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Errata

- add an <s> after the apostrophe: pp VI, 14, 15, 226, 228, 231, 249, 280, 296
- p 3 para 6: "over" for "in"
- p 5 footnote 3: read "Unbestimmtheitscharakter"
- p 31 para 5: delete "the" before "'epic theatre'"
- p 64 para 4: read "'cultural cringe'"
- p 99 para 2: read "*The Threepenny Opera*"
- p 105 para 2: read "*The One Day of the Year*"
- p 143 para 2: add "are" before "thus"
- p 170 para 2: "evident in" for "of"
- p 179 para 3: comma after "Smith"
- p 181 footnote 1: "more" for "rather"
- p 192 para 2: "at" for "from"
- p 193 para 1: read "zerbrochne" (also pp193 and 194)
- p 193 footnote 2: "in" for "at", read "Department"
- p 195 para 2: read "Yiddish"
- p 200 para 2: "along" for "on", "lines"
- p 200 para 3: "at" for "in"
- p 211 footnote 6 "descent" for "descant"
- p 219 para 1: "equated" for "equalled"
- p 220 para 4: "from" for "than" , delete commas"
- p 222 para 2: delete "a" before "theatre"
- p 223 para 2: read "Goethe Institutes"
- p 223 para 4: "aroused" for "raised" (also p 236)
- p 224 para 1: "until now" for "so far"
- p 224 para 3: "are" for "were"
- p 230 para 2: "in connection with" for "in relation to"
- p 230 para 3: delete "definite"
- p 230 para 4: read "siècle"
- p 235 para 3: "in" for "to"
- p 237 para 4: read "Kadidja's"
- p 241 footnote: comma after "Gaden"
- p 268: "to" for "towards"
- p 272 footnote 3: gap after 311
- p 287 para 1: read "*Süddeutsche Zeitung*"
- p 301 para 3: "life" for "live"
- p 303 para 4: "in" for "for"
- p 330: "Semdner"for "Sebdner"

Amendments

- table of contents: headings 3-8: delete "receiving" and replace "the reception of"
- p 2 para 1: delete "However"
- p 4 footnote 4: read "the historicity (...) of a hermeneutic principle"
- p 15 para 1: insert "the critic" before "Brisbane"
- p 22: move footnote 1 to p 21
- p 27 footnote 3: delete "from now on", read "henceforth"
- p 31 para 3: delete "exceed", read "go beyond
- p 32 para 4: insert footnote "Cf. Eve Rosenhaft, "Brecht's Germany: 1898-1933", 11-12, in: Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks (1994), 3-21.
- p 39 para 1: add "(sic)" after "Bertold"

- p 39 para 2: insert German titles (*Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*)
- p 41 para 4: delete "It bears recalling", read "One only need recall"
- p 43 footnote 2: add "19" before "61"
- p 56 para 2: add "newspaper" before "article"
- p 57 footnote 4: delete "towards", read "of"
- p 64 para 4: insert footnote "Personal interview, 9.2.98"
- p 69 para 3: delete "cultural changes", read "cultural exports"
- p 70 para 2: delete "continued", read "has taken place every year since"
- p 81 para 3: delete "the" before "introduction", read "my"; add footnote "Cf. my observations regarding "entertainment", 28 -30
- p 100 para 2: delete "merit", read "achievement"
- p 105 footnote 2: read "Therefore the world of the war in its theatre form (...) appears (...) as an artistic image of reality, for post-war Europe and especially for the ruined world of Germany after the Second World War. (...) It can be a symbol in an undisturbed world which has not, or not directly, experienced war."
- p 107 footnote 1: add "8"
- p 139 para 2: delete "waited to be performed", read "had yet to be performed"
- p 141 para 4: delete "well", read "positively"
- p 140 para 5: delete "mixed", read "complicated"
- p 150 para 2: delete "one"; read "At a time when major corruption (...) came to light, it was appropriate to interpret *The Threepenny Opera* in this vein. Even the critic (...), who a year earlier had dismissed (...)." Delete "actualisation", read "staging"; delete "has" before "proved"; delete "guarantee a production with considerable impact", read "give a production genuine appeal"; delete "impact", read "impression".
- p 150 para 4: delete the comma after "possibly"; read "but also at mocking the behaviour (...)"
- p 160 para 1: delete "a vague description", read "an, albeit vague, description"; add "had" before "continued"
- p 157 para 1: delete "attract", read "draw"
- p 160 para 6: delete "originally"
- p 179 footnote 1: read "Department of German and Swedish Studies at the University of Melbourne"
- p 180 para 4: delete "similarly to", read "in a similar vein to"
- p 181 footnote 1: delete last sentence
- p 183 para 3: delete "dismissal", read "discreditation"; delete "consent", read "agreement"
- p 190 para 4: delete "premieres", read "first performances"
- p 193 para 4: delete "discussed anywhere in writing", read "anywhere put into print"
- p 199 para 2: delete "Just like" read "In the same way as"
- p 201: move footnote 1 to p 200
- p 201 para 1: delete "in context with", read "in the context of"
- p 202 para 4: read "the only subtle means to express the issues of the day"
- p 204 para 2: delete "suggested to interpret", read "presented"
- p 205 para 3: delete "locate", read "set"; read "an economically prosperous period"
- p 205 para 4: read "Cuban Missile Crisis"; read "in the history of the performance (...) in Australia"; read "the relevance of theatre"; read "some critics, like Ramola Constantino, (...) or, as Kevon Kemp did, (...)."
- p 219 para 3: read "relevance as an idea had been referred to"
- p 221 para 1: read "were attended"

- p 221 para 3: read "indeterminate quality attaching to"; delete "horizon of expectation", read "expectations"
- p 221 footnote 4: add "5" after "introduction"
- p 222 para 2: delete "exceeded", read "went beyond"; add footnote to last sentence "Personal interview, 26.10.98"
- p 226 para 3: read "lectures directly, since"
- p 231 footnote 4: delete "had a difficult stand", read "encountered difficulties"; add "divide" after "binary"
- p 232 para 5: delete "This detail", read "Such assistance"; delete "bear", read "bring about"
- p 233 para 1: add "in" before "conference";
- p 233 para 3: add "out" before "classic"
- p 233 para 4: read "an extension (...) could have helped to narrow the gap between (...)"
- p 235 footnote 1: add "154" after "*Little*"
- p 240 para 4: delete "demonstrate"; read "prove"
- p 241 para 2: read "from the beginning"
- p 245 para 3: read "critics likewise appear"
- p 246 para 3: add "column" before "space" (also para 4); add footnote after "space": "244"
- p 248: move footnote 1 to p 247
- p 248 para 2: read "more widespread"
- p 249 para 3: delete "instead of referring", read "and not through contact with"
- p 251 para 4: delete "distance, read "perspective"
- p 292 para 2: delete "never ceased", read "was undiminished"; delete "ascertained", read "indicated"; delete "exceeded", read "went beyond the simple"
- p 292 footnote 1: read "which is worthy of study"
- p 293 para 2: delete "turning", read "reverting"
- p 294 para 1: add "of the late 1960s" after "movement"
- p 295 para 1: delete "reception history", read "the period under consideration"
- p 299: delete "German performance", read "performances in German"

The Australian Reception Of Austrian, German And Swiss Drama: Productions And Reviews Between 1945 And 1996

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

This thesis deals with the Australian reception of Austrian, German and Swiss drama by looking at productions and reviews between 1945 and 1996. Approaching the topic chronologically, the thesis traces the history of Australian theatre from a particular angle, that is, from the performance of plays by German-speaking playwrights in Australia. It also throws light on developments in intercultural relationships between Australia and Germany. As a result, it indicates possible implications of cultural policies both on a national and international level.

