples: When Galileo (Peter Kurth) justifies his actions during the plague and Andrea (Sebastian Wendelin) stands alongside him with his dead mother (Karina Plachetka) over his shoulder, the very real price that has been paid is laid achingly bare.

Less convincing are the irony-laden interludes inserted into the otherwise radically pruned text and played out in front of the curtain, which I took for attempts to re-establish a certain distance, but which aside from providing Wolfgang Michalek ample opportunity to display his remarkable comedic talents and Julischka Eichel, as Virginia, her captivating range, wore quickly thin. Playing multiple roles, Michalek is superb throughout, likewise Eichel. As Galileo Kurth is so much more restrained than one is used to seeing, especially on English-speaking stages where the tendency of late has been to view the play as an opportunity to inject some star-power into Brecht and turn things over to a scenery-chewer. This is an ensemble piece – science, the pursuit of knowledge as a cooperative effort? – which is constantly suggestive and illustrative of different perspectives. Maybe Petras does overreach in not focusing in on one such perspective; it is a heady mixture which he presents, but a mixture, I think, which offers plenty of jumping-off points for future endeavors.

These two Brecht-productions, even allowing for the above-cited reservations on the part of the critics, are a useful counterpoint to the third production which I should briefly like to mention here. Another co-production, this time with the Nationaltheater Mannheim where the premiere took place on June 21 as part of the 17th International Schiller Festival, *The Parasite* was heralded for its entertainment value by a different set of critics – including those from the *FAZ*, the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and the *Süddeutsche*. The production was indeed diverting, a full house lapped it up, but for its laughs it relied upon a goodly amount of slapstick and the spirited physical comedy of Torsten Ranft in particular, Philipp Lux and Ahmad Mesgarha, who, as the parasite, ends the evening chasing about the auditorium naked as a jaybird. As I say, slapstick. Perhaps it was the unexpected pleasure of being able to laugh along with Schiller which befuddled the critics so, but for my money Heller and Petras engage where Bachmann *merely* entertains because, in the Brecht-productions at least, the entertainment does not result from a flight into the broad, even campy, but rather from an inventive realignment of issues raised by the work today or accrued to it because of our different historical moment. The unanimity of the critical response to *The Parasite* suggests that the unstated but broadly understood meaning of "entertainment" must necessarily involve a banana-skin or two. A more nuanced view would allow for Heller and Petras' work to be entertaining *and* thought provoking. The stakes are perhaps not as high as when *Seeschlacht* proved such an éclat a hundred years ago, but nevertheless, wouldn't the acceptance of that AND still be quite something?



Theatertreffen, Berlin, May 3-20, 2013

Ralf Remshardt
University of Florida

"So this is what middle age feels like," I thought, as the tour bus took its twists and turns through a drizzly Berlin afternoon, spiriting a motley crew of journalists and theatre fans along a route dotted with the venues of *Theatertreffens* past – the venerable Schiller-Theater, where Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* exploded onto the stage in 1964, the Berliner Ensemble, where Heiner Müller's abrasive *Arturo Ui* of 1996 was still in repertory, the hangar at Tempelhof airport that housed Christoph Marthaler's phantasmagoric *Riesenbutzbach* in 2011.

Sipping my complimentary *Rotkäppchen* bubbly, it was not my own middle age I was reflecting on while the bus careened along its course, its video monitors supplying clips and pictures of festival archaeology while a jovial guide told anecdotes. *Theatertreffen* itself had turned *fünfzig* and was having a party, and as such occasions go, it was by turns nostalgic and retrospective, bold in the assertion of its relevance, and a little puzzled about where to go when the party was over.

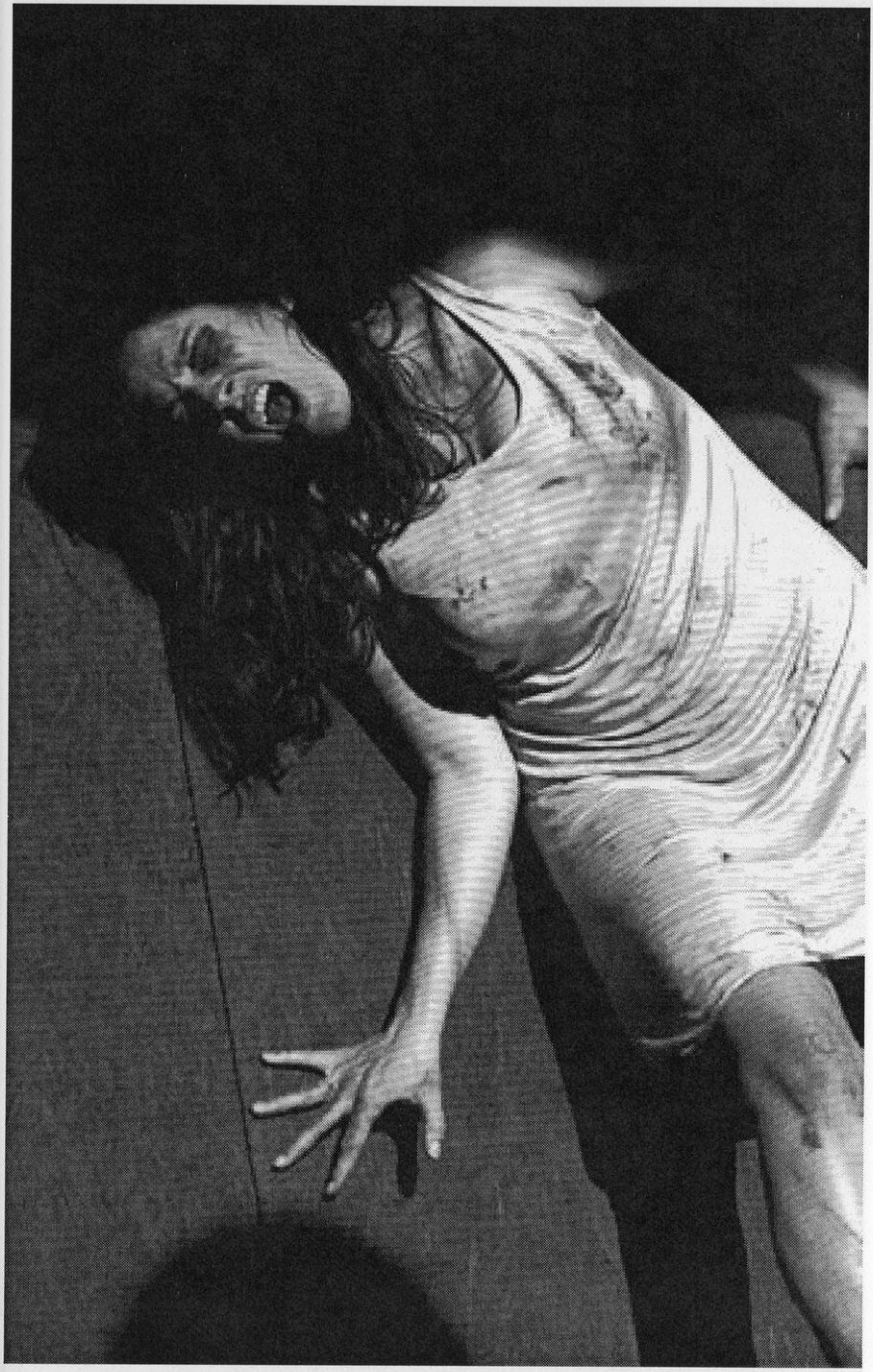
In 1964, its first year, the *Theatertreffen* (with directors like Zadek, Barlog, Noelte) set a political signal that West Berlin was still at the crossroads of the German culture, and provided a showcase assuring an embattled city that its judgment mattered. Bringing ten "remarkable" productions to Berlin every year was a logistical feat of defiance in the spirit of the airlift, but is it all still necessary, even affordable, in the austerity-racked Europe of the 21st century, with theatre festivals proliferating everywhere? That question hovered over the *Theatertreffen* like the damp clouds that enveloped Berlin itself.

Medea

Constanze Becker, whose face with its expressive, even sensual, suffering was everywhere on the covers of theatre magazines, has emerged as Germany's new tragedienne of the moment. Her portrayal of Medea at the Schauspiel Frankfurt under the direction of Michael Thalheimer had earned her the Gertrud-Eysolt Ring, a signal acting honor. Opening the festival with this highly praised production, however, produced immediate discord: was it a bold move to reclaim a classical heritage, or a timid surrender to theatrical conservatism?

Indeed, director Thalheimer's pared-down productions can seem conservative in an environment that thrives on conceptual obliquity. Thalheimer seems undaunted by ancient tragedy – often considered the litmus test of a director's mettle. (He produced a remarkable, highly concentrated version of the *Oresteia* a few years ago at the Deutsches Theater, squeezed down to a potent, bloody two hours, just the fearful deeds.)

In this *Medea*, he had cleared the stage of everything but light and shadow: a Beckettian *tabula rasa*, running all the way to an upstage gate, which was soon lifted to reveal Becker as Medea, high on a narrow ledge, bewailing her betrayal like some wounded animal. On this blank stage, and strafed by a crepuscular light that issued forth ominous shadows as if in Plato's cave, single figures dwarfed by the immensity of the space came in supplication to an anguished goddess: the Nurse, muttering fearful imprecations; the hapless men who served as the target



Medea Photos: Birgit Hupfeld

of her wrath or the means of her escape; the lone woman to whom the chorus had been reduced. To thus reduce the chorus was not only to play to modern sensibilities, but to acknowledge what Euripides knew: that in the face of such ferocious force of will, of such transcendent rage, the voice of reason and persuasion is weak to the point of submission. "Her heart is too big," the choryphaeus (Bettina Hoppe) remarked with fated resignation, "it will accept no injustice."

Becker's Medea was not mere character study; it was rather a series of powerfully evoked attitudes and responses, resolved into near-expressionist imagery. She performed the spurned demigoddess as a kind of *monstre sacré,* a diva of destruction, like a Greek Norma Desmond waiting for her close-up: infantile and implacable, beguiling and demanding at once. Here the Aristotelian concept of *ethos*, that is, character as action, met and challenged the postmodern sense of identity as fragmentary and elusive, even performative. The actress never proposed that we could understand Medea in any feeble psychological sense. Where she might have invited empathy, in the painful deliberation about whether to slaughter her offspring, she eschewed all tortured hand-wringing. "It must be done," she spat out rapidly, almost affectlessly, like a knife cutting to the quick. In Becker's performance, Medea was the motor and first casualty of her compulsion towards justice, pitiless even to herself.

Jason, the husband whose flagrant escapades had precipitated Medea's suffering (played by Marc Oliver Schulze as a vain jerk in a blue leisure suit, puffing with insincerity) was so obviously no match for her rage and contempt that the production found comedy in his smarmy mendacity. She froze in coiled incredulity as he delivered his apologia, his shadow magnifying his vain *contrapposto* in a beautiful visual V-effect that contradicted his every utterance. When later he reappeared to challenge her, the far stage wall swept forward in an astonishing *coup de theatre*, squeezing the teetering Jason onto the narrowest downstage ledge. It was as if the space of possibility had been foreclosed by the irrevocable finality of action: all had been decided, all had been done. When Becker at long last left the stage, it was not in a triumphal chariot, but in a black dress that made her seem more like Ibsen's Nora than a figure of myth.

Murmel Murmel

Speaking of Nora, Herbert Fritsch has been the toast of two consecutive *Theatertreffens*, first bursting onto the scene with the controlled anarchy of his *Doll's House* and *Beaver Pelt* in 2011 (see *CIBS* 40), then topping that with his hilariously hyperkinetic *Die (S)panische Fliege* in 2012. He has been excoriated as a fraud by directors as grave and reverend as Claus Peymann. Would his reputation as the disruptive *enfant terrible* of the festival hold a third time? Or had he become, by now, a merely irritating juvenile?

There's only one thing to say about *Murmel Murmel*: "Murmel." That word (which here translated to "mumble," not "marble") was in fact the only piece of dialogue repeatedly spoken, sung, chanted, shouted, and whispered in this farcical production. The play (if that's what it was) was actually based on a book of concrete poetry by Dieter Roth, but little matter. Fritsch wanted something that could serve as "acoustic wallpaper," and so it's as if a group of eccentric bit players, given nothing but a meaningless utterance as their text, had suddenly taken over the theatre, a

Murmel Murmel Photo: Thomas Aurin

theatre moreover that was itself animate and seemed to want to mirror their idiosyncrasy through radical light shifts and sliding and careening walls. *Murmel Murmel* was not only minimal of text, but scant of plot – a series of vignettes animated mostly by a sheer will-to-play, a kind of fierce clownishness – touching one moment, bizarre the next. Fritsch's fearless cast, done up in loud 1960s costumes, cabaret makeup, and oversized wigs, capable of the most virtuosic contortions and acrobatic feats, seemed like a group of overgrown children, eager to please with any physical invention, with any inflection, dissection, or declension of *murmel* the mind could conceive.

Anything from Fluxus and Dada (on the high end) to Blue Man Group, Monty Python, and awkward German TV shows (on the low end) was grist for the performative mill, but without being self-consciously derivative or parodic. I was sometimes reminded of the great clowns I had seen at the circus as a child, whose comedic power lay in a rejection of irony and an embrace of the naïve.