The thesis has its material basis in a documentation of as many productions of Austrian, German and Swiss plays between 1945 and 1996 as could be established. This listing provides data which has not been systematically documented to date.

This record serves as a basis for examining the reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights at a given time and place in Australia. Referring to a selection of case studies, the study considers how Australian directors have produced the foreign plays, and how Australian theatre critics have responded to these productions. The analysis is based on programme notes, reviews in daily and weekly newspapers and in theatre magazines as well as on personal interviews. The majority of productions under consideration have been performed in English translation, however some crucial productions in the original language have been considered.

In Part I, the analysis concentrates on the Australian reception of Bertolt Brecht's plays and theories on theatre. As he is the only German-speaking playwright whose plays have become part of the repertoire in Australian theatres, approaches towards his plays and reactions towards their productions will serve as a touchstone for the reception of other German-speaking playwrights, to be analysed in Part II.

The study establishes patterns of reception and examines when shifts in the paradigms of reception have occurred, and looks for possible cultural and socio-political explanations. It follows how Australian approaches towards dramas by German-speaking playwrights and towards their productions have evolved over time, ultimately leading to the question of how drama by German-speaking playwrights can be performed in a meaningful and appropriate way for contemporary Australian audiences.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Melbourne, 30 November 2000

[redacted]

Ulrike Garde

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In researching and writing this thesis, I have benefited greatly from the supervision of Professor Walter Veit, whose valuable comments and ongoing encouragement I have much appreciated. I am also grateful for Professor Philip Thomson's assistance during my early work on the reception of Bertolt Brecht. I would like to thank Hector Maclean for sharing his love of the theatre and his memories of productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights. He also provided me with a number of notable resources, including Joachim Tenschert's unpublished letters to the MTC concerning the production of *Mother Courage* in 1973.

This research would have been impossible without the numerous individuals who granted me interviews and replied to my letters and emails. I am particularly grateful to Professor Leslie Bodi and Professor Peter Fitzpatrick for their comments in general and to Michael Kantor and Lindzee Smith who freely gave their time to speak about their work in Australian theatre.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of numerous friendly librarians and archivists, the staff of the Goethe-Institutes in Melbourne and Sydney, Erika Kovac from the department of public relations at the Goethe-Institute in Munich and Sandi Logan from the Australian Embassy in Bonn. I would like to thank Kais Hamza from the department of Mathematics and Statistics for the first version of the graph in Appendix I.

This thesis was supported by a Monash Graduate Scholarship. A travel grant from Monash University enabled me to complement my findings in Australia through research in Germany and to participate in the "Thalia Germanica" conference in 1997. The paper which I presented at this conference is being published in *Deutschsprachiges Theater auf fünf Kontinenten - Interkulturelle Beziehungen in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Parts of the thesis' last chapter have been published in *Literature in Times of Crisis*.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents who have always encouraged my studies and my husband David for his patient support. This thesis is dedicated to them.

We must do the plays of Molière quite differently to the French. We have to do them like Australians, which might be a completely erroneous view of Molière. (...) We have to search for an Australian style.

(Wal Cherry, 1966)

"One of my big things is the notion of ownership. Shakespeare does not belong to the English. (...) At the end of the 20th century, everyone owns it [Shakespeare's work]. And it is what you do with it and why you do it that is the important thing."

(Barrie Kosky, 1999)

"There is a peculiar freshness and originality in the way we take what is classic and remake it as our own. It is here, unconsciously perhaps, that we catch the clearest image of ourselves as Australians."

(David Malouf, 2000)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and Methodology

This study is an overview of the Australian reception of drama, originally written in German in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, and then performed in English.[1] Generally, it concentrates on the period between 1945 and 1996; however, in the case of the reception of Brecht, this time frame has been extended to incorporate the centenary of Brecht's birth in 1998 and Australian reactions towards it.

Up to now, the Australian reception of plays by Austrian, German and Swiss playwrights has not yet been studied systematically. As Richard Fotheringham indicated in an article for *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, it is only lately that research theses are beginning to document the recent past of Australian theatre history, thus complementing the author-based criticism which has dominated much of the research so far. He adds that "little

[1] My study focuses predominantly on productions in translation, although significant productions in the original language, such as those at the beginning of the reception, have been taken into account.

analysis or documentation has been published of individual theatre companies (particularly alternative companies)" [1]; this lack of research also applies to the analysis and documentation of Australian theatre history with an emphasis on the role of foreign drama in its history. However, it is noteworthy that Robyn Archer, who has been involved in many productions of Brecht's plays and Brecht recitals as well as recordings of songs with Brecht's lyrics, delivered a talk on "Brecht Today: An Australian Perspective" for the International Brecht Society in 1995. Her talk is important for this study because she points to the problems associated with Brecht's plays having been "relegated to the classification of 'classics'"[2], which will be dealt with in the context of possible approaches towards Brecht's work. Apart from this, Archer concentrates on musical aspects and cabaret performances.[3]

The lack of comprehensive studies is partly due to the absence of a database containing information on Australian productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights.[4] At present, Australian research concentrates on organising databases of performances of Australian plays.[5] Therefore, a primary aim of this study consists of listing Australian productions of plays, in translation, by German-speaking playwrights between 1945 and 1996. [6] This data will serve as a basis for examining the reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights at a given time and place in Australia.

With this foundation established, it will be possible to examine the reception of Austrian, German and Swiss plays by Australian directors and critics and their specific points of view. The quotes preceding this chapter by Wal Cherry, Barrie Kosky and David Malouf indicate my research focus. Australian director Wal Cherry proposed to stage the French classics in a distinctly Australian style, which, according to him, still needed to be developed. Cherry suggested this in an interview for the Australian television programme *Spectrum* in 1966.[7]

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[1] Richard Fotheringham. "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 75, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76. Fotheringham also points out that the only single-volume critical account in print was Carroll (1995), "originally researched in the 1970s and now showing its age".
[2] Archer (1995), 145.
[3] Cf. Archer (1995).
[4] Later, I shall analyse the role of the only database available, which lists a great number of productions of plays by Brecht from 1939 until 1979, cf. Page and Wagner (1979 (June)).
[5] Richard Fotheringham points to the research at the Australian Drama Studies Centre at the University of Queensland which also publishes *Australasian Drama Studies*, in: Richard Fotheringham, "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 76, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76.
[6] Cf. Appendix II. The database does not list any guest performances which did not involve any local theatre practitioners.
[7] Morphett (1966).

Thirty-three years later, Australian director Barrie Kosky no longer questions the existence of a unique Australian approach towards staging foreign plays. However, his speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival, from which his quote is taken, still reflects the need to claim the local appropriation of classical plays in a provocative way. This insecurity has been replaced by Australian author David Malouf's expression of resolved confidence and pride. Malouf's quote was part of his foreword to the Nugent report, a "Major Performing Arts Inquiry" with the aim of "Securing the Future"[1] of the Australian performing arts. The fact that Malouf's quote is related to plays which are characterised by an historical distance from contemporary Australian audiences rather than by cultural or geographical distance is not relevant in this context.[2]

Together, these quotes point to a development in Australian theatre which will be at the centre of my research and may be expressed in the following questions:

How do Australians approach culturally and historically distant plays when staging and reviewing them? How has this approach developed during the history of reception?

For the case studies, I have chosen to focus on drama by German-speaking playwrights.[3] Indeed, both Cherry and Kosky did not limit their reflections to Molière and Shakespeare, but referred to Bertolt Brecht in their interview or speech.[1] In the context of the Australian reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights, I shall try to answer the following questions:

How did Australian approaches towards plays by German-speaking playwrights develop during the history of reception?

What was the influence of German-speaking playwrights and their plays on the Australian theatre scene? How did it evolve in time?

The last question implies that, during the 50 year period of reception, changes in the

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[1] David Malouf, "Foreword", in: Nugent (1999), 20-21. The report had been prepared for the Federal Government.

[2] For parallels in the encounter with the historically and the geographically unfamiliar cf. Veit (1999) and Krusche (1984), 206, footnote 17.

[3] Ultimately, it would be valuable to examine the reception of other European drama in Australia, such as French drama, with the purpose of bringing out the specific character of individual reception histories and how they contrast with each other.

interpretations of drama by German-speaking playwrights have influenced the Australian reception, resulting in various approaches towards producing and receiving them. The fact that the interpretation of a fictional text can vary over time can be explained through Hans-Georg Gadamer's notions of "Effective History"[2] and "Horizon of Expectation"[3]. Like the interpretation of other literary texts, any interpretation of a play in a theatre production and its reviews are embedded in history in general and, more particularly, in the play's effective history. In *Wahrheit und Methode*[4], Gadamer explains how, in the domain of history, tradition and preconception play a large role in shaping a reader's expectations towards a text. Within this horizon of expectation, the reading of a text, including that of a drama, is conditioned by a pre-understanding; that is, the reader reads a text "with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning".[5] It follows that any reader approaches a text with "pre-knowledge" and with "pre-judgement".[6] Consequently, the historically conditioned reality, in which the recipient is living, influences personal understanding. In this regard, Gadamer's ideas correspond to Wolfgang Iser's, who also considered the approach towards a text as influenced by "the individual situation of the reader, his consciousness, his perceptions, conditioned by his own social and historical, as well as his own personal experience."[7]

This horizon of expectation has practical consequences for the director of a play who, as expressed by Kosky, takes on "a lot of baggage":

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[1] In the context of his overseas trip in 1958, Cherry identified Brecht's plays, his theories on theatre and his practical work as the most important influence on him. He noted "At the Berliner Ensemble, I was fortunate enough to see four productions. In these productions, a student of the theatre could see so much that made more sense than anything that was happening anywhere else in the world." [Cherry had also travelled to France and USA]. in: Morphett (1966). Kosky noted that "The only way we should tackle Brecht now is [by asking] 'what has it [his work] got to do with living in the 20th century?'", in: Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[2] Cf. Hans Georg Gadamer, "Wirkungsgeschichte und Applikation", 113-115, in: Warning (1975), 113-125 and Gadamer (1990), 305-312, Gadamer (1975), 267-274.

[3] Gadamer (1990), 270-312, Gadamer (1975), 235-274.

[4] Gadamer (1990), cf: "Erhebung der Geschichtlichkeit des Verstehens zum hermeneutischen Prinzip", 270-312; "The elevation of the historicality of understanding to the status of hermeneutical principle", Gadamer (1975), 235-274.

[5] Gadamer (1990), 271, Gadamer (1975), 236.

[6] Gadamer (1990), cf: "Erhebung der Geschichtlichkeit des Verstehens zum hermeneutischen Prinzip", 270-312; cf. "The elevation of the historicality of understanding to the status of hermeneutical principle", Gadamer (1975), 235-274. Gadamer promotes a "rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice" because it belongs to historical reality itself and is not an obstacle to understanding, but rather an inherent condition of the possibility of understanding. For a rehabilitation of the concept of misunderstanding cf. also: Veit (1997).

[7] Iser notes that the way in which a reader fills in the "blanks" is influenced by "die individuellen Dispositionen des Lesers, seine Bewußtseinsinhalte, seine epochalen, schichtenspezifisch bedingten Anschauungen sowie seine eigene Erfahrungsgeschichte.", Wolfgang Iser, "Der Lesevorgang. Eine phänomenologische Perspektive", 259, in: Warning (1975), 253-276. Cf. also O'Brien (1996), 105.

> You take on a lot more than the text [when performing it]; you take on a history of performance, the history of the culture, which you are in (...). [As an audience member], you remember the last time you saw the play, you remember the last time you were in the theatre (...). There is a lot of baggage and you cannot ignore this baggage.[1]

Kosky recognises effective history and the influence of horizons of expectation and lets them affect his practical decisions regarding the content and aesthetics of his theatre productions. This process illustrates Gadamer's argument that the application of a literary text is an integral part of understanding and interpreting it[2]; in the theatre, directors and artists adapt their productions to their own and their audiences' horizons of expectation, thus applying the source text to the period in history they are working in.

The possibility of interpreting fictional texts in a range of ways arises from their "character of indeterminacy" and their "blanks" as described by Iser.[3] Although Iser does not consider theatre productions specifically, his observations also apply to the dramatic area. For instance, when directors interpret a script in the form of a production, they fill in the text's "blanks" in individual ways.[4] One or more elements of the script may become dominant, while others recede temporarily. Equally, when the play is performed on stage the production can be interpreted in a range of ways. Spectators, including critics, fill in blanks in personal ways, drawing different conclusions about meaning and relevance. In a live theatre performance, the simultaneous wealth of information presented on stage forces spectators to be selective. For instance, their field of vision is always limited because it is impossible to take in all the visual information presented on the entire stage and the ephemeral character of a theatre production prevents repeated or prolonged access to the information provided. [5] Peter Brook went so far as to make the surplus of information a criterion for judging the quality of a play in performance. He wrote:

> A play in performance is a series of impressions; little dabs, one after another, fragments of information or feeling in a sequence which stir the audience's perceptions. A good play sends many such messages, often several at a time, often crowding, jostling, overlapping one another.[6]

Through a selective reading of these messages each spectator makes up a personal

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[1] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[2] Cf. Hans Georg Gadamer, "Wirkungsgeschichte und Applikation", 122-124 in: Warning (1975), 113-125.

[3] The German terms are *Unbestimmheitscharakter* and *Leerstellen*. Cf. Wolfgang Iser, "Die Appellstruktur der Texte", 234-241, in: Warning (1975), 228-252, and "Der Lesevorgang. Eine phänomenologische Perspektive", in: Warning (1975), 253-276.

[4] Cf. footnote 18.

[5] This differs from the information presented in a video recording of a performance or from the drama as written text..

[6] Peter Brook, "Introduction to Marat / Sade", V, in: Weiss (1965), V-VII.

version of the production.[1] In some cases studied in this thesis, this multiplicity of information makes it difficult to assess how an individual critic's response is characteristic of the general reception of a particular production. Therefore it is only possible to discover general tendencies in contemporary expectations through comparison and consensus with other sources.[2]

In this thesis, I shall organise these synchronic studies chronologically, in order to determine when shifts in paradigms have occurred in the Australian reception history. The notion of these shifts is based on Gadamer's and Hans Robert Jauß concepts of "shifts of horizons"[3] and of "effective history", or, respectively, "history of influence". Following Gadamer, Jauß argues that expectations towards a literary text and its interpretation, which develop over time, lead to "the successive unfolding of the potential for meaning that is embedded in a work and actualised in the stages of its historical reception". This constitutes the work's "history of influence" and history of reception which are characterised by shifts of horizon.[4]

These shifts of horizon have affected and continue to affect the reception of drama on two levels. Firstly, they determine how directors and other theatre practitioners involved in a production interpret the drama they are staging. Secondly, audiences and critics attending these productions have expectations which are shaped by these shifts of horizon.