Alas, those clowns knew when to stop, and I was no longer a child. It was not that I wasn't amused, but I was surrounded by a kind of giddy audience approbation I couldn't quite share. The longer *Murmel* wore on, the more I felt myself pondering the deficiencies of German comedy, which like its vaunt-

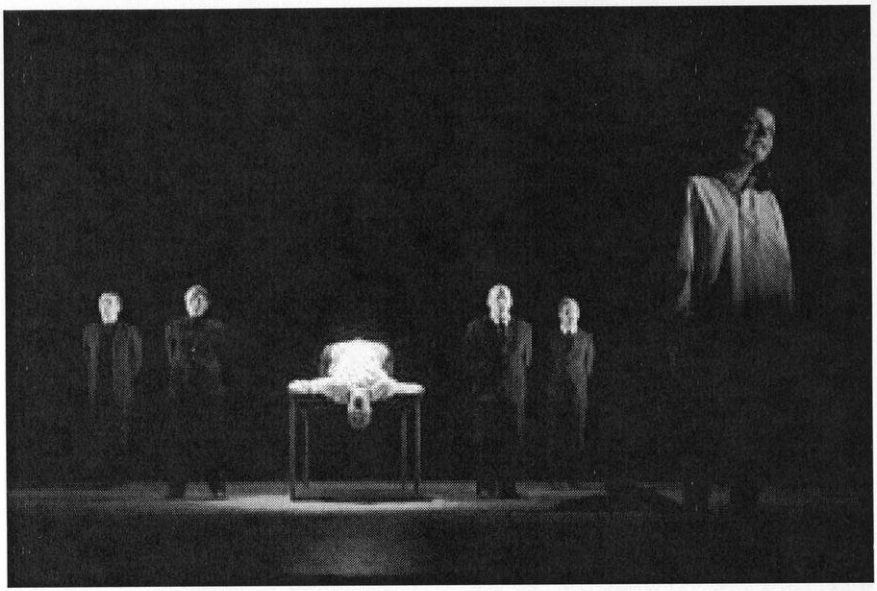
ed automobiles had a tendency to be over-engineered. Sitting at the Volksbühne and wearing my critical hat, I marveled that this lengthy *scherzo* of a production, with no apparent social agenda, had been so rapturously received by an audience of one of the most politically astute theatres in Berlin. It seemed to me that they craved permission to be *albern*, silly, to get momentary dispensation from a theatre that demanded serious engagement, that took justified pride in its conceptual rigor and emancipatory fervor. In *Murmel Murmel*, the *Theatertreffen*, weary of relevance, had allowed itself a midlife indiscretion by indulging in apparently meaningless fun. Sound and fury, signifying nothing. In a festival such as this, which is a meaning-making machine, the absence of meaning unavoidably signified. But what?

Jeder Stirbt Für Sich Allein

"Sentimentality is something for Americans; we don't want it" was prominently printed in the program book for *Jeder Stirbt für Sich Allein*, Luk Perceval's four-and-a-half hour adaptation from Hamburg's Thalia Theater of the eponymous Hans Fallada novel. Three years ago, the Flemish director had attempted a first adaptation of a Fallada novel, *Kleiner Mann, Was Nun?*, with great success at the Munich Kammerspiele and was invited to that year's *Theatertreffen* (see *CIBS* 39). In the meantime, he had directed Wolfgang Borchert's rarely seen postwar classic *Draußen vor der Tür*. Clearly, Perceval harbors a fascination with the extremes of recent German history—whether Depression, Nazi era, or *Stunde Null*—and clearly, he wanted us to know that he would treat the subjects with the appropriate stringency.

The tale Fallada tells in this, his last, novel, which he composed in a four-week frenzy of writing before succumbing to a heart attack in 1946, is harrowing enough. Lightly fictionalized from the exploits of Otto and Elise Hampel, the story tells of Otto and Anna Quangel, a working-class Berlin couple who, after losing their son to the war, begin to turn against the Nazis and start distributing subversive postcards accusing the regime of inhumanity. It was a small, haphazard, almost inconsequential act of resistance, futile in its straining against the machine of conformity and destruction, fed not by the heroic, reflected righteousness of the *Weisse Rose*, but by disgust and sheer outrage: "The Führer has murdered my son", begins the first card. But the regime, having created a climate of pervasive fear and denunciation, allows for no distinction between a grand gesture of opposition and the sting of a gnat, and it will find the Quangels out and crush them inexorably. Fallada's story, then, is about a kind of defiant moral courage in the face of one's own trepidation and of almost certain death—the Quangels do what they do even though they know the consequences, and even though they are torn in a very human way between their vain need for self-disclosure and their absolute need for self-concealment.

Perceval, with his excellent ensemble of actors, led by Thomas Niehaus and Oda Thormeyer as the rebellious couple, trusted absolutely in the power of Fallada's narrative, in his eye for the simple, telling, even trivial detail, in his ear for dialogue at once colloquial and revelatory. The frightening dialectical irony in which every utterance can be turned to its opposite was reminiscent of Brecht's *Furcht und Elend*: "He so loves the equanimity of his life," Anna said of the stoic Otto, the involuntary hero and victim, when it was much too late to return to that equanimity. Though the actors played with an unembellished simplicity



Jeder Stirbt Photo: Krafft Angerer

closer to realism than V-effect, Perceval used the Brechtian *grotesk-komisches* to sketch the deformations forced on people under the Nazi regime: the opportunist whose spine visibly contracted with every "Heil Hitler!" he shouted; the bureaucrat obsessed with a manic recitation of the city's streetcar stops (near which some of the postcards were found); and the chilling Obergruppenführer played with barking sarcasm by the diminutive actress Barbara Nüssing.

But Fallada's novel is no formulaic reckoning with the Nazi regime. The most morally complex figure turned out to be the inspector, Escherich, whose career is staked on identifying the source of the subversive missives. Escherich knowingly entraps the wrong man and forces his death. Though ironically he becomes the Quangels' only convert, he is finally too afraid to challenge the system that feeds him. For Fallada, Escherich is the ethical and existential fulcrum of a world defined by lack of courage, and in Perceval's production, he was played by the marvelous Andre Szymanski with a bewildered gravitas that touched the tragic.

Mostly, though, Perceval's style retained a subtle, almost understated theatricality. A single rectangular table on the vast stage sufficed to indicate anywhere from the Quangels' living room to the guillotine, as if introducing any additional elements could break the production's concentration. The central stage image itself, a giant perpendicular map of Berlin made up, on closer inspection, of ordinary objects (design: Annette Kurz), rested on the metonymic perception of a world of small things exaggerated to outsize proportions. As such, it could be read as the topography of the Quangels' mind, in which trivial domesticity and the larger community intersected, their furtive private scribblings becoming mapped onto the public space of the city as their pursuers closed in.

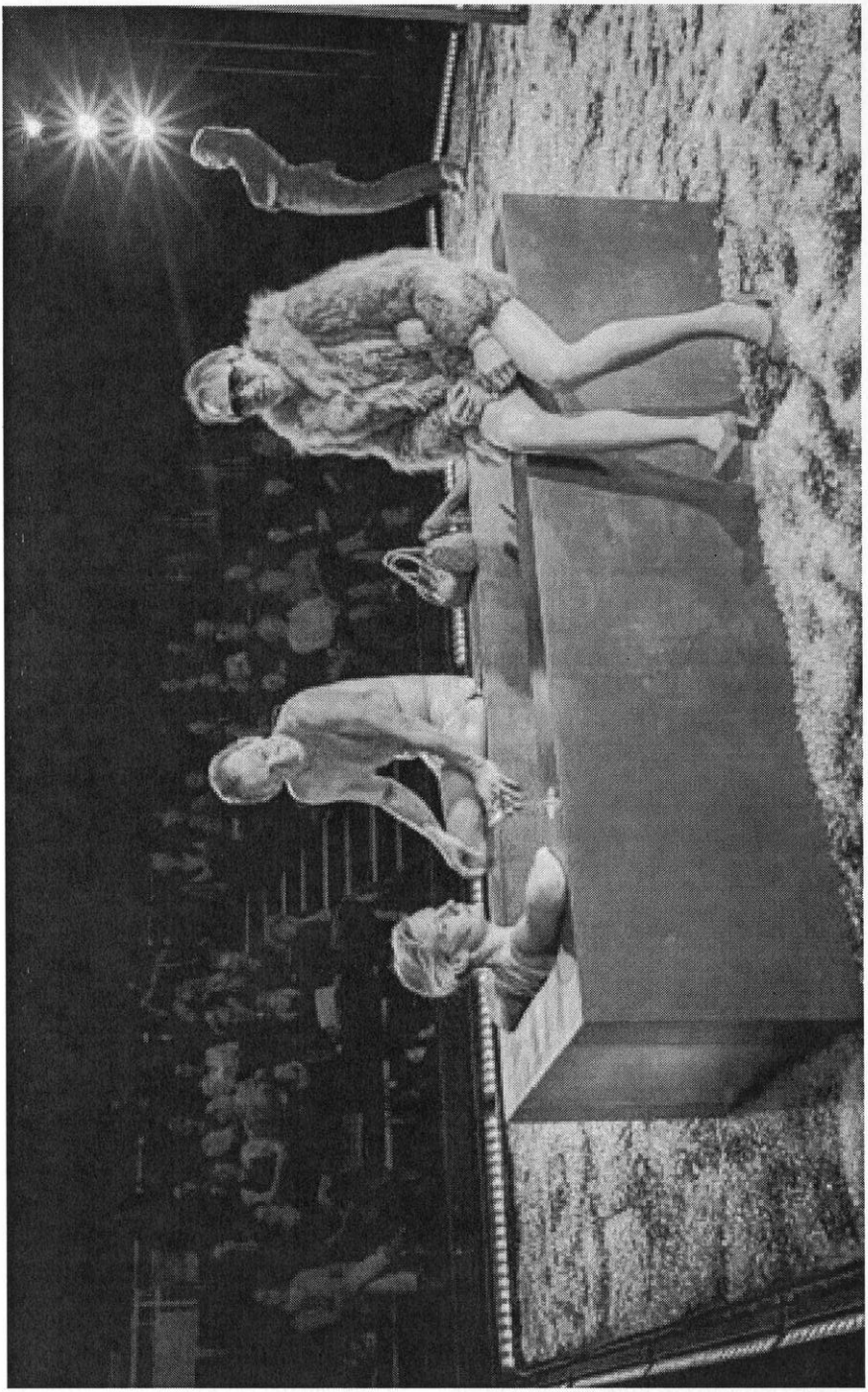
An exhausting, exhaustive evening of theatre, *Jeder Stirbt für Sich Allein* didn't answer the question whether the Quangels' sacrifice was worth it. The small acts

of the Hampels never moved the needle on Nazi terror, and when caught, they pleaded for their lives and denounced each other—sordid details which Fallada's fictional version spared us. And yet there was undeniable courage in the face of unimaginable peril, and the production finally did what good theatre does: hold a moral mirror up to its audience and ask us if we would have been capable of such mettle.

Die Strasse, die Stadt, der Überfall

It's rare that a play arrives as a gift from the gods, or at least from a goddess – in this case, the Nobel-winning literary Olympian Elfriede Jelinek, who wrote *Die Strasse, die Stadt, der Überfall* in response to a request by Johan Simons, artistic director of the Munich Kammerspiele, to celebrate that storied theatre's centenary. But beware what you ask for from the gods! Anyone who knows Jelinek expected no reverential paean to the city (Munich, of course, is *die Stadt* of the title). Jelinek is a deity with an ancient and enduring grudge against the very world of bourgeois respectability and Bavarian normalcy *die Stadt* represents. She writes, as she concedes, from "hatred" (*Hass*), and here her linguistic arsenal was fully stocked with all of the teasing sarcasm, insolent mockery, and withering contempt she could muster. And because this was Jelinek, an acrobat of language like no other, the text came crashing onto the stage like an unpunctuated tsunami of wordplay, wave upon wave of verbal onslaught, semantically engulfing and obliterating its objects. The Berlin audience – not lastly because it regards Munich as an arrogant rival for preeminence – was probably more appreciative of this take-down than artistic neutrality would warrant.

Apparently precipitated by an assault on her apartment by Bavarian tax authorities (thus *der Überfall*), this hybrid and sometimes loosely structured textual montage – to call it a play would stretch the term – is really about *die Strasse*, Maximilianstrasse, Munich's glitzy answer to Fifth Avenue, with its accumulation of chic boutiques, exclusive brands, exorbitant prices, and conspicuous consumption. But Jelinek isn't interested simply in lambasting capitalist excess or making fun of the high-maintenance one-percenters to whom a Louis Vuitton handbag or a Hermès tie are necessities of daily living. Her simple satirical pointedness often slips and dips into existential inquiry with the mere turn of a phrase, and the text is (albeit vaguely) embedded in a mythical substrate, with Munich standing in for the doomed Thebes of Euripides' *Bacchae* where the shoppers are like frenzied maenads and the cruel epicene god Dionysos has decreed that "orgies are now law." Careening between plump provincialism and anxious overreach, Munich is in Jelinek's cold-hearted depiction the stage for a primal scene rife with puffery and flattery. The vanity fair that is Maximilianstrasse and the fashion victims that people it also serve as a warped allegorical mirror for a society addicted to image and status, the perpetual circulation of self-regard and self-promotion, and a pathological fear of becoming invisible and irrelevant. "This City recognizes only itself," runs one line. Of course, as Jelinek well knows, the Kammerspiele theatre itself inhabits this miracle mile as one of the prime depositories of cultural capital – Munich's *haute volée* artfully intertwines commerce and culture – and so it too pays dividends in the markets of narcissism.



Die Strasse, die Stadt, der Überfall Photo: Julian Roeder

Faced with the task of taming Jelinek's monstrous text into something playable, to balance her nerve, verve, and vitriol, director Johan Simons did so with a light touch and a delicious theatrical imagination. Perhaps the spectators sitting on stage were his least subtle invention (yes, we understand, this is a play about *us*). But when burly stage hands, in one of those beautiful excesses possible only in the subsidized theatre, began to pour dozens of sacks of crushed ice noisily onto the floor, resulting in a glittering, crunching, melting, sloshing, all-but-impossible-to-maneuver-in-high-heels installation/landscape, the slippery text had found its material foundation. Also on stage: a huge suspended white globe, like an anodyne sun shining on the living dead, a black rectangle that could be hot tub, burial crypt, and subway entrance, and a glass box evoking a storefront, housing a jaunty band (design: Eva Veronica Born). Jelinek's piece is not least about the tyranny of fashion, a tyranny aimed mostly at women, but it is replete with shifting identities and gender slippage, and so Simons nicely undercut our gendered expectations from the start by garbing a group of men in killer heels, garter belts, fur jackets, and cocktail dresses and having them strut their awkward androgyny while holding forth on matters of mode and morals. "It's always the same," they philosophized, "the Old, but entirely New, so that the Old is vanquished. That's the job of this *Strasse*: to make them buy what they already have, without even noticing."

But it was the wonderful, spunky, spiky, spectacular Sandra Hüller, the only woman amongst the gaggle of men, who first burst forth from an oversize shopping bag singing a torch song, and then proceeded to walk away with the production (and, not coincidentally, with the *Theatertreffen's* top acting prize). Hüller's role was nominally the archetypal shopaholic mesmerized by the siren songs of haute couture, a gawky gamine with furrowed brow and wide eyes, stalking the elusive dream of being fashionable for once. At the same time, she was openly Jelinek's surrogate, the mouthpiece for the author's complex meditations on aging, transience, and death, and on the eternal lure of images. The evening's most absorbing passages came when she discoursed on the purchase of a skirt, which was really about the yearning to become an Other, forever out of reach, to be like the fashion model in the image who "seemed so fully herself." It spoke to Hüller's considerable virtuosity that she could pull off this double voice of character and commentator with such ease and charm, not in a strictly dialectical manner, but contrapuntally, as if riffing on Jelinek's dark and funny utterances like an experienced jazz player. (Indeed, all of the actors showed similar stellar technique – the ability to wrest compelling performances from the *subjunctive* of the text in the absence of any real character or action.)

In the production's lengthy threnodic coda, however, bodies sloshed through the melting ice without accomplishing much apart from the verbose refusal of the ghost of Rudolph Moshammer to be put to rest. Played as a grotesque figure of artifice by Benny Claessens, Moshammer, an eccentric fashion designer and fixture of Munich society who was murdered by a gay lover, was Jelinek's token for the authentic Maximilianstrasse; his protracted funeral rites signaling that the city had finally fallen victim to bland brands and multinational conglomerates. Of course: what else is New? Under Simons'

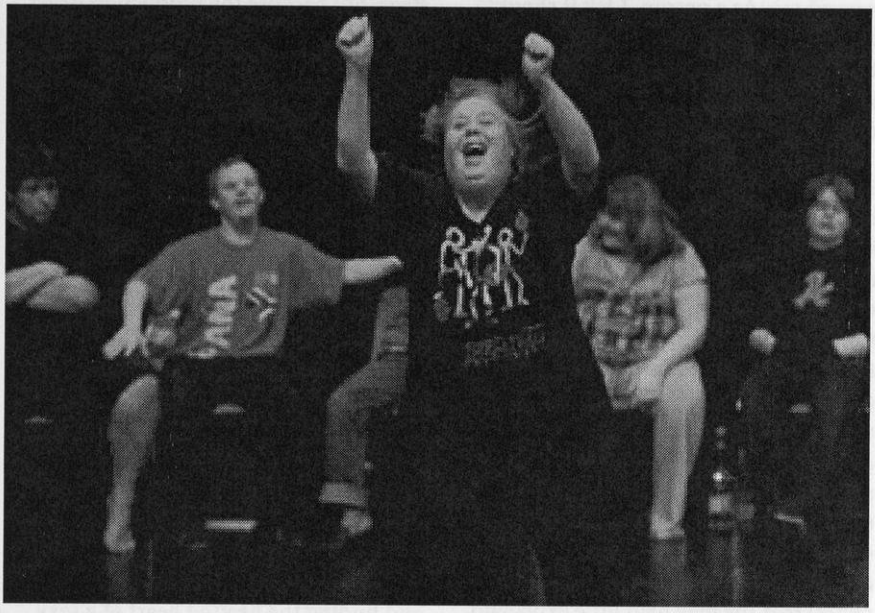
inspired direction, *Die Strasse, die Stadt, der Überfall* could almost have passed for a deep play, but in reality, it was as skin-deep as the fashions it guiltily and jealously lampooned. And that, surprisingly, was deeply satisfying.

Disabled Theater

As I was standing outside the Theater Hebbel am Ufer, waiting for *Disabled Theater* to begin, I sensed that this was going to be the kind of event that would make me unhappy. I only hoped it would be a critically productive unhappiness. I knew, in principle, what was coming: the distinguished French choreographer Jérôme Bel had been enlisted by Zurich's Theater Hora, which specializes in working with actors with disabilities, to create a piece around eleven mentally handicapped actors, most of them suffering from Downs Syndrome (or is that the right locution for people whose joyousness seemed so far from *suffering*?). I was aware that Bel had the reputation of operating outside of the established aesthetics of dance, or at least of challenging them with every work by exposing the underlying structure of the theatrical event, by questioning the nature of representation, fictionality, professionalism, virtuosity. So, even before I set foot in the theatre, I was (slightly resentfully) wrestling with my sense of privilege and my aversion to naked didacticism, trying to recalibrate my critical eye to an extra-aesthetic experience without surrendering to a squishy feeling of liberal empathy that would indulge anything so as not to run afoul of political correctness. I was keenly conscious that *Disabled Theater* would not allow me to sink into spectatorial passivity, that it would keep my response (and my response to my response) front and center. And so it did.

The concept was almost disappointing in its simplicity. Guided by an MC at the edge of the stage who introduced each person and also translated their Swiss German into English (Chris Weinheimer), the performers would carry out the absent Bel's instructions ("Now Jérôme would like the performers to..."). The first instruction was to come forward, one by one, and merely stand center stage silently for a minute, a miniature durational performance that occasioned squirming both on stage and in the auditorium: wasn't this a kind of *exhibition*? Were we allowed to scrutinize the joy, the pain, the resignation, the mortification; were we allowed to *gaze* as we did? The audience was perceptibly searching for a sustainable attitude – Openness? Solemnity? Coolness? In later rounds, the performers introduced themselves ("My name is --- and I'm an actor"); named their handicap ("I'm a fucking mongoloid," said one; "I have Downs Syndrome, and I'm sorry," said another); reported on reactions to the show ("My mother thinks it's a freak show...but she likes it"); and danced to their favorite pop tunes. But although the audience embraced the performance in what appeared to be a spirit of relieved magnanimity, for me the unnerving quality of that first encounter lingered.

Clearly, these were not freaks, not trained seals. They were by turns sunny, serious, and sullen; defiant and delighted; subtle and overwrought. They danced their asses off for an appreciative audience. They bonded with us. We loved them (and adored ourselves for being so generously disposed towards them). They were entirely human. I could feel myself, on several occasions, beginning to slip into the trap of patronizing benevolence, beckoning me to perceive them as more authen-



Disabled Theater Photo: Michael Bause

tically human than ourselves, as holy fools in their truthful simplicity, though whenever I was tempted to do so, one would say something unintelligible, or overstay her welcome, or dance like the awkward teenager he was. But were they, as they themselves claimed (or had been prompted to claim), *actors*? Surely they were increasingly sophisticated, increasingly virtuoso *performers* of their own persona – after an extensive international tour, they clearly knew what worked, which lines got laughs, who they were *expected* to be. But even though one of the performers, Julia Häusermann, was later awarded the festival's young actor prize by juror Thomas Thieme, in what seemed like a calculated rebuff to conventional expectations, I couldn't quite see my way to giving these (albeit lively and engaging) performances equal status with the imaginative exploration and embodiment of a fictional character by a professional actor. Much as I understood that we live in an age of ubiquitous performativity and a postdramatic environment that privileges event over representation, I felt (perhaps peevishly) that to give *Disabled Theater* billing in the lineup of the *Theatertreffen* meant also to jettison an entire category of artistic criteria with only the vaguest notion of what (other than *anything goes*) might replace it.

The bluntness of *Disabled Theater's* title was refreshing – none of the euphemistic nomenclature so common in the US, where someone certainly would have insisted on calling this "differently abled" theatre. There was something sensibly Swiss in the manner in which the performers were not, as the program proclaimed, "hidden behind the protective shield of political correctness." Only on second thought did the *double entendre* of the title occur to me: this production had also "disabled" theatre, at least of the orthodox kind, had pulled the rug out from under any disinterested contemplation, or aesthetically framed and contained affective response. It had, as good theatre should, troubled and un-

nerved me. As a person, I felt it should be performed, should be watched, thought about. As a critic, its inclusion in the festival confounded me like no other piece I saw.

If the heterogeneity of the productions discussed above gives somewhat of an impression of a festival adrift, that isn't altogether inaccurate. There were other offerings that varied from the annoying to the exhausting, from the pointless to the half-sublime. Sebastian Baumgarten of the Schauspielhaus Zürich made an unbearable hash of *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe,* Brecht's already fairly schematic 1929 indictment of monopolistic capitalism and the ineffectuality of humanist intervention. Baumgarten apparently concluded (and perhaps correctly) that the play held little explanatory power as an allegory of business in the current crisis of neoliberal economics, so he proceeded to deconstruct it into a *mise-en-scene* that was meant to be eccentrically cartoonish but came off instead as sloppy and obvious, trafficking in tired clichés of American pop culture, trading silly dialects (and outrageous ethnic stereotypes) for solid dialectics. He was roundly taken to task for showing Mrs. Luckerniddle in blackface, as if the insidiousness of the minstrel show could simply be expunged by adding a postmodern shrug to it. If, as Brecht was fond of quoting the British adage, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, then Baumgarten tried to nail this mess of a pudding to the wall. An adaptation of Tolstoy's signature novel *War and Peace* already sounds like a set-up for a joke about interminable performances, and the five-hour *Krieg und Frieden* from Leipzig did strain endurance – not because it was tedious, for there were moments of great beauty and idiosyncrasy to behold on the perilously pitched stage, but because the production never found its epic rhythm, its narrative voice, or its emotional ground. In *Die Ratten,* Karin Henkel's updating of Gerhart Hauptmann's seminal play of the Berlin proletariat, a lot of stage blood was spilled, a lot of dialogue pronounced unintelligibly, a lot of costumes changed on stage. But Henkel's Köln production appeared thoroughly suspicious of the text's pathos, and at times Lina Beckmann, the magnificent actress playing the tragic figure of Frau John, seemed heartbreakingly stuck in another play. Sebastian Nübling's elegant, muscular, funny, deeply poetic rendering of *Orpheus steigt herab* (again from the Munich Kammerspiele) blew the staleness off Tennessee Williams' self-conscious Southern gothic by giving a it a glittering carnival façade and finding the beating heart of a sexy, dangerous play about erotic obsession underneath.

What then, fifty years on, were the trends, the truths of this *Theatertreffen*? New plays were never the festival's mainstay, but even by the paltry standards of previous *Theatertreffens*, significant dramatic writing had all but dried up (the ubiquitous Jelinek excepted). I sampled the parallel *Stückemarkt*, which this year was unusually well-stocked, but could find little of more than passing interest. The laudable movement of recent years to include more independent theatres of the loosely defined *freie Szene*, such as Gob Squad or She She Pop, had stalled. There was a marked discrepancy in reception: Berlin critics discussing the productions were frequently cool while audiences were friendly, though not often rapturous. In the final jury discussion, a generation gap even became apparent: older audiences (those who remembered back to the first *Theatertreffen*) complained that there were

few surprises, few great *Inszenierungen* to carry the torch forward; younger audiences criticized the unwillingness of many productions to raise the great questions of our time, found that they squandered their huge subsidies on clever formalism. I could hardly take issue with these reservations. To me, the *Theatertreffen* appeared symptomatic of a theatre that mirrored German politics, anxious not to extend its muscle too much, preaching a kind of austerity of the "good enough," while seemingly oblivious of the obligation its enormous cultural power and great good financial fortune imposed upon it. The good news is that, even though it may be a bit tired at fifty, the *Theatertreffen* isn't about to get laid off and cashiered. It is still without serious competition, and it will return at fifty-one.

Medea
Author: Euripides
Director: Michael Thalheimer
Ensemble: Schauspiel Frankfurt

Murmel Murmel
Author: after Dieter Roth
Director: Herbert Fritsch
Ensemble: Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin

Jeder Stirbt für Sich Allein
Author: after Hans Fallada
Director: Luk Perceval
Ensemble: Thalia Theater, Hamburg

Die Strasse, die Stadt, der Überfall
Author: Elfriede Jelinek
Director: Johan Simons
Ensemble: Münchner Kammerspiele

Disabled Theater
Author: Jérôme Bel
Director: Jérôme Bel
Ensemble: Theater Hora, Zürich

Also discussed:

Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe
Author: Bertolt Brecht
Director: Sebastian Baumgarten
Ensemble: Schauspielhaus Zürich

Krieg und Frieden
Author: after Lev Tolstoy
Director: Sebastian Hartmann
Ensemble: Centraltheater Leipzig

Die Ratten
Author: Gerhart Hauptmann
Director: Karin Henkel
Ensemble: Schauspiel Köln

Orpheus steigt herab
Author: Tennessee Williams
Director: Sebastian Nübling
Ensemble: Münchner Kammerspiele

Way to Heaven by Juan Mayorga

Direction: Kelly Howe Ensemble: North Central College Department of Theater Madden Theater, North Central College, Naperville, IL. May 9-12, 2013.