This study is particularly interested in the Australian reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights and in changes which this reception has undergone. Central to the history of Australian reception are the recipients' changing expectations and responses to - mostly non-contemporary - texts from another culture and their production, as indicated by the introductory quotes.

In an article about "European influences" on Australian theatre, Katharine Brisbane, Tony

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[1] This is especially the case in recent productions which focus on the surplus of information as a special characteristic of theatre productions, cf. Fischer-Lichte (1993), 418.

[2] Accordingly, Zima points to the fact that it is impossible to attribute a homogenous horizon of expectations to the society at a given period, cf. Zima (1992), 187.

[3] Jauß describes the "system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language." He also points out the role of the social context, in: Jauß (1982), 22, 39; Jauß (1970), 174, 199. Similarly, Gadamer implies shifts in horizon when describing his concept of "fusion of horizons"; cf. Gadamer (1990), 307-312, 380-381;Gadamer (1975), 302-307, 374-375.

[4] Jauß (1982), 30; "die sukzessive Entfaltung eines im Werk angelegten, in seinen historischen Rezeptionsstufen aktualisierten Sinnpotentials", in: Jauß (1970), 186.

Mitchell and Anne Murch have taken the view that European "plays that can find a bond with audiences without making too great a leap from a foreign context, are probably the most successful [in Australia]. Audiences are generally incurious about what they do not easily understand."[1] In the restricting context of a reference article, they paint a generalised picture of Australian audiences, which, as my study will show, vary considerably from alternative to mainstream theatres. More importantly, though, the authors tacitly assume that a play remains largely unchanged when performed in a foreign country, thus implying the concept of 'fidelity' to a text. Cherry, Kosky and Malouf however, challenged this concept. Amongst them, Kosky is the only one who developed his approach in more detail in a speech, which he delivered for the Shakespeare Youth Festival at Sydney's Seymour Centre in August 1999.[2] He suggested:

> We have to be *bold*, we have to take these texts, throw them up in the air, rewrite them, adapt them, develop them, pull them apart, don't give a monkey's arse about the historical notions of when and how these plays were done, ignore it.[3]

Thus, Kosky suggests a method of turning historically and culturally distant texts into relevant cultural experiences for local contemporary audiences.

My study will use Kosky's bold approach and the approach of 'naturalisation' as a framework of two forces for tracing the history of reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights in Australia. Underlying these approaches is the dynamics between leaving the unfamiliar untouched and appropriating it and, in this context, by means of consciously adapting an unfamiliar play to contemporary local audiences.[4]

For this reason it is essential to define the two approaches in more detail. The article quoted above indicates, already, that many Australian directors have attempted to follow what they perceived to be the works' or their authors' intentions. Therefore, they perceived their productions as faithful and appealing to an Australian audience. At the same time, this pattern of reception involved, in many cases, an unreflective adaptation of plays in

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[1] Parsons and Chance (1995), 216.

[2] The full speech was broadcast on ABC's Radio National on 7.1.00. Parts of it were quoted in Kerry Burke's article for *The Age* (10.8.99) and Marian Theobald's article for *The University of Sydney News* (12.8.99).

[3] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)). Italics by me.

[4] Gadamer points to a similar basic tension between the "stilgerechte Wiedergabe" of a non-contemporary play and the "Stilwillen der Gegenwart", in: Hans Georg Gadamer, "Wirkungsgeschichte und Applikation", 123-124, in: Warning (1975), 113-125. Cf. also the discussion between the scholars of "interkulturelle Germanistik" in publications such as *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* and in publications edited by Alois Wierlacher, such as Wierlacher (1985), Iwasaki (1991) and critical views published in Zimmermann (1991).

performance to local theatrical norms. In the following study, this approach will be called 'naturalisation', by analogy to the Australian - and other countries' - citizenship process, which describes an adaptation to local standards in the sense that a non-Australian becomes 'naturalised' by taking up Australian citizenship.

The other prominent mode of reception examined in this study is based on Kosky's approach. In my analysis, I shall refer to the suggestions which Kosky made at the Shakespeare Youth Festival, by calling similar innovative approaches to staging 'bold'. These approaches will imply, in varying degrees, what Australian playwright Roger Pulvers described in 1979 as "irreverence" towards traditional approaches and authorities in the context of Australian Brecht reception.[1]

In order to clarify the implications of Kosky's attitude, it is useful to refer in more detail to his speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival, in which Kosky explained his understanding of "ownership" of culturally and historically unfamiliar texts further.

The central idea of Kosky's notion of ownership is that a production needs to relate to the audience. When Kosky condemned the "institutionalisation of style" as "museum theatre", which unavoidably leads to "death of the theatre"[2] because it fails to resonate with its audiences, he followed Peter Brook's rejection of "deadly theatre". It can be concluded from these negative labels which Kosky used and from his own productions that he does not want to ignore a play's local and historical origin entirely. Excluding such background would lead to a reduced understanding of the text.

Kosky acknowledges that the producers' and recipients'[3] horizons of expectations regarding the production of a drama are historically conditioned, and he challenges future directors and actors to take into account "the cultural, social and historical world of the audience"[4], for instance by asking themselves "what do the characters represent [in

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[1] In my analysis of the reception of Brecht, I shall compare Pulvers' attitude and that of his contemporaries with Kosky's.

[2] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)), cf. "The Deadly Theatre", in: Brook (1968), 11-46. Tony Mitchell called Brook "the most influential English director to visit Australia in recent years", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 208. Brook's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which the actors appeared as circus performers, might have also been influencing Kosky when he suggested in his speech to have the play performed by Circus O- Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[3] Stressing the importance of the spectators' expectations, Kosky says that these "do not pass the door into the theatre and somehow become neutralised", in: Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[4] Similarly, Peter Brook has pointed out the danger of "the gap between it [a traditional performance style] and the life of the people around it", Brook (1968), 18.

contemporary Australia]?"[1]

According to Kosky, these factors need to be included for a production to build a strong connection between stage and audience. Ultimately, his aim is to foster a theatre which audiences can relate back to their world; it should allow audiences as well as people involved in the production to "assume ownership"[2] of the text and the production.

Kosky's innovative and challenging approach, which dismantles the authority of the text and its performance tradition in order to allow for local ownership, can be applied to the reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights in Australia easily; in fact, he did so himself when directing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*.[3]

My analysis of the Australian reception history will follow the development of bold approaches over time and will ask how Australians reached the notion of ownership. Within this analysis, I shall attempt to bring to light and explain Australian expectations of theatre, expectations which have affected the production and reception of plays under consideration. Specifically, I shall look for cultural, socio-political and other possible factors which have influenced these expectations, the style of productions and their function.[1] For instance, my analysis will show that Kosky's notions of ownership and being "bold" are as much related to Australia's social and cultural history as to the developments of literary theory, such as the concept of fidelity to a dramatic text. My study will put Kosky's ideas into the context of greater cultural and social developments. They need to be interpreted against the background of cultural developments in Australia. Most important in this respect is the development marked by cultural adherence and devotion to European and American imperatives to a nation whose self-confident theatre directors, such as Kosky, feel free to use as bold an approach towards drama texts, including the respected classics, as many of their European colleagues.