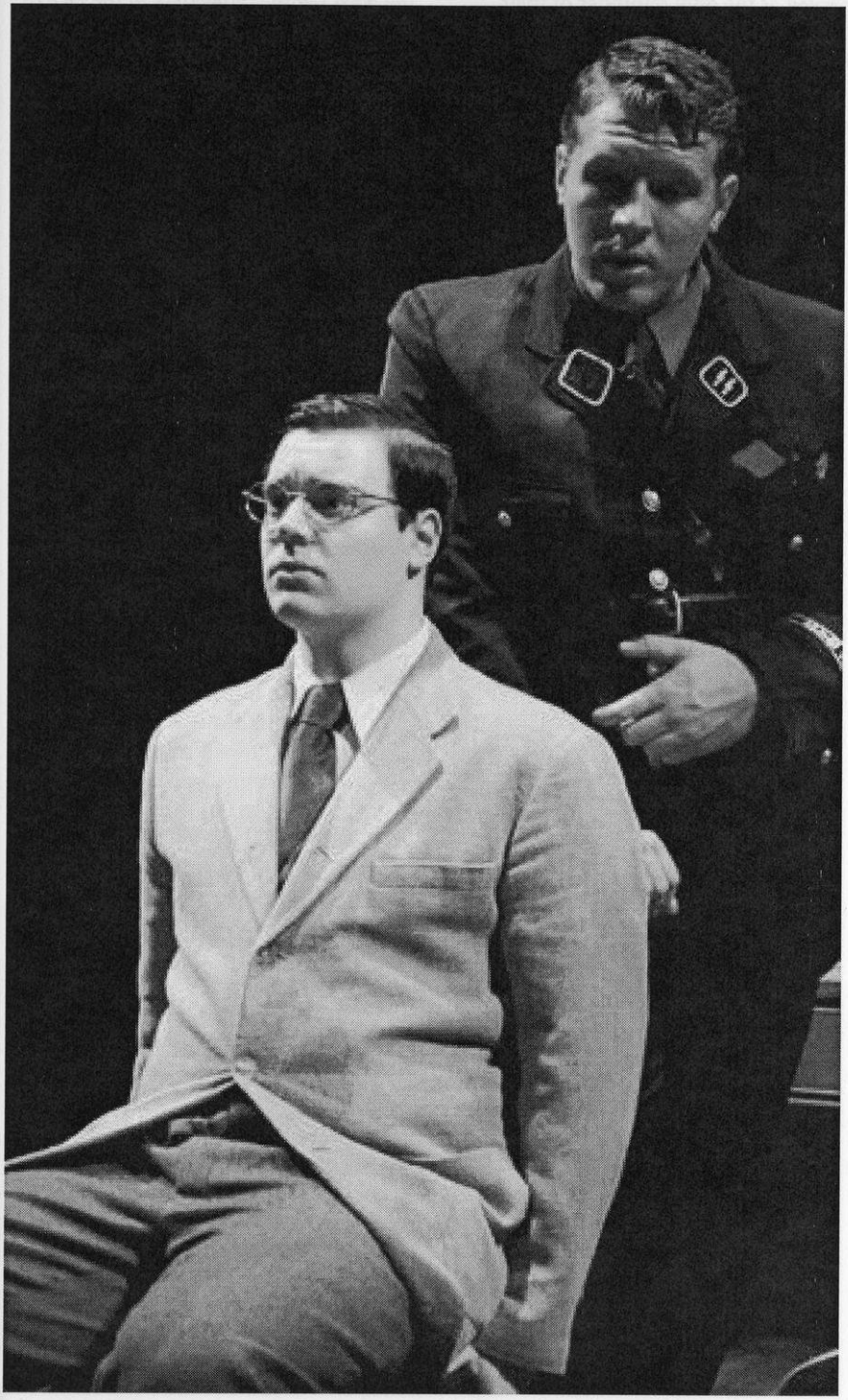
Review by Jessica Krempp and Gregory H. Wolf

Spanish playwright Juan Mayorga's *Way to Heaven* (2004) has been met with international acclaim since its premiere in 2005. Set in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, the play explores how the Nazis led the Red Cross and the international community to believe that Jews and other prisoners were being held in humane conditions.

At the play's performance in the Madden Theatre at North Central College's Fine Arts Center, director Kelly Howe guided the audience members into a small dark room and instructed them to stand in a cramped space framed by brick walls, with large wooden sliding doors on one side and a platform supporting a wooden chair, a small desk, and a sole actor on the other side of the room. After about twelve minutes of anxiously standing around, making eye contact with the actor, whispering cautiously amongst one another, and trying to avoid breaking the overpowering silence, the audience experienced the actor coming to life.

In the first of the play's five distinct parts, the Red Cross representative recalls his trip years earlier to the camp. His emotions shift from joy at an opportunity to uncover the truth about the Holocaust and genocide to remorse and disgust. He remembers his suspicions that the Nazis had created an elaborate hoax, and castigates himself for failing to have acted upon his initial doubts about the contrived reality. At the conclusion of his monologue, the sliding doors of the brick wall were opened and the audience was directed quickly to seats along an open set with actors already in place. The second part of the production consisted of three banal scenes of domesticity performed for the Red Cross representative: two boys playing with a toy top, a couple arguing on a park bench, and a young girl talking and singing to her doll while standing in water. As the scenes are repeated three times with slight variations and different actors, it becomes clear that the prisoners are in fact actors who become increasingly aware of their role in the macabre performance for the Red Cross.

With no fixed description of the time during which the scenes are taking place, the setting of the play is not restricted to within the walls of the concentration camp. The ambiguity of the setting allows the viewer to place him or herself into the scene and to reshape the stage to form it into an environment relevant to the individual. "The play," director Howe told the authors, "largely avoids converting atrocity into consumable spectacle. In fact, the piece takes the opposite approach. It examines how spectacle, and theatre more specifically, are easily pressed into service for atrocity." The sudden sound of a train in the distance broke the dramatic tension of the prisoners' performance and invited viewers to reflect on the juxtaposition of reality and theater. Similar to the setting, the prisoners' common, everyday wardrobe gave the impression that they lived in domestic bliss, while the missing shoelaces



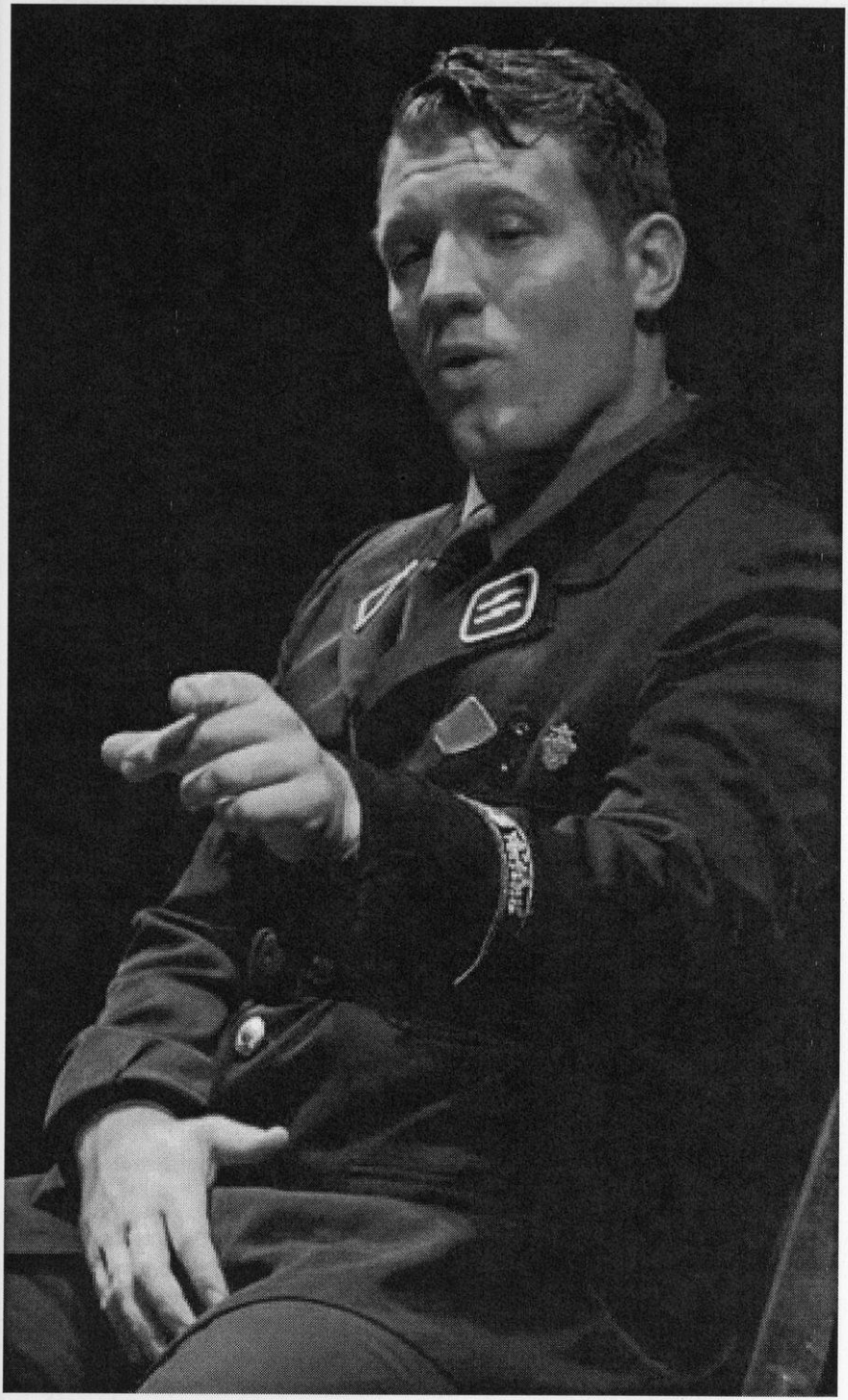
served as the only reminder of their imprisonment. The absence of restrictive boundaries and the vagueness of the setting allowed for a forceful evocation of the emotions and themes present in the play.

The following scene focused on the meeting between the camp Commandant, played by Evan Michalic, and the Red Cross representative. Tall, imposing, and obsessed with books, the Commandant attempts to impress the visitor with his knowledge and enlightened direction of the camp. "[The Commandant] measures people by their literary and cultural exposure," said Howe. "The Commandant's particular shrewdness about the canon as currency felt simultaneously historically specific and chillingly current. The play cultivated an opportunity for us all to talk about how, in the wrong hands, erudition can become lethal ammunition." The Red Cross representative accepts the Commandant's performance as a reflection of his good intentions.

Envisioning himself as a dramatist and director, the Commandant ensconces himself in an office filled with books, symbols of decency and humanity. He summons an inmate, Gottfried (played by Warren Dailey) and coerces him into staging the ghastly sham performance in order to deceive the Red Cross representative. Gottfried is forced to recruit the "actors" for the performance while knowing that those not selected will be sent eventually to the gas chambers. The set, props, and movement of the characters on stage were minimal, successfully preventing distraction away from the content of the interaction between the Commandant and the prisoner. Conspicuously absent were swastikas or any physical reference to the Nazi regime. Powerless in the face of absolute oppression, Gottfried struggles with his dilemma of choice, truth, and ultimately life and death. While the Commandant plans the logistics of the visit in the final scenes, Gottfried directs the prisoners acting and rehearsing their roles as content citizens of the camp.

The Commandant and Gottfried undergo riveting transformations, and the performances of Michalic and Dailey were eerily captivating. The Commandant loses his air of intellectualism and reveals his menacing terror and unbridled rage. He chides and patronizes Gottfried from whom he demands complete obedience and more convincing actors. In his untenable position, Gottfried fears for the lives of his fellow prisoners and confronts his duplicity in creating the absurd theatrical performance of deception. A "Drama of Ideas," *Way to Heaven* depends on complicated dialogue to wrestle with the spectacle of theater and notions of truth. "The play contains lengthy, gorgeous, and sometimes evocatively ugly monologues that required the actors to shape their delivery of the text in a really muscular way," said Howe. "It also demanded gestus work that was subtle enough to avoid caricature yet heightened enough to punctuate the text and reveal information." The dialogue between the Commandant and Gottfried unites the three central themes of deceit, oppression, and loss of identity and shapes the timing and location of the previous scenes. Mayorga's enigmatic way of providing a reference to time plays a significant role in the meditation on one's own society, reinforcing the idea of universality and the timelessness of the themes.

Way to Heaven concluded with Gottfried immersing himself into each of the three



rehearsal scenes, offering the prisoners words of encouragement, despite the tacit understanding that their fates have already been sealed. "Many atrocities happen the world over, and a majority of people do relatively little (if anything) about them," said Howe. "Many people have understandably judged the International Red Cross harshly for clinging to neutrality, but how often do many of us stake out neutrality ourselves, at great cost to others?" Howe's gripping and thought-provoking production of *Way to Heaven* challenges the viewers to act in the face of obvious evil instead of deceiving themselves that it does not exist.

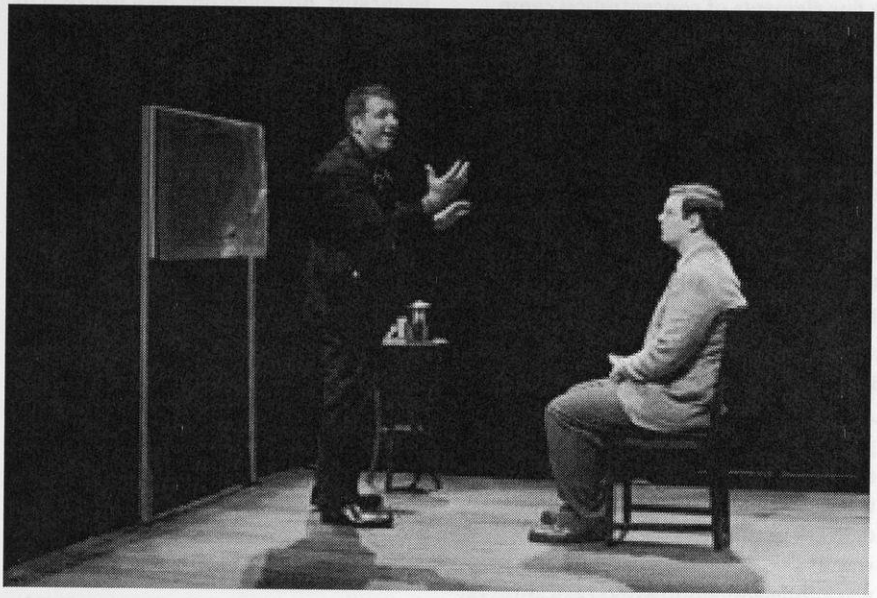
Gregory Wolf Interviews Director Kelly Howe about the Challenges of Performing Juan Mayorga's "Way to Heaven."

Why did you choose to stage a production of Juan Mayorga's "Way to Heaven"?

I've long been interested in the relationship (or in some cases the disturbing lack of a relationship) between learning about the Holocaust and cultivating concern for contemporary atrocity. That interest grew when I worked as the co-author of a memoir by my dear friend Eva Cutler, who survived internment at Bergen-Belsen. As far as my interest in *Way To Heaven* specifically is concerned, I was introduced to the play by my partner, Martín Zimmerman, a playwright, and I've required the script for two of my courses here at the college. The first time I read the play, I instantly admired its keen intellect and engaged heart. *Way to Heaven* clearly cares deeply about the horrifying human choices it depicts, and I hoped that Mayorga's delicate rendering of the charade at Theresienstadt would inspire students to learn more about what happened there. But I also really appreciated that the play largely avoids converting atrocity into consumable spectacle. In fact, the piece takes the opposite approach. It examines how spectacle and theatre more specifically are easily pressed into service for atrocity. Pedagogically I was attracted to that aspect of the play most; it refuses to romanticize theatre. It's very easy for artists to fall in love with their chosen fields and to imagine that those fields are inherently for the good. A romantic spirit of theatre-making is arguably particularly potent in a college theatre department. After all, you have to love theatre to pursue it in a good economy, much less in a difficult one. I hoped the play would estrange theatrical practice enough to reveal it as value-neutral, as easily deployed for ill as for good. If we are forced to consider that our art can have terrible, even deadly, consequences, I think we are more likely to ponder each artistic choice as a Brechtian "not-but" moment, a moment when we as historical agents choose not this, but that. Perhaps more importantly, we are invited to think that the choosing of not this, but that can have material force and effect. That was my biggest reason for choosing the play. The piece is a sobering reminder of what the tools of our trade can do.

How does "Way to Heaven" transcend its dramatic space and time to thematize issues in contemporary society?

Obviously, in some respects the play *does not* transcend its moment. By that I mean that, like Brecht, I think that it's important to preserve historicity. The students and I worked hard not to



flatten out the differences between the characters' circumstances and our own circumstances. At the same time, what Juan Mayorga and translator David Johnston have accomplished is a script that speaks eloquently to the present. The issue I just talked about a moment ago is one example: Inside and outside the space of theatre, performance techniques are used to preserve and amplify power, often in extraordinarily unjust ways, so in that sense the play feels very immediate to me. I also loved that the play astutely critiques the cultural capital that people accrue when they manage to present themselves as well-read. The Nazis recognized the potential efficacy of art and literature, and they capitalized on it in well-documented ways. In *Way to Heaven,* the Commandant is obsessed with performing his love of books: "People think we're animals. But look at my library" (42). He measures people by their literary and cultural exposure, and he offers his discerning taste as evidence of his supposedly good intentions. I thought that aspect of the play was really, really smart. The Commandant's particular shrewdness about the canon as currency felt simultaneously historically specific and chillingly current. The play cultivated an opportunity for us all to talk about how, in the wrong hands, erudition can become lethal ammunition.

What are the challenges of staging "Way to Heaven"?

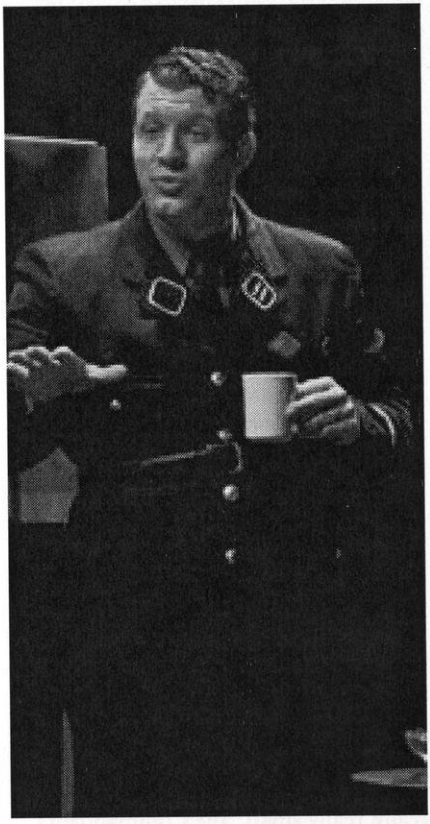
There were many rich challenges. I'll speak to just two for now. From the start, scenic designer Lizzie Bracken and I agreed that we did not want student performers or audience members to engage *Way to Heaven* vaguely as "a Holocaust play." We wanted to avoid a production that was generically somber, and I believe wholeheartedly that the best way to pay people respect is to represent them with as much specificity as possible. We didn't want to drown the play in symbols so affectively over-determined that the audience would end up missing the nuances of why and how the characters do what they do. Lizzie's subtle scenic design suggested

a few elements of concentration camp architecture, but tried to avoid being too on-the-nose. In terms of costumes, the Commandant did not wear a swastika. The prisoners did not wear stars. Some people might understandably question the choice not to have those symbols onstage, but I do think it was the right decision. We weren't running from the realities of history. We were just trying to avoid a situation in which a swastika appears and then suddenly it's the only thing the audience can see. Another challenge was practical. The play contains lengthy, gorgeous, and sometimes evocatively ugly monologues that required the actors to shape their delivery of the text in a really muscular way. It also demanded gestus work that was subtle enough to avoid caricature yet heightened enough to punctuate the text and reveal information. I thought the students rose to the occasion very well, and in some cases astonishingly well.

How can theater, and this piece in particular, incite people to act, think, and examine their view?

Like so many other theatre people, Brecht probably most famously among them, I believe theatre is well-suited to embody the familiar as strange and the strange as familiar. There's much more to be said about theatre on that score, but we'd be here all day. As for *Way to Heaven* specifically, for me at least, the play invites spectators to question what they would have done in the Red Cross Representative's position. The play balances judgment of the Red Cross Representative with an attempt to understand (but not excuse) him. As I discussed in the program, I think it can be tempting for audiences (and I include myself in this) to traffic in historical smugness, assuming that we would have intervened in the atrocities of the Holocaust. But often our own inaction in the present tells a different story. Many atrocities happen the world over, and a majority of people do relatively little (if anything) about them. Many people have understandably judged the International Red Cross harshly for clinging to neutrality, but how often do many of us stake out neutrality ourselves, at great cost to others? I *hope* that audiences left *Way To Heaven* a bit humbled and restless, compelled to question their relationship to present injustices. As for whether that goal was actually achieved, that's of course hard to know.

Photos of Evan Michalic as the Commandant and Warren Dailey as Gottfried by Carin Silkaitis



Woyzeck Times Two

1. *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner Mitchell Theater, University of Wisconsin. Madison, Wisconsin, USA . 1-16 March 2013

Kristopher Imbrigotta interviews director Kristin Hunt Assistant Professor of Theatre, Northeastern Illinois University (formerly a Faculty Associate in the Department of Theatre and Drama, and Lecturer in the Integrated Liberal Studies program at University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Interview date: 10 April 2013

Kristopher Imbrigotta (KI): Could you tell me a little bit about your interests, your theatre background, and what you've done in the past?

Kristin Hunt (KH): My primary interest is in Greek tragedy, politicized adaptations of Greek tragedy, which is actually how I ended up working on this assignment. I also work on experimental methodologies for performance.

KI: How did you get involved with this production? What was your approach?

KH: The Theatre Department selected *Woyzeck* for obvious reasons [paired with the production in the UW German Department] and wanted the text to be done in a site-specific way. This is how we started. We actually lined up a few different sites on the UW campus, but had many fall through because of various problems with risk management. So we staged this play really thinking about getting the Mitchell Theater. My secondary research involves food and food in performance. Those two interests came together and informed my initial thoughts on this production: how could we bring those two aspects together on stage for *Woyzeck*? I thought that was a natural fit for Büchner's play.

KI: You mentioned how much the site was going to influence how you conceived and produced this play. What were some of the other sites you considered and why?

KH: We wanted this to be an experiment and we wanted collaboration at a radical level, really letting people bring their fresh ideas to the table. We wanted to "grow" the show and create surprising resonances. Ultimately, the process of finding a suitable site ended up giving us a lot of usable material for the show. We went around with campus historians, looking for places unseen and forgotten. I had this idea from the German artist Pina Bausch to do the entire play in the underground steam tunnels throughout campus! A train car would then move forward and the audience would move with the actors through the scenes, going through the stations of the play. Unfortunately, we ran into problems right away with the UW Office of Risk Management and had to scrap that idea. That would have been great. We also had our eyes on a livestock barn for *Woyzeck*, which was the site of the famous "Single Grain Experiment." Scientists fed groups of cattle a single grain over a period of time, and they eventually identified Vitamin D as beneficial – so you can see how this fits together with Woyzeck's experience in the play as the doctor feeds him peas exclusively! Finally, bringing the play to the Mitchell Theatre, we had a freak show or circus tent idea.

KI: The freak show theme was then what your team decided on for the production. Did you encounter other snags or problems along the way?

KH: We did, there were quite a few. We had questions from the department as to whether people would come see this thing, and whether or not people would eat the food or want to be blindfolded during a part of the performance. So we brought in a test audience specifically because we became afraid that we were taking these radical ideas too far or we were becoming a cult or something! We kept hearing: "What will you do when people start walking out during the show?" And it was gratifying, and also problematic, to find that the audience was actually docile and just did whatever we told them! So that was another type of experiment that ended up taking place aside from taking risks in the production – to observe how the audience reacted to various prompts, the outbursts from the actors, and whether or not they would comment to each other while sitting there. We ended up taking notes and watching the test groups as a sort of sociological experiment, which was fun to watch for us! We also had to deal with risk management on campus in terms of sanitation and food distribution. Do people have allergies to peas? Is the space clean? Are the blades hanging from the ceiling too sharp? By the way – Risk Management told us that canned peas are acceptable but fresh peas would be a health risk! So we used canned peas.

KI: I remember what some spectators around me were saying when I saw the production. Most of the audience was really engaged and interested, and I think we realized quickly that there were two performances going on here, one with the actors moving through the stations of this chaotic play and the other happening from the reactions around us in the seats, such as: "What is this?!" "Oh no, I'm not eating that!" or "I dropped my peas – can I have another helping?" The group across the stage from me, however, was absolutely silent! Their eyes were wide open, they looked very confused, and two people actually did walk out.

KH: Yes! We were hoping that the audience reaction would influence the texture of the show. Nights like that were my favorite because that is what we wanted to see; wanted to elicit those types of reactions.

KI: What was your reaction to the production? Was the final product something you had envisioned?

KH: I was amazed at how much it all paid off. I wanted the actors to invest themselves in making a fresh exploration of the specific performances each evening. We talked about how they could respond to their partner during the show, not psychologically, but in terms of things like tempo, kinesthetic response, how to stay fresh and alive in the moment – kind of like a circus act! The actors were evolving in the show and pulling out more detail in their performances. The moment where Marie [Niccole Carner] is singing her creepy murder lullaby to the baby and then suddenly pivots and starts to torment Woyzeck while he is on the floor evolved over time. The actors started playing with it more, the scene got crueler, etc. Marie would bend down lower and lower to the point of indecency so that the audience had a view of her upper thighs; this shocked some spectators and they turned away. Marie touched Woyzeck more and more, and during one of the final performances, in the scene where Woyzeck is covered with peas, she actually flicked a pea off his head. It landed

on someone in the audience, totally shocking and possibly disgusting them. It was great! We loved that.

KI: Any moments of surprise?

KH: I was surprised over and over again at how docile the audience was. Again, we were trying to disorient the audience members, get them outside their comfort zone, trying not to meet expectations. It was easy and troubling that they objected so little and that we ran up against a rather typical passive audience. This could have to do with the "circus" theme. Maybe people were in carnival mode; they were willing to sit back and be entertained and we could do whatever we wanted to them. In the stabbing scene, the actor playing Woyzeck delivered the line to the audience "Should I kill Marie?" – which is interesting if you think about it from a Brechtian approach. The audience would answer simply "Why not?" The actor playing Woyzeck found that pretty disturbing, but I thought it wasn't. It would be asking too much from the audience to invite them to stand up and say "No! Don't do it."

KI: I don't think Brecht would have expected that either necessarily, but you're right. The audience should observe that cruel act and think about it.

KH: Exactly. The performative frame persists. But I think we still accomplished what we wanted. Especially after hearing so often that the audience would reject this, it was amazing to see that they didn't reject it at all. Even people who didn't like it just sat there. And it was scary to watch that. Every time I saw the show I was waiting for the mass walk-outs that never came.

KI: Most interesting for me was to observe how audiences are trained to sit there and let themselves be entertained or, even if it is irritating, they just sit and look at their watches and think "Okay, only 20 minutes left, I can handle this." I did notice right as we walked into the theatre space, as we took off our coats, sitting there in the rows, we were confronted with non-conventional techniques: three actors were waiting for us, asking us if we wanted them to sing for us. And this might have been the most unsettling part for some people. I tried to gauge the reaction in the room, which ran the full spectrum from smiling and laughing to wide-eyed shock and frightened looks!

KH: It's that anti Cirque du Soleil thing. We thought it would be fun and delightful, but it didn't exactly pay off. The actors playing the drum major [Kailen Fleck], the monkey [Ben Krueger], the canary bird [Daniel Millhouse], and the horse [Melinda Capperino] were absolutely great. They really wanted to tease the audience from the very moment they walked in. That was just the beginning. Then we led the audience back behind the stage curtain to the actual performance circle where the play happens. We didn't let people walk into the theatre, sit in their assigned seats, get settled, and then just fade away.

KI: You talked about the casting. For me, and I think for most others, the most shocking experiment in this production was that a woman [Ely Phan] was cast to play Woyzeck. This was a conversation thread that ran throughout the entire performance for the audience around me. Most people were whispering, "Who is that?" and "Is that a woman or man, I can't exactly tell!" I really enjoyed that aspect! You really threw a wrench in the wheel.

KH: I'm bad with labels, but the actor playing Woyzeck is trans. Ely and I had a long conversation after auditions. I asked about pronouns, and we didn't

end up with one. But I was extremely interested in this in terms of casting. I wanted actors who were physically distinctive. I didn't want actors who could be cast as anything, who could play an ingénue role, or who might have been the "leading-man" type. So when I cast Ely, I knew that the supporting characters would have a special physicality and would end up outside whatever we mark as "neutral" in terms of body signification. But, especially with the "freak show" frame of the production, we decided early on not to make such a big deal out of the gender issue. We didn't want to send the message that Woyzeck is trans and that makes the character a freak. So we played with the constraints. We treated Woyzeck in the world of the show as a man with no ambiguity, but of course, that was an extra push for the audience because they could tell something was different. Also, the actors playing the doctor [Heather Pickering] and captain [Tina Machele Brown] were women, so that shook things up even more. Essentially the four main characters were all women – Woyzeck, Marie, the doctor, and the captain. The actor playing the doctor really wanted to take things to the extreme. The scene where she analyzes Woyzeck's urine, for example, was interesting. She not only wanted to examine it but, during rehearsal, she turned to me and said, "I think I should take a sip!" So she pushed the scene pretty far.