I shall proceed with an historical analysis which presents individual performances in chronological order as representative case studies. The general division of chapters according to decades corresponds to overall developments in Australian theatre and to the

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[1] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).
[2] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).
[3] Cf. my analysis of the production. Kosky himself uses Brecht as one of his examples in the speech, commenting: "The only way we should tackle Brecht now is [to ask] 'what has it got to do with living in the 20th century'?"

generally accepted divisions in research about Australian theatre history.[2] Obviously, the transitions are more fluid than this division can suggest.

The analysis will begin with the period when plays were predominantly naturalised in the production and reception process. This will be followed by the first shift in horizons of expectation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which questioned the previous approach. It will become evident that this shift was closely linked to the emergence of a new kind of Australian theatre and playwriting as well as to the socio-political and cultural changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The late 1970s were characterised by the peak in the reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights, followed by a decline in interest. There are many reasons why the 1980s were a period of low interest in productions of Austrian, German and Swiss plays, and why many of the previous developments in Australian theatre were put on hold. Finally, I shall analyse the second period of questioning the status quo of Australian theatre which includes the changes proposed by Kosky. It began in the 1990s and continues to affect the Australian theatre scene at present. All of these developments have affected the productions of Austrian, German and Swiss plays, as well as influencing reviews in the press.

Within this analysis, Brecht's dramas play the role of a touchstone for this study because they dominated the reception in several ways. Therefore, the Australian reception of Brecht's plays will be dealt with first in detail. The study of the reception of Brecht will allow a thorough analysis of the patterns of reception introduced above, as well as of additional important influences on the reception. The results of the Brecht study can then be applied and compared to the reception of plays by other German-speaking playwrights.

1.2 Australian theatre and Australian theatre reviews

In her article on Australian theatre for *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, Katharine Brisbane begins her essay by noting that "Australia is the largest island and the smallest continent in the world".[3] Although they do not seem directly related to Australian theatre and its history instantly, these geographical factors have influenced

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[1] In this respect, my analysis of the *Mudrooroo / Müller Project* is important because it exposes many underlying intercultural influences which are less clear in other recent Australian productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights.

[2] Most studies of the history of Australian drama and theatre proceed in chronological order and many follow an underlying division according to decades, cf. for instance Glaap (1996).

[3] Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 40. in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57.

Australian theatre productions and their reception considerably. In general terms, they have resulted in the "historical mindset of isolation from European civilisation"[1], which, given Australia's colonial history, resulted in the country turning to Britain, and later America, for cultural orientation. German-speaking culture, however, generally was not in great demand.[2] It was introduced mainly through migrants and refugees from Austria[3], Germany and, to a limited extent, from Switzerland.

Another important geographical feature affecting Australian theatre has been the distance between the regional capitals' dense population. Distance hindered the exchange of productions between these cities[4], contributing to the existence of separate State theatres in the regional capitals instead of a single national company. As far as reviewing is concerned, it took until the launch of *The Australian* in 1964 for a newspaper to cover the entire nation, leading to a growing awareness of other centres of activity and a sense of comparative standards. As a result, "it became possible to think of an 'Australian' theatre rather than a number of semi-autonomous regional dramatic movements."[5] Yet, even nowadays, local newspapers, sometimes represented by a single critic, tend to dominate theatre criticism in the regional capitals.

In comparison to European theatre, white Australian drama is a young culture. Most scholars relate the emergence of contemporary Australian theatre to the writing of Australian drama. While some name Louis Esson's plays in the 1920s and his amateur Pioneer Players[6], the majority of scholars identify the 1955 premiere of Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* as the birth of Australian playwriting.[7]

Aboriginal theatre in the sense of traditional, word-based performances on stage is an

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[1] Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 40, in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57. Cf. also Elisabeth Wynhausen who reiterated recently that Australians represent "a society that feels itself (...) cut off from European culture", *The Australian Magazine*, 2.9.00. I shall analyse the 'tyranny of distance' and the 'cultural cringe' in more detail in the case studies.

[2] Before World War I, the exception to this was "the most popular and most frequently performed German play (...), [that is] August Friedrich von Kotzebue's *Menschenhaß und Reue*, translated by B. Thomson as *The Stranger*", in: Irvin (1985), 111. Kotzebue's play fitted in with preferences of Australian audiences at the time.

[3] Cf. my analysis of the *Kleines Wiener Theater*.

[4] In a personal interview, Australian director Kim Durban expressed the opinion that distance played a role in slowing down the development of the Australian theatre scene because it prevented the scenes in the different capitals to inspire each other. Personal interview, 28.5.98.

[5] Richard Fotheringham, "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 75, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76.

[6] Glaap (1996), 391.

[7] The importance of *The Doll* as a watershed in Australian playwriting is reflected by the following publication: Fitzpatrick (1979).

even later development, since Aboriginal performances traditionally consist of songs, storytelling and dance. In the 1970s, this changed with the arrival of playwrights Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert and Kath Walker. Against the background of a young Aboriginal tradition of theatre of the spoken word, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project[1] is particularly significant for this study because it represents the only Aboriginal response to German drama.

On an organisational level, Australian theatre has developed several types of companies, two of which are important for my study. These are the State theatre companies, which exist in regional capitals as major government-subsidised companies, and the alternative companies, which are considerably less or only short-term funded if at all.[2] Government subsidy for the performing arts began in 1968 with the founding of the Australia Council. Brisbane summarises the funding structure for State companies as follows:

> They are structured as non-profit organisations with an honorary board of directors; they receive subsidy from the federal government through the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council, and from their state government through their arts ministry. They are also expected to seek private sponsorship through tax-deductible donations. However, most companies still derive between 70 and 85 per cent of their income from the box office.[3]

In this respect, Australian theatre differs greatly from theatre in Germany, where "municipalities (...) bear about 63 per cent of public expenditure for theatres and orchestras"[4]. The lower level of government funding in Australia is also partly the reason why Australian theatre is organised differently from its German equivalent. In Australia, theatre companies do not consist of permanent acting ensembles, although my study will point to attempts at creating them.[5] Moreover, Australian theatres tend to perform one or several plays en suite for a number of weeks before going on to present a new production. Funding shortages, combined with the organisational structure of Australian theatre, result in a great number of actors being unable to make a living from their profession.

Apart from standing theatre companies, local and foreign performances at various Australian Arts Festivals are of great importance for the Australian theatre scene and its patrons. However, as I have only taken into account productions in which Australians have participated, these festivals only play a minor role for this research.

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[1] Fischer (1993).

[2] Most of the productions under consideration are professional ones with some of them having come from amateur theatre.

[3] Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 49, in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57.

[4] Kappler and Reichert (1999), 485.

[5] Cf. my analysis of Wal Cherry's work at the Ensemble theatre and Jim Sharman's work at the STC in Adelaide.

As far as theatre reviewing is concerned, I shall provide relevant information as the necessity arises and shall develop the complex factors which influence reviewing in the context of individual case studies. In addition, my analysis of the production of plays by German-speaking playwrights other than Brecht in the 1980s will examine difficulties experienced by Australian reviewers at the time.

1.3 Sources

The data concerning productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights are based on archival material[1], on information in daily and weekly newspapers and in theatre magazines. In 1995, I sent out a letter with a request for relevant information to all theatre companies listed in Thérèse Radic's *The Playwright's Handbook* in order to complete my findings.[2] I have also contacted German publishers who hold the performing rights.