KI: The doctor in this production really showed the tension between "doctor" and "dominatrix." There were sexual elements and dominance issues going on there that were interesting to watch. You mentioned pushing the text. I wanted to ask about how you and the team approached the dramatic text for this production. Did you have to compromise or compensate for anything, for example the lack of knowledge on the part of the audience or even the cast?

KH: We wanted to treat the text in a non-academic way for the audience, and considering the context in which it was being performed, we were wary of having the production feel like a museum piece or an academic exercise. For example, we didn't give out the programs until after the performance; instead, we handed out menus tying in the food elements: peas, pea flavored gum, pea gelatin, pea soda, pea flavored popsicles, and finally the pea cake, which was meant to be Marie's corpse. So we were giving the audience clues to some of the changes we made. There are a number of folk songs in the text, but we decided to go with more contemporary American folk songs about murder in order to add that interesting performance quality and to get everyone's attention and bring people into the through line of the story via the use of the songs. So we showed the audience something new and then told them about it afterward. So it's a bit of critical distance, but not centered on how true we were to the text. We did not want to educate about the history of the play. I also had to draw on my limited German abilities as we adapted certain parts, so that was a good exercise for me. And our production was not about Germany at all, so there were no references to Germany. We wanted to make it about the characters and contemporary times. We also wanted a new design for the performance space, for lights, props. At times it seemed random, but it came together so well!

Photograph of Kailen Fleck as the Drum Major by Ben J. Golden

2. *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner

Margaret H'Doubler Performance Space, University of Wisconsin. Madison, Wisconsin, USA. 6-7 May, 2013.

Kristopher Imbrigotta interviews director Manfred Roth

Manfred Roth, theatre director and actor based in Frankfurt, Germany, is a Jay C. and Ruth Halls Distinguished Visitor at UW-Madison, and Professor for Stage Movement at the Detmold Academy of Music (Germany).

Interview date: 23 April 2013

Production video: http://archive.org/details/Woyzeck2013

[Every other year the Department of German at UW-Madison produces a play with undergraduate students, conceived by visiting director Manfred Roth.]

Kristopher Imbrigotta (KI): Could you tell me a bit about your background in theatre and what you enjoy most about what you do?

Manfred Roth (MR): I could never get away from theatre. I grew up on stage, on the opera stage. I had a nice soprano voice, but that is gone by now! I teach voice lessons, but I don't sing anymore. Even before the opera, I was on stage all the time in school. It was my outlet. Theatre was a completely new world for me. I didn't have the courage to really apply for drama academy, so I went the academic route to become a dramaturge. That didn't last long. I did my MA on Shakespeare. That was a wonderful time – 1968 in Frankfurt, can you imagine?! That didn't last long either. I did some street theatre and worked with some freelance theatre groups and English-language theatre. I always tried to get away from it, but I wasn't successful! I cannot imagine a life without theatre. What I've enjoyed most working in the theatre for almost 50 years is the variety. Puppet theatre, street theatre, English-language productions, gay theatre, political theatre, everything you could imagine. Nowadays I do quite a bit of opera and stage productions, working with professionals and students. I still occasionally do some acting, and that is a treat.

KI: I was the same way. I was less interested in being out front on stage and more interested in the technical aspects and history of theatre. Let's turn to Büchner. What was your first contact with him and his plays? Have you ever staged anything by him?

MR: No, I haven't. I first thought about doing something by Büchner almost 25 years ago. I was reflecting on a production of *Leonce und Lena* for school kids, but nothing materialized out of that. My first contact was seeing *Woyzeck* on the stage at the age of 16. And that was eye opening for me. We didn't read Büchner in school, but perhaps I had seen *Dantons Tod* before. He is always present on German stages. But the *Woyzeck* opera really interested me. And Büchner is of course one of the great German playwrights. For this production in Madison, Sabine [Gross] and I started almost two years in advance, thinking of new ideas and things to try out. What was possible? Sabine has done *Leonce und Lena*, and she suggested *Woyzeck* to me because of the English-language production on campus [adapted by Kristin Hunt]. And we always must keep language in

mind, both for the audience and for the students in our productions – what is their language ability? Will everything come across as it should? And I wasn't so sure at first because of the complicated language in the play with the puns and all the other references. But after we got started with some rehearsals I knew we could do it. So our production will be a nice contrast to the English-language production that Kristin has done.

KI: You were not on the UW-Madison campus when the English-language production was running. Have you seen or heard anything from that – photos, clips, video?

MR: I really don't know anything about it! And I think that is best. If I go into this production with the other one in my head, I think it would lose originality and the creativity will not be there. There is always that danger of copying or even copying something unconsciously. So I do not want any of that. There is also a production of *Woyzeck* in Frankfurt right now – it's the Büchner year in Germany – so there is great interest. But I did not see that one either. I will see it after I return from Madison. I wanted to keep my ideas fresh without any contamination. And to say "Oh no, I cannot do that because Kristin Hunt did that" would be awful. I mean these two productions are the same play; there is still *Woyzeck*, the doctor, Marie, and so on. You can't reinvent the wheel so to speak. I want to do my thing and not compare right now. I will see the video of the other production after we are finished. And for me, it's not a theoretical exercise or an intellectual practice. Throughout my career, I have tried to choose plays for other reasons, but I also take things as they come, sometimes by chance. I love to do Shakespeare or Beckett, and have written much on that.

KI: Have you done any Brecht? I know he is another interest of yours.

MR: No, not really. But unfortunately, Brecht is not so "in" at the moment! It's difficult to do Brecht on stage, as you know, and these days it is very complicated.

KI: You mentioned this before in your public remarks on campus, but I wanted to ask about your approach to this current *Woyzeck* staging with undergraduates in Madison.

MR: Well, I see *Woyzeck* as a very dark play. It's not simply an individual case of someone going crazy; it has to do with society and the people around him mistreating him. He is treated like a dog by the other characters in the play; it's no wonder he goes crazy. Of course we all know these things from psychology, but I'm not interested in that. From this point of departure we had the idea for using two Woyzecks [Daniel Faust and Joseph Spafford] in the play. They are always together on stage, but they contrast and sometimes they help each other.

KI: I think that fits in with the psychology of the play – Woyzeck fighting with himself, with other characters.

MR: It fits beautifully. Then I added some quotations from Büchner's Lenz as reference points – Woyzeck #2 is the counter character really, who opposes everything, whereas Woyzeck #1 is the one who gets the brunt of everything and goes crazy. But very decisive for the whole production is the fact that I have a large cast – almost 20 undergraduate students! I don't see any sense in having a production with three or four always on stage and that's it. I always try to include everybody on stage. This is what you will see on stage, that everyone will participate at all times. Another thing important to me is that we have a

different performance space in Madison this year. In previous years, we produced the plays at the Play Circle in the student union on campus; now, we get to have the wonderful Margaret H'Doubler space. The equipment is better, the acoustics are better, lighting, stage, everything. With another advantage: stadium seating! It informed my visual ideas of the play. So this will be a chance to expand technically from what we have done here in Madison in the past with the German Department plays. My idea is to make things simple and clean: very few props, sparse lighting, and simple costumes. I want the text to step forward and I want the actors to be the focal points. I wanted to concentrate on the actors with this production, and this was very worthwhile because this group is really so good. It's a large group, like I said, and everyone is included on stage. We are having fun!

KI: You mentioned your visual ideas of the play. Could you elaborate?

MR: This play deals with visuality and the visual in interesting ways and we wanted to bring that out to the front. *Visuelle Wahrnehmung*, visual perception, is a thread running through the entire play: *gucken, gaffen, sehen, glotzen, schauen*. And that is something that gave me the idea to have the scenes play out in a "public" setting, where things are being observed and watched closely. Our murder scene with two Woyzecks is different from the original text; she dies publicly with commentary from those watching and from the other Woyzeck. Other scenes are public events; the group is always there. So the conditions of our productions in Madison also influence how we stage these plays. And I welcome that. I've never staged a play in a vacuum.

KI: That sounds great for theatre work though, because the show must go on either way. That leads into what I wanted to discuss next. How is it working with the undergraduate students of German? You visit campus every other year for the German play.

MR: Working with the students is wonderful! Each time, Sabine and I talk about what would work for any given character and why that is, plus we invite students to audition for characters of their interest. We divided the students into groups and made lists; then we give students the choice. I've been here seven times or so, and it works out every time! With the male students it's sometimes a challenge to get them to open up. They are somewhat more reserved. But they are willing to invest the time. Marie [Fiona Beamish-Crouthamel] is not a German student in the department but she wanted to act in the play and she has acting experience. I know how difficult it is with the arduous rehearsal schedule. I expect everyone to be there on time, and to meet the challenges. In many ways, working with the students is one of the more gratifying jobs I have.

KI: I think the students also come into these productions wanting to do a great job. They know the challenges. Producing a foreign-language play is a major part of the drama course for which they have registered, so they are aware of this going in. They also look forward to your arrival. They know you have one month and then show time!

MR: I appreciate their efforts and I look forward to working with the students. They are really disciplined, and they remember what I say! I'm impressed. It also helped that they saw the English-language production of the play adapted by Kristin. They got to see the text come alive prior to my arrival. They

knew that this play, the play's material, was heavy and serious. Most impressive is that many of these students are not German majors at all; they just enjoy German literature and culture and want to be associated with our production.

KI: How much freedom do you give your actors? Is it different when you work with American students?

MR: In general, yes. Here in Madison, I am more involved. I was decisive and gave them structure. I also welcome ideas and accept changes. The problem is that I have four or five weeks to put on a play with non-native speakers! I try to pass on the important points in the play and then let them act it out to see if it works. The students meet for rehearsals and experiment with certain things. I like that a lot. But, in order to establish a formal style or vision, we cannot be too free form. The students need material and direction. We don't have three months to put on a play, including lectures, rigorous rehearsals, exercises, etc. No, we have a month and they are busy, too.

KI: Have you experienced any major problems in the staging?

MR: At the moment, we are having some issues with the longer scenes between the major [Will Swassing] and the doctor [Justin Court]. Those scenes are full of dialogue, lots of action. I give them patterns, but they are still unsure. It's very difficult for them but they are making great progress. If they come to rehearsal with the text not yet memorized I get nervous! So we can't get too courageous all at once. We try things out and do certain patterns and constellations on stage. Their job is the text; my job is the action and overall concept. So as long as we are all on the same page it works. Mistakes are human nature and I accept that.

KI: How do think the audience will react to your staging?

MR: If it really works, they will go along with it. If it goes wrong, I will go on stage with the book and direct them! I can throw on rags and direct the actors on stage like a defamiliarization effect to the extreme, almost like showing a rehearsal. I don't think that will be necessary. I have high hopes for this production, and I think the audience can engage at certain points. I think this will be my most daring production in Madison – distance, lighting, shadows, facial profiles. Four years ago with Ödön von Horváth's *Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung*, I had only ramp lights and cardboard boxes; here I will do something totally different. I hope that the audience will be *befremdet* in the best sense. I'm doing this play in a really pessimistic way. I want to exceed people's expectations, especially those who always see the German Department plays every other year. Getting out of the comfort zone is possible. I hope that comes across this time!

Photo of Fiona Beamish-Crouthamel as Marie and Daniel Faust and Joseph Spafford as the two Woyzecks by Sabine Gross

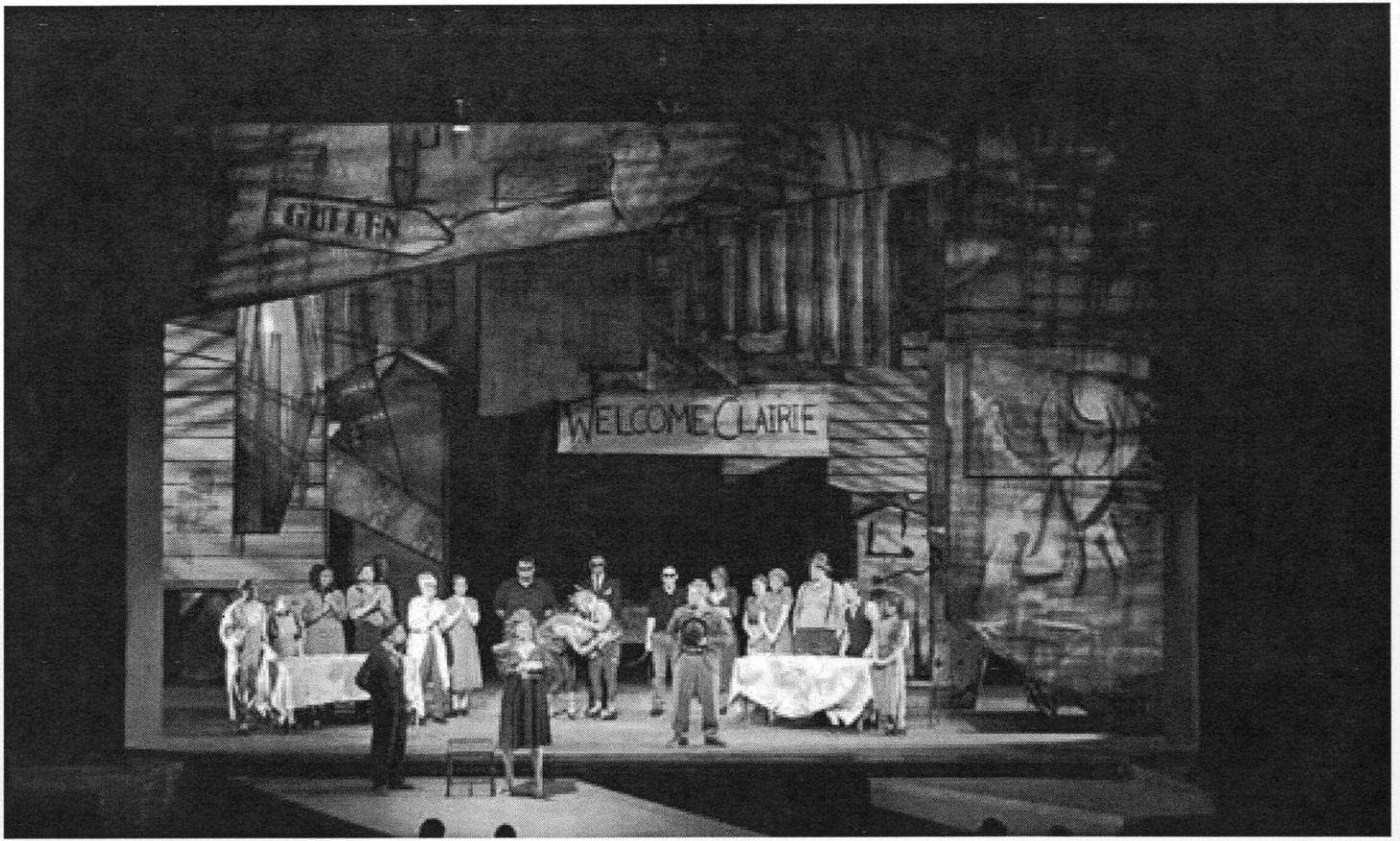
The Visit
by Friedrich Dürrenmatt
Thurber Theatre, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Directed by Lesley Ferris
March 6th, 2013
Reviewed by Alex Holznienkemper