As pointed out earlier, my study looks at two levels of reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights. The first level of reception results in the director, actors and other people involved in the production interpreting a play on stage. The second level of reception is that of the spectators - amongst them the critics - responding to the interpretation of the play presented to them.[3] Whenever the sources were available, my study has examined both levels.

Regarding the first level, the reception manifests itself in and as a production and, frequently, as additional explanations in programme notes. When possible I have attended productions since 1990[4], tried to obtain programme notes of past performances and interviewed theatre practitioners who were part of the productions. Concerning audience reactions, I have excluded audience surveys because these would have shifted the focus of my work to recent productions. Instead, my research relies to a great extent on reviews in daily and weekly newspapers and theatre magazines, such as *Theatre Australia* and, more

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[1] The Australian archives in which I have worked predominantly are Adelaide University Archives, University of Melbourne Archives, Monash University Archives, State Library of Victoria, Dennis Wolanski Library, Performing Arts Museum (Melbourne) and the archives of the Goethe-Institutes in Melbourne and Sydney. I have complemented this work through comprehensive research in Germany.

[2] Radic (1994).

[3] The analysis of critics' responses will show that critics are not in all cases familiar with the drama text itself.

[4] It could be considered problematic that I have not seen all of the performances which I analyse, especially the early productions. However, as this is a reception study, my response to a performance represents one amongst many others and the written responses in the press as well as oral impressions and judgments reported by members of the original audience are equally important.

recently, *Real Time*. I have also included relevant publications from the literary magazine *Meanjin*. These sources contain one letter to the editor only.[1] Up to now I have made cursory reference to play readings, programmes and reviews on radio and television in exceptional cases only; however, I would like to investigate these sources further at a later stage.

Given the policy of newspapers to subsume their theatre reviews under various sections and the poor indexing during the early years under consideration, the emergence of the *Australian and New Zealand Theatre Record, ANZTR*[2], facilitated my research from 1987 onwards. Unfortunately, the reproduction of published newspaper reviews ceased in 1996. Overall, the scanty record keeping of theatre productions in Australia[3], the limited coverage by newspapers of productions in alternative theatres, which were the main venue for the productions under consideration, and the fact that many alternative theatre companies had ceased to exist[4], made my task complex and time-consuming.

Personal interviews and correspondence with individuals make up an important part of my research about reactions towards productions. Interviewees shared their recollections of past productions, added data to the production records[5] and put me in contact with other people who had been involved in or attended a production of an Austrian, German or Swiss play. In this respect, my research resembled that of Robert Page and Lucy Wagner who, in 1979 "listed as many Brecht productions in Australia as the editors could discover from various sources and with a lot of help from friends".[6]

The 'snow ball effect' resulting from my interviews, lead, to a certain extent, to my research becoming orientated towards the Melbourne theatre scene. I have balanced this direction through the extensive use of the Dennis Wolanski Library in Sydney and through

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[1] After H.A. Standish had criticised the voices in Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959 in the Melbourne *Herald*, the public relations officer of the UTCR wrote a letter to the editor. (*The Melbourne Sun*, 13.1.59).

[2] Published in 1987 as *Eccles (1987 (Jan.) - 1988 (March))*.

[3] I found that Robert Page's and Lucy Wagner's complaint about "our communal inability to keep records" remains still largely applicable to my research, cf. Page and Wagner (1979 (June)).

[4] In many cases, these companies had not kept systematic records or they had been lost after their demise.

[5] Initially, it was difficult to find out exactly when and where these productions had taken place because interviewees had only vague memories. This was the case in John Ellis's and Elijah Moshinsky's collaboration on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in 1966 and on *Mother Courage* in 1967, which seemed to have stayed in the memory of Melbourne audiences as a kind of myth. I could only establish the proper data when one of my interviewees provided me with a contact for John Ellis and he agreed to grant me an interview.

[6] Page and Wagner (1979 (June)). O'Brien describes the theatre historian as "a detective, hunting out bits and pieces of information", in O'Brien (1996), 106.

personal contacts in Sydney. I have obtained as much information as possible on productions in Adelaide, proceeding in a similar fashion. As far as productions in Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart and Perth[1] are concerned, my resources were more limited; in this respect, my thesis reflects to some degree the general problem which distance has presented for Australian theatre, especially in the early years. Thus, my thesis continues the Australian tradition of looking towards Melbourne and Sydney which Gareth Griffiths has called "the principal centres of performance, as well as of the production and publishing of arts criticism and comment" and which Brisbane labelled "Australia's theatre capitals"[2]. For the years covered by the *ANZTR*, this statement is confirmed by the fact that productions in Melbourne and Sydney outnumbered those in Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart and Perth together.

My thesis' orientation towards interviews and personal correspondence made possible the discovery of aspects which have been neglected so far in Australian theatre history. For instance, so far, no biography or extensive publication exists on Australian director Wal Cherry. My research reveals him to be a significant, albeit controversial, contributor to Australian theatre and a crucial figure for introducing Melbourne audiences to Brecht's theatre-related work.

Overall, the way in which I proceeded resulted in a 'mosaic', representing a particular reception history which itself is embedded in the history of Australian theatre and in the corresponding *Zeitgeist*. This mosaic displays the wealth of factors which have influenced the production and reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights in Australia. Much of the information represents individual perspectives, which, as part of a multiplicity of sources, make up the greater picture of this specific look at Australian cultural history.

In accordance with the hermeneutic principle that there is no neutral position from which observations can be made, this picture has been influenced by my own horizon of expectations.[3] As a Germanist, I examine a reception history based on literature from

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[1] For instance, I was unable to include some productions in my research, which Raymond D. Omodei, artistic director of Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre Company, had provided me with. Despite contacting a number of people, including Katharine Brisbane herself, I could not obtain any further information on Brisbane's production of Max Frisch's *The Fire Raisers* which took place at the Old Dolphin Theatre in Perth "in the mid 1960s", Personal letter, 11.11.95. I would like to do specific research on the Festival of Perth at a later stage. However, here this would shift the emphasis of my research from productions which involved Australians towards the influence of foreign productions on the Australian theatre scene.

[2] Gareth Griffiths, "The parochial metropolis. A view from the west", 460, in: Richards and Milne (1994 (Spring)), 460-466; Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 49, in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57.
However, it needs to be added that scholarly research is spread more evenly nowadays.

[3] Cf. Gadamer (1975), 267, Gadamer (1990), 304-305, Thomson (1985), 245.

German-speaking countries in Australia, and I thus contribute to the writing of Australian theatre history.

My position corresponds largely to Philip Thomson's description of Germanists carrying out research in a foreign country[1]. On the one hand, I am familiar and have familiarised myself with drama by German-speaking playwrights as well as past and present developments in Australian theatre. On the other hand, both components of my research are unfamiliar, "*verfremdet*"[2] to me, because I look at Australian culture through the eyes of a foreigner, and the Australian perspective on German drama creates, at the same time, a new outlook on familiar plays for me.[3] Thomson explains how this position of 'having a foot in both camps' can result in antagonism, but also how it creates a potential for critical insight through a truly interdisciplinary[4] and intercultural approach.[5]

Concerning the subject matter of my research, I have focused on productions of Austrian, German and Swiss drama in translation. However, I have included performances in the original language where they were significant for the reception history and for Australian theatre in general, such as in the early years of production.[6]

I shall consider the question of translation as much as possible when it arises. Thus, I shall analyse the crucial role of Edith Anderson's 1958 translation of "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?"[7] for the Australian reception of Brecht, and I shall examine the increasingly important question of a play's translation in the 1980s and 1990s. For a great number of previous performances, however, it has been impossible to establish the translator's name because he or she was neither acknowledged in the programme notes nor in the reviews.

The productions under consideration consist of performances of 'literary' drama written

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[1] Cf. Thomson (1985).

[2] Cf. Der ausländische Germanist "hat zwei verschiedene (...) Kulturen ständig im Blick. Er sieht sie aber beide mit einer gewissen Distanz, beide Kulturen sind für ihn 'verfremdet'; sie sind ihm zugleich bekannt, ja vertraut, und dennoch immer wieder neu und fremdartig.", in: Thomson (1985), 241.

[3] My study indicates how this change of perspective can add a new meaning to a familiar play. For a detailed study of the 'surplus' of meaning, cf. Veit (1999), 260-261.

[4] In the case of my research, the interdisciplinary aspect consists of my study's close relation to Drama and Theatre Studies.

[5] Cf. Thomson (1985), 243-246.

[6] For instance, I have included early productions at the departments of German studies, such as Heinz Wiemann's 1958 production of *Mother Courage* which was reviewed even by the mainstream press. Cf. *The Age*, 11.7.58. For a more detailed analysis of German-speaking theatre in Australia cf. Garde (2001).

[7] Published under the title "Theatre for learning" in *Meanjin*, cf. Brecht (1958).

for the stage.[1] At this stage, I have excluded opera from my research, although, as an exception, Brecht's plays with music and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* have been included.[2] Due to the wealth of material, I have been unable to take into account Children's and Youth Theatre here, but I plan to work on them in the future.

I shall only look in passing at the influence of German-speaking playwrights upon Australian colleagues and their work, as this question opens up a new area of research which would exceed the framework of this thesis.

[1] I shall discuss the question of whether Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* and of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* were intended to be performed on stage in the context of individual case studies.
[2] In most cases, newspaper reviews of Brecht's plays with music, such as *The Threepenny Opera*, have been published as a drama review rather than being included in the music section. According to my records, *The Trial of Lucullus* has not yet been performed in Australia.

Part 1 - Brecht's work in Australia

2. THE RECEPTION OF BRECHT'S WORK IN AUSTRALIA

2.1 Brecht as a touchstone for this study: specific methodology used in Part I

In 1979, at the height of Australian interest in Brecht and his dramas, Australian director Wal Cherry, one of the key figures in the local reception of Brecht, summarised the Australian reception of Brecht as follows: "Brecht was never in Australia in body and seldom in spirit"[1].

Concerning Brecht's physical presence in Australia, Cherry was right; unlike the United States and Britain, Australia never played the role of a place of exile for Brecht or of a country for which Brecht prepared a production of one of his plays directly.[1] Nevertheless, Brecht is the only German speaking playwright who has found a permanent place in the repertoire of Australian mainstream and alternative theatres. His plays dominated the reception in terms of the number of productions and continuity over time. They are the only plays by a German-speaking playwright which have been performed outside the Australian theatre capitals.

The number of Brecht's plays produced in Australia and the continuity of productions over time make the history of the reception of Brecht a touchstone for this study. The reception of Brecht traces the history of Australian theatre from a particular intercultural perspective. Also, it allows the historically determined Australian horizons of expectations and the resulting modes of reception to be established.

I shall begin the study of the reception of Brecht by examining which factors have influenced the reception of Brecht, and of other German-speaking playwrights, in Australia. Australian theatrical norms, such as the prevalence of the 'naturalistic' style, created the basis on which Brecht's plays were received.

The study of the Australian reception of Brecht also differs from that of other German-speaking playwrights in so far as Brecht is the only author under consideration who has

[1] Cherry (1979).

expressed his theories on theatre in such detail and whose theories have been made available to an increasing extent.[2] They have been commented on by Australian scholars and have formed part of the university curricula. Therefore, I shall examine how key terms of Brecht's theories on theatre were rendered in the first translations which were easily accessible at the start of the reception period. This is important because the English translation of these terms strongly influenced their early Australian understanding and because the interpretation of key terms, such as *Verfremdung*, constitutes a recurrent aspect in the overall reception of Brecht's work. The examination of Australian theatrical norms and early translations of Brecht's theories will provide the basis for the following chapters which will analyse the reception of Brecht's work in Australia from an historical point of view.

As Brecht's plays have an explicit political dimension, the political attitudes of his recipients also play a role. With regard to Australia's political and social history, I shall examine directors' and critics' tendencies at various times to de-politicise Brecht's plays or to take up their political message.

Selected individual productions and their reception will be analysed as case studies taking into account the development of Australia's cultural and theatrical climate. For the sake of clarity, I shall begin each chapter with a brief survey of socio-political expectations and then of aesthetic factors which have influenced each reception and then shall progress to analyse them in that order. I am well aware, though, that the political and aesthetic factors are intrinsically linked.[3]

Wherever possible, this method will be applied first to the theatre practitioners involved in a production by looking at programme notes and using other sources of information available. As a second step, I shall analyse critics' responses as expressed in their reviews.

As stated in the introduction, I shall identify patterns of reception which will be compared to the reception in other English speaking countries where appropriate. These patterns will

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[1] Cherry did not define explicitly what he meant by 'in spirit', but it can be assumed that he had 'faithfulness' in mind. However, the discussion about the term and concept of 'faithfulness', used with a range of meanings, and its application to the case studies would exceed the framework of my thesis. Cf. the discussions in Fischer-Lichte (1985) and Gay (1997 (June)).

[2] However, Morley noted that "there are still many important essays, articles and commentaries that remain inaccessible to the English reader.", in: Morley (1997), 336.

[3] In the context of Joseph Jurt's study *La réception de la littérature par la critique journalistique. Lectures de Bernanos* (Paris 1980), Zima reaches the same conclusion when he points out that aesthetic criteria are rarely free of ideological connotations; cf. Zima (1992), 179.

serve as a basis for the study of the reception of plays by other German-speaking playwrights in part II.

As the Australian theatre scene is constantly changing, especially in the continual formation and dissolution of companies in the alternative theatre scene, it is helpful to use as a yardstick those theatre practitioners who have been presenting Brecht's work over a long period of time in Australia. Wal Cherry has staged plays by Brecht from 1959 until the late 1970s, when he moved to the United States. Thus, his personal relationship to Brecht's work, as expressed in his productions[1], reflects some of the changes which were taking place in the Australian reception of Brecht in general.[2]

Ultimately, I shall examine if and how Kosky's approach to Brecht can be applied as phrased in his speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival: "The only way we should tackle Brecht now is [by asking] 'what has it [his work] got to do with living in the 20th century".[3] Thus my study leads to examining the possibilities of applying Kosky's notion of ownership to Brecht's plays, which represent the combined challenge of being of foreign origin and of having reached the status of classics, with the complications associated with copyright laws.[4]

2.2 *Factors which have influenced the reception of Brecht in Australia*

At the 1995 Melbourne Writers' Festival, Australian playwright Jack Hibberd declared: "Brecht has been grossly misunderstood in Australia". When asked to expand on the statement for this thesis, he gave the following explanation:

> Many directors believe that the *V-Effekt* is designed to alienate the audience, drain the theatre of emotion and render everything avidly intellectual or political (...) The problem is a combination of the tyranny of naturalism / realism here and ignorance - they have not read and understood the theory and notes.[1]

This quote intimates many important factors that have influenced the reception of Brecht in Australia. These can be divided into two categories: the aesthetic reception, that is the reception within the boundaries of the play and its production, and the ideological reception

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[1] As Cherry was reluctant to put his theoretical considerations about theatre down on paper, his development as a director's of Brecht's plays needs to be deduced from his productions. He believed that "one's work is one's comment on the theatre", in: Morphett (1966).