The Ohio State University's Theatre Department, under the guidance of Director Lesley Ferris, provided a sizeable mid-week audience with an entertaining, stimulating staging of Friedrich Dürenmatt's 1953 play *Der Besuch der alten Dame*. Taking seats about ten minutes before the opening of the play, a man hurriedly painting on stage may have initially been taken as doing last minute stage prep, but revealed himself as part of the play before the play, staging the citizens of Güllen's anticipation of the potentially debt-alleviating visit by Claire Zachanassian in a creative way.

A sense of heaviness, dreariness was marked by the hanging stage props - scaffolded, hanging one behind another, partially overlapping, with individual props floating away intermittently throughout the play, bringing about a sense of greater clarity, or even purification as Claire Zachanassian's stay in the downtrodden town of Güllen progressed. Staying close to Dürrenmatt's stage instructions, the production was generally held simplistic, but it also made resourceful use of the Thurber Theatre's size and technical capacities. The projection of trains rushing through Güllen did not feel out-of-place with the bare-bones feel of the production, but rather already set the tone for the active engagement with the audience. As the moving train images were only clearly recognizable on projection screens to either side of the stage, one felt as though one were partaking in the watching of the train with the Gülleners, just from the opposite side of the tracks.

Breaking the fourth wall clearly played a prominent role in this production, and in my judgment worked splendidly. Only when Claire's first husband – played maybe with a little too strong of an added redneck element to his fishing enthusiasm – stared down some fifth-row spectators uncomfortably long did the stage entrance from within the audience come across as slightly distracting, adding a minimal *Verfremdungseffekt* for some in the audience to a play that was otherwise more concerned with enveloping the audience with the action. A row of seats in the front third of the auditorium had been replaced by a walkway across the width of the auditorium, which then descended through the first four rows and was connected to the main stage by an angled, tilted platform. Its consistent use throughout the play proved to be effective in making the audience feel part of this ever-relevant piece.

The opening sequence depicting the Gülleners in their haste to prepare the town for the arrival of Claire Zachanassian certainly succeeded in portraying the largely comical element of Dürrenmatt's tragic comedy. The mayor of Güllen, played appropriately overly animatedly by Patrick Wiabel, as well as the town Pastor (Sifiso Mazibuko) led the way in embodying the town's unease. The mayor's boisterous and hurried speech, along with the pastor's exaggerated facial gestures and exclamations made clear the town's anxiety in light of its financial dependence on the impending visit by the town's own self-made strongwoman. Alfred Ill, portrayed in masterfully nuanced fashion by Brent Ries, is also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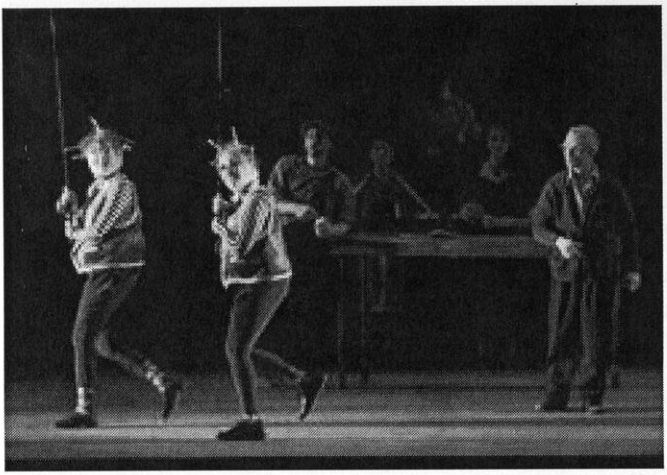
caught up in the town's fretfulness, though to a more reasonable degree than many others.

Throughout the play, Ries manages to bring out Ill's shifting moods succinctly. In the opening sequence, his long-past relationship with Claire Zachanassian puts him on a social pedestal from which he can attest to her character traits and draw hope for the town's citizens that Zachanassian might indeed be inclined to aid the flailing city. Zachanassian's entrance into the action marks the first point at which the stage walkway in the auditorium is employed. Entering from the left side with her Butler Boby, who looks more like a hybrid bodyguard / Secret Service agent than a butler, Zachanassian's presence can literally be felt in the first rows as her imagined prosthetic left leg forces her to audibly limp across the walkway and onto the main stage. Played by Meg Chamberlain, her vocal and physical presence dominates the stage, signifying her preeminence in Güllen's collective psyche during her visit.

While the costume design of the Gülleners is clearly set in Dürrenmatt's time, Claire's entrance brings a certain *Ungleichzeitigkeit* to the play. Her suitcases are marked with Louis Vuitton emblems, and she is soon seen chatting on her cell phone and arranging for wedding invitations to Obama, Angela Merkel and others. Other modernizing references include Facebook, Justin Timberlake, Lady Gaga and the heavily-advertised Fiat 500 which are the only minor drawback to this staging. The adaptation of the play to a more contemporary setting is marked more by pop cultural references that undermine the original's more poignant critique of post-war industrial enrichment. The original medley of names (Zacharoff – arms dealer and owner of the Monte Carlo Casino, Onassis – industrial ship owner, and Gulbekian – engineer, oil explorer and finance expert) strongly invoke connotations of ill-gotten industrial wealth. References to similarly deceptive methods of wealth abound in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis – Berny Madoff, AIG and Lehmann Brothers would have lent themselves well to a current staging (Lehmadoff could have been a possible name adaptation), but maybe I am too narrow-minded to truly appreciate the more ambiguous incorporation of both current political and pop culture references.

In the second act, the buildup of suspicion into fear is carried out well, as Ill starts connecting the dots of his fellow townsmen's consumption patterns. Once again, the stage setup proves itself skillfully employed as the scene of Ill trying to flee the town via train envelopes part of the audience while the townspeople close in on Ill from all sides when he is getting ready to depart. The projection of a single color onto a backdrop behind all props fittingly guides us through the different moods, as the backdrop changes from purples to reds to blues and greys throughout the play.

After the intermission, the third act again succeeds in succinctly bringing about the changing dispositions in Güllen. While Ries manages well to act out how Ill has come to terms with the threat to his life, other citizens begin to panic, as the teacher and doctor (both cast as women in this rendition – Melonie Mazibuko and Sarah Ware, respectively) gently try to entice the kindness out of Claire's heart, all the while insisting on their humanistic values and innocence in accumulating suffocating debt. Their idea of selling the *Platz-an-der-Sonne-Hütte*, *Bockmann*, or *Wagnerwerke* are



quickly dissolved as empty hopes since Claire owns them already, and the town of Güllen realizes it cannot escape its vices innocently.

Yet the attitude in Ill's store remains upbeat: the stage is lit brightly, and the customers still consume on store credit. The tone of the people still wrapped up in consumption shifts to one of condemnation of Ill's long-gone mistreatment of Claire, and Ill's now-stoic attitude begins to draw the crowd into the inevitable martyrdom of Ill for the good of the town's credit standing. Having accepted his fate and culpability for the harm inflicted upon Claire, as well as her two crowd-favorite eunuchs, Ill's disposition turns from one of fear and paranoia towards acceptance and contentment.

The staging of Ill's execution leads towards a dramatic conclusion to the play. For the death itself, frontal lighting extinguishes, while the blue back-lighting allows the crowd to see only the black silhouettes of those murdering Ill. As the frontal lighting illumines, we see an interesting alteration to Dürrenmatt's original as Claire Zachanassian now hands the check for one billion to the mayor, though not without letting the check fall on Ill's corpse first. The question of guilt is left open in the original, but here is clearly shifted towards the townspeople, maybe serving as a poignant warning call to the credit-giddy American audience whose economy seems to be on the verge of temporarily surviving another credit bubble without truly changing anything about lending and borrowing practices.

As the Chorus concludes the play, the finale indeed becomes quite grand. With the light focusing on the Gülleners singing in the foreground, all stage props begin to drift away into the background, and as the final line is sung ("That we may enjoy our good fortune"), all lights extinguish save for a horizontal line of lights that burst alight onto the audience, concluding the play with arguably the greatest instance of *Entfremdung* for the audience. The audience can see the entire stage in its stark, architectural simplicity, and the crew takes its final bow before a cheering audience.

The evening concluded with a stimulating discussion session, in which Prof. Malkmus from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures offered remarks on Dürrenmatt's employment of the grotesque in his *Spießersatiren*. Prof. Malkmus was joined by Director Lesley Ferris and Dramaturg Leela Singh on stage and a lively discussion with actors and spectators concluded an engrossing theatre-going experience.

Performance Photos: Eric Mayer

Brecht: *A Man's A Man*
Classic Stage Company, New York
Directed by Brian Kulick
Jan. 10 – Feb. 16
Performance attended, Jan. 31

Reviewed by Andy Spencer

It's hard to know what to make of the Classic Stage Company's production of *A Man's A Man*, not because it makes the play any more confusing than it already is, but rather because it's a little all-over-the-place. At one and the same time it seems to want to make everything hang together by both stylizing and naturalizing, and in this Janus-faced mode it ultimately proves a little wearing. Maybe it's inevitably so - as intrigued as I had been to see the play, during the course of the performance I couldn't help but think about whether it's even possible or wise today to put on this particular play at this particular time AND try to have it seem somehow timely. From the army tunics to the rough-and-tumble-banter, there's a musty air to proceedings which no amount of fourth-wall battering or diverting knockabout comedy is quite able to dispel. To their credit, the cast members certainly give the impression that they believe that the play can still work, turning in spirited performances in just about all roles, but the production as a whole never really cuts loose, remaining at the that spirited level throughout, engaging but not enthralling, at points plodding and often baffling. But not in a good way; which is to say it doesn't really matter how many times you have the cast remind you that this or that makes no sense, or that this or that has nothing to do with any kind of narrative, there still has to be a reason to come back for the second act. Director Brian Kulick employs strategies that have proven successful elsewhere – new music by an award winning composer, a drag star in a leading role, props (oil-drums) that reference contemporary sources of conflict etc, but somehow the play resists a retooling for our time, and on the night I saw it even the scenery rebelled, with a sliding door at first sticking and then proving resistant to much concerted whacking, which prevented the grand appearance of the Ganesh figure in the temple sequence. Further, the aforementioned oil drums, which formed the building blocks for most on-stage constructions, kept, well, rolling, and rather than foregrounding conflict, they seemed more an invitation to a broken ankle.

It does have its moments, and Justian Vivian Bond is engaging enough as Widow Bigbeck, particularly in the opening song of act II, a song which is a spoken interlude in the original, but which has here been transformed by Duncan Sheik. It's an interesting move and one which pushes me towards agreeing with Frank Scheck, writing in the *Hollywood Reporter*, who laments the fact that the play had not been entirely transformed into a musical. However, such a bold step is a step too far for this production, and even if it were all-singing, all-dancing, I'm not so sure that Sheik's accomplished but stagey music would be the ideal foil.

At heart it is perhaps the theme of the inherent instability and vulnerability of identity which doesn't really startle as it maybe did in the mid '20s. That ordinary men do terrible things is no revelation, but even allowing for that, if the figure of Galy Gay, as played here by Gibson Frazier, were not such a simpleton, the transformation into a killing machine would provide more in the way of food for thought. As it is, it's hard to really credit his metamorphosis as much more than a stupefied reaction to a series of practical jokes.

This year's *Brecht Yearbook* contains a fitting tribute to Manfred Karge on his 75th birthday. Here at *CIBS* we offer our own contribution in the form of the following anecdote as related by actor Hansa Czypionka to Margaret Setje-Eilers.

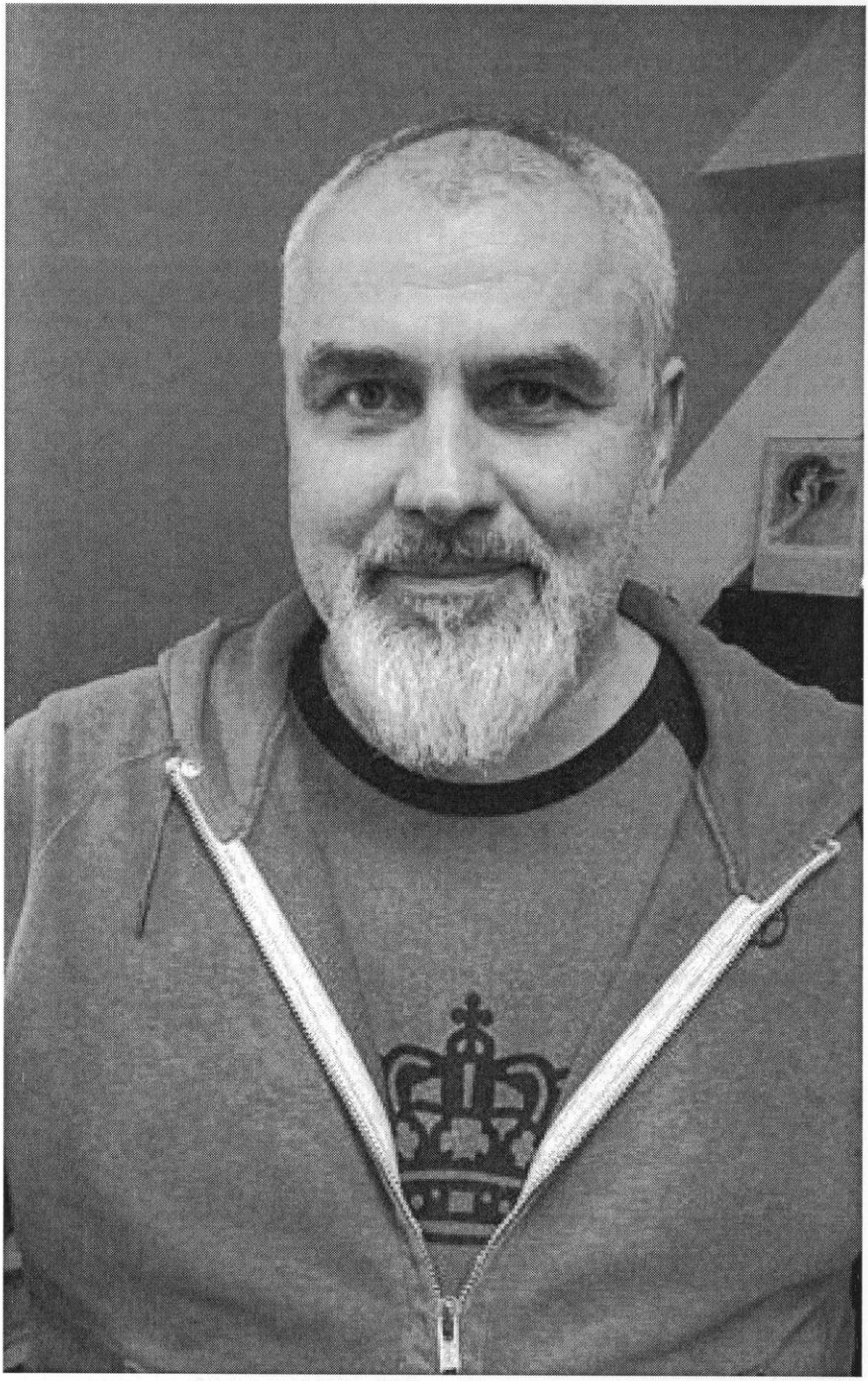
Manfred Karge zum 75. Geburtstag Gespräch mit Hansa Czypionka, 8. März 2013, Kreuzkölln

Margaret Setje-Eilers: Heute spreche ich mit Schauspieler Hansa Czypionka in seiner Berliner Wohnung in Kreuzberg. Herr Czypionka, da Sie am gleichen Tag wie Manfred Karge auch Geburtstag haben, hat er Sie bei seiner Geburtstagsvorstellung am 1. März 2013 zu einem besonderen Anlaß auf die Bühne gerufen. Sie haben beide zusammen improvisiert, was Sie hier erzählen, nämlich was bei einer bemerkenswerten Vorstellung von *Der Mutter* von Bertolt Brecht nach Gorki im Jahr 1985 am Bochumer Schauspielhaus passierte (Regie: Manfred Karge, 1983). Das Ereignis liegt ziemlich weit zurück, stellt aber vortrefflich dar, was nur im Theater passieren kann. Solche Momente liebt Regisseur Manfred Karge, der nicht nur inszenierte und den Gutsmetzger spielte, sondern auch nach dem Beifall eine Rolle übernahm, die sämtliche Schauspieler überraschte. Herr Czypionka, wie war das bei dieser Vorstellung im Jahre 1985?

Hansa Czypionka: Ja, wir sind jetzt bei mir in Kreuzkölln, wie sich das so hipperweise nennt. Also, es war am Schauspielhaus in Bochum. Naturlich war das schön in Bochum, weil ich aus Bochum komme und ich hatte schon ein Riesenglück, dass ich nach der Schauspielschule mein erstes Engagement an dem Theater hatte, wo ich vorher schon zur Zadek-Zeit Statist gewesen war. Es muss 1985 gewesen sein, jetzt fast 30 Jahre her, genau 28 Jahre. Ich hatte bei Manfred dann gerade Proben für *Claire* gehabt, sein Musical über Claire Waldoff. Das war ein Tag, an dem wir im Malersaal eine Probe hatten und wir hatten die ersten Kostüme bekommen. Es gab eine Szene, wo ich halb Mann, halb Frau geschminkt war und mit einer Kollegin getanzt habe, wo es genau umgekehrt war. Also waren es gespaltene, androgyne Wesen. Auf der Drehbühne gab es Szenen, wo sie tanzten. Es war 20er Jahre Berliner Panoptikum, glaube ich. Ich saß in der Maske und kriegte zum ersten Mal diese Maske aufprobiert, also eine Seite blond, wasserstoff-gewellt, die andere Seite so ein Gigolo mit Bärtchen, und in der Mitte halt gespalten. Da kam schon ein Anruf von der Probebühne. Die haben gesagt, ich muss jetzt schnell hochkommen, die Probe geht los. Sie haben mich aus der Maske nicht weggelassen. Dann kam ein zweiter Anruf und ich habe gesagt, ich muss jetzt hoch, die werden ungeduldig, die werden sauer. Dann sagte mir Chefmaskenbildner, nee, du bleibst jetzt hier. Wir müssen unsere Arbeit auch mal machen, wir müssen es

auch richtig ausprobieren. Und ich habe es halt nicht geschafft, wegzukommen, kam dann, als sie ihre Arbeit fertig hatten, auf die Probebühne, so halb Mann, halb Frau, und kriegte von Manfred einen totalen Anschiss, so etwa, das ist eine Unverschämtheit, dreißig Leute warten da. Ich war völlig perplex, habe nur so gestottert. Es war absurd, weil ich war ja gar nicht ich. Ich war zwei Wesen: „Die haben mich nicht weggelassen." Manfred: „Ach, das gibt's doch nicht!" Er hat mich ganz zur Schnecke gemacht. Es war mir peinlich, aber ich hatte das Gefühl, ich hätte da echt nichts machen können. Ich war so wie zwischen Mama und Papa, die beide etwas anderes wollten.

So, die Probe ging zu Ende und dann kam Manfred zu mir und fragte: „Kannst du für morgen die Rolle von Reiner (Gross) in der *Mutter* übernehmen? Er ist krank. Die wollen die Vorstellung nicht ausfallen lassen». Reiner Gross, der mittlerweile schreibt. Ich glaube, er hat ganz aufgehört, Theater zu spielen. Also Reiner konnte nicht, und um die Vorstellung zu retten, ob ich das bis zum nächsten Tag lernen könnte. Ja, ich war jung und strotzte vor Selbstbewusstsein und habe mir gedacht, ach klar, das kriege ich irgendwie hin. Hab mir dann doch diesen relativ umfangreichen Text, also es waren schon einige Wörter zu lernen, über Nacht reingeprügelt. Einige Sachen waren auf Live-Musik, die auch so ein bestimmtes Timing haben mussten. Wir hatten am nächsten Tag Proben. Ich habe echt geschwitzt, war sehr, sehr aufgeregt. Dann kam die Vorstellung, es ging los. Alles funktionierte auch ganz gut, bis wir zu der berühmten Szene kamen: «Iwan Wessowtschikow erkennt seinen Bruder nicht mehr». Ich spielte Iwan Wessowtschikow. Die Szene erzahlt, wie ich meinen Bruder, den Lehrer, nicht mehr wieder erkenne, nachdem die Mutter einige Wochen bei ihm gewohnt hat. Also, ich hatte sie dort bei meinem Bruder untergebracht, weil ihr Sohn verhaftet wurde und auch sie in Gefahr ist. Während sie dort wohnt, agitiert sie meinen Bruder. Der ist vorher ein sehr zarengläubiger und konservativer Mensch, hat auch ein Zarenbild da hängen. Das wird noch eine Rolle spielen. Sie bringt ihm in der Zwischenzeit bei, dass er sich auch um die Interessen der Arbeiter kümmern soll. Er fängt auch an, sie zu unterrichten. Jetzt komme ich nach einigen Wochen aus dem Untergrund zurück. Heimlich tauche ich da auf und es fällt noch ein bisschen Wortgeplänkel mit meinem Bruder. Die beiden Kollegen sitzen jetzt mit dem Rücken zu diesem Bild. Und ich merke auch erst ganz kurz vor meinem Satz «Wo hast du das schöne Zarenbild hingehängt?», dass das Bild noch hängt. Es ist auch zufällig gefilmt worden, auf Video. Man sieht es ganz schlecht in einer ganz groben Videoqualität, aber man sieht trotzdem, wie ich in dem Moment blass werde und so anfange zu lachen. Ich weiß auch nicht, was ich machen soll, und da fragt mich mein Bruder: «Was hast du?» Es rotiert in meinem Kopf, ich denke, verflixt, was mache ich denn? Also sie hatten schlicht vergessen, dass der, der das normalerweise gespielt hat, es beim Umbau immer abgehängt hat. Damals haben viele Schauspieler die Umbauten mitgemacht. Das war im ganzen Stück so; viele Umbauten wurden vom Ensemble bewältigt, dass da nicht noch Techniker zwischendurch herumhüpfen mussten. Und Reiner hatte eben das Bild abgenommen. Da hatte keiner daran gedacht. Also wir hatten sonst an alles gedacht, dass der Text und die Musik läuft. Jetzt hing auf einmal dieses Bild da. Die beiden Kollegen sahen es nicht. Lore



Hansa Czypionka

Brunner (die Mutter) guckte mich ganz groß an, mit einem Blick etwa so: jetzt hat er die Nerven verloren, jetzt dreht er durch. Ich war zuerst völlig hilflos, musste was tun. Und dann sprang ich auf das Podest drauf und sagte: „Willst du nicht das schöne Zarenbild mal abhängen?" Uli (Ulrich) Pleitgen, der Lehrer Nicolai Wessowtschikow, drehte sich mit großen Augen um. Lore Brunner guckte auch völlig entsetzt. Dann nahm er das Bild nach einem ziemlich langen Double-Take und sagte: „Ja, ich wollte es sowieso mal abnehmen, nicht so aus ideologischen Gründen." Und wir haben uns irgendwie über die Szene gerettet und haben geguckt, welche Wörter wir davon noch unterbringen konnten, sind auf das Ende der Szene gesprungen.

Das Stück ging weiter und eigentlich war für mich danach Schluss, außer es kam noch ein Lied, glaube ich, in einem kleinen Chor. Das heißt also, ich hatte das Schlimmste hinter mich gebracht, sitze völlig erschöpft und erschlagen in der Garderobe. Da kommt Manfred, der den Gutsmetzger gespielt hat, reingestürmt, also er kommt mit seinem Gutsmetzgerkostüm, ich weiß nicht, ob noch mit dem Hackebeil in der Hand, da bin ich mir nicht mehr sicher. Er kommt in die Garderobe reingestürmt und fragt: „Kannst du den Text noch?" Ich sage: „Was?" „Kannst du den Text noch?" „Jaaaa." Rums, Tür zu, er war wieder weg. Ich hatte keine Ahnung, was das bedeuten sollte. So, da war das Stück zu Ende und es wurde in Bochum immer stürmisch gefeiert. In der Studentenstadt fanden das alle immer ganz toll. Wir hatten einen Riesenapplaus und außerdem eine wilde, wüste Applausordnung, so Ariane Mnouchkine-mäßig, wo alle so nach vorne mit ziemlichen Schwung stürmten. Nachdem das ein paarmal durchgelaufen war, kam dann Manfred, hat etwas hinter dem Rücken versteckt. Er hat den Applaus abebben lassen und sagte: „Jetzt mache ich mal etwas, was ich noch nie im Theater gemacht habe." Alle stehen da. „Bravo!" Weiterhin hat er kurz erklärt, dass ich die Rolle von gestern auf heute übernommen hätte, sonst hätten wir gar nicht spielen können, ich hätte es auch gut gemacht, und bravo. Dann sagte er, es ist etwas passiert, zieht das Zarenbild hinter dem Rücken hervor, und sagt, dieser Herr hat uns einen Streich gespielt, dass ich nichts dafür konnte, aber er kann jetzt doch nicht umhin, dieses Publikum in den Genuß der Szene kommen zu lassen. Wir spielen diese Szene deswegen einfach nach. Er stellte sich hin, mit dem Bild in der Hand und sagte: „So und jetzt ist es weg." Und drehte es um. Dann fingen wir an. Es gab zwei, drei kleine Pannen, weil keiner genau wusste, wo fangen wir jetzt an, was ist los, alle völlig verwirrt. Den Leuten hat es total gefallen. Am nächsten Tag stand eine kleine Meldung in der Zeitung und darüber: „So was kann nur Theater." Das muss 1985 gewesen sein, in der *WAZ*, in der *Westdeutschen Allgemeinen Zeitung*.

MSE: Herr Karge schätzt solche Situationen, glaube ich, außerordentlich, denn sie gehören für Schauspieler und Publikum zu den einmaligen Erlebnissen des Theaters. Das Theater ist das Unwiederholbare, sagt er; Pannen gibt es nur am Theater. Im Film kann man sie wegschneiden, aber auf der Theaterbühne muss man mit dem Unerwarteten fertig werden. Wann ist das sonst passiert, dass ein Regisseur seine Schauspieler plötzlich und überraschend bittet, eine Szene noch nach dem Applaus nachzuholen? Herzlichen Dank, Herr Czypionka, dass Sie sämtliche Szenen hier noch einmal nachgespielt haben.

Margaret Setje-Eilers, Vanderbilt University

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