[2] Reviewers such as Harry Kippax and Geoffrey Hutton, who have been commenting on performances of Brecht's work over a long period. play a similar role in providing a consistent voice which will allow to make comparisons between reception periods.

[3] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[4] In the words of Australian scholar Denise Varney, these seek "to preserve the 'integrity' of the author's work rendering it unavailable for fragmentation, rewriting or revision.", Varney (1998), 116.

in the context of political history. The latter includes theatre practitioners' early reluctance to become involved in political issues, the recent discreditation of left-wing political thinking and directors' and critics' individual reactions towards Marxism, which are best analysed in the historical context of the case studies.

On the aesthetic level, the most important factor to influence the Australian reception of Brecht - and of German-speaking playwrights in general - is the predominance of naturalism in Australian theatre. As it did not only shape the early stages of reception but continued to influence Australian theatrical norms in general for a prolonged period, it will be looked at separately. Another important problem in the early reception stage of Brecht's work, which Hibberd puts his finger on, is the understanding of Brecht's texts, especially his theoretical texts, as read in English translation.

2.2.1 Theatrical norms which have influenced the reception of Brecht's work for theatre: naturalism and entertainment

Naturalism

Most historical studies of Australian theatre acknowledge the predominance of a 'naturalistic' style. 'Naturalism', in this sense, does not correspond to the term of literary history with its critical implications, but refers to a production style, including an acting style and a stage design, which attempt to create the illusion of real life on stage. This representation avoids any form of theatre associated with 'artiness' because it could disturb the direct contact between the subject matter and the spectator. This leads to what might be called ' invisible form'.[2]

Apart from this common emphasis on representation, the expectations related to this ideal vary. Some reviewers stress the formal aspect; they associate 'naturalism' with the 'well made play' and they see the play as a character study with a psychologically motivated dramatic development. Others emphasise the content; in this case, 'naturalism' means the aim to represent 'authentic' Australian life on stage. Frequently, the qualities of 'truth' and 'humanness' are also associated to naturalism.[3] Of general importance is that the Australian vernacular and accent can be heard on stage.[4]

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[1] Personal letter, 31.1.96.
[2] McCallum (1981), 141.
[3] These associations have been made in the history of English theatre also; cf. Shepherd and Womack (1996), 277.
[4] In his M.A. thesis, John McCallum discusses many of these aspects in detail, cf. McCallum (1981).

Generally, from the end of World War II to the mid or late 1960s, Australians expected a naturalistic performance style. Alternative views of theatre only began to establish themselves after that time.[1] As far as the standards of some critics are concerned, it will be seen that these expectations lasted even longer.

Possible reasons for this situation can be seen in the strong influence on Australian theatre from Britain, where naturalism was belatedly accommodated in the late 1950s.[2] When Australian theatre started to loosen its bonds with the mother country, it rejected the British accent and content but it kept the naturalistic style. This can be explained by the fact that a mimetic style of representation lends itself to the process of self-definition that took place when the Australian theatre scene decolonised itself. The Australian stage needed to define Australian theatre first by holding up a mirror on stage[3]; Australian theatre needed to establish itself before being able to question in any way and not just in the Brechtian sense. This important role, which the first Australian plays on stage played for Australian self-confidence, can be seen in the comment the theatre critic Bruce Grant made in 1958: The 'new' Australian playwright "is saying [to Australians] that their lives are fascinating, that everything they do is significant. He is holding up a mirror, and they are seeing themselves for the first time."[4]

In this process, the staging of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* represented the first milestone in the quest for identity. In 1955, it brought Australian accents and content to the stage. In the following year, television was introduced in Sydney and Melbourne. This reinforced the Australian tendency towards a naturalistic playwriting and performance style.[5] Thus, the plays and performances of the 1950s and most of the 1960s were dominated by naturalism. This affected the Australian reception of Brecht and of German-

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[1] Cf. Radic (1991): The influence of playwrights such as "Anouilh, Pirandello, Brecht, Lorca, Kleist, Wedekind and more recently the Absurdist (...) had challenged the notion that the function of drama was to reflect and reproduce life 'as it is'. But in Australia in the 1950s their influence was virtually non-existent. Naturalism remained the dominant motif."

[2] Cf. Yarrow and Frost (1992), 228: "in one sense the story of British theatre since that time (1957) has been the problem first of accommodating to naturalism (roughly 70 years after most people in Europe had got over it) and then finding something to replace it. The 1960s is largely a period of trying on for size issues of social relevance that Ibsen and Hauptmann had explored in the 1870s and 1880s.

[3] Cf. my analysis of the seminar "Beyond the Backyard" and of James McCaughey's comment in *Farrago*, vol. 54, no 21, 17.9.76, Melbourne University, 10.

[4] Grant (1958). This function remained important in the following years. In 1966, Cherry noted that he was not very interested "in theatre as a showcase of what we would like to think we are like." Morphett (1966).

[5] Even nowadays, when a variety of approaches to acting is offered at most institutions teaching drama, many actors put some emphasis on the naturalistic training style for television because this represents an important source of income. Cf. *The Australian*, 16.7.82.

speaking playwrights in general.

As far as the reception of Brecht's concepts and plays is concerned, three consequences of the naturalistic style are relevant: Firstly, a staging style which attempts to mimetically imitate reality on stage, secondly, an acting style which supports this aim, thirdly, the role of the audience as relatively 'passive' spectators who are allowed to look through the 'fourth wall' and identify with what is happening on stage. As will be seen later on, Brecht breaks with all of this and his concept of theatre opposes the theatrical norms that dominated at least the start of the reception period. It follows that this did not create a favourable climate for Brecht's ideas for the theatre.

As the study of Brecht's ideas will show, one cannot consider the clash in theatrical expectations without mentioning the world views that are the basis of these expectations. This becomes clear in Brecht's "Couragemodell" where he criticises naturalism for creating "such an impression of naturalness that one no longer interposes one's judgement". He demands instead:

> Die Illusion des Theaters muß eine teilweise sein, so daß sie immer als Illusion erkannt werden kann. Die Realität muß, bei aller Komplettheit, schon durch künstlerische Gestaltung verändert sein, damit sie als veränderbar erkannt und behandelt werden kann.[1]

Brecht's aim to show how reality works had to lead to a clash with the function most Australians ascribed to theatre in the early reception period. As indicated previously, in the quite young Australian theatre, Australians wanted a production to mirror Australian life on stage and to allow the spectator to identify with what was happening in the theatre. Brecht's spectator, though, needs to repeatedly 'take a step back' from what is happening on stage in order to judge the situation and to think of alternatives.

Australian directors have reacted to these differences between Brechtian aesthetics and the local horizon of expectations by consciously or unconsciously adapting Brecht's plays to naturalistic norms. As explained previously, the term 'naturalisation' will be used for this mode of reception. Regarding the Australian reception of Brecht's work, 'naturalisation' refers to a mode of reception which adapts the unfamiliar, that is Brecht's work, to familiar theatrical norms. Where form is concerned, directors have reduced Brecht's dramas to a bare storyline and turned them into predominantly emotional performances; their critical

[1] "Couragemodell 1949", 176, in: Brecht (1994), 169-398. "The illusion created by the theatre must be a partial one, in order that it may always be recognised as an illusion. Reality, however complete, has to be altered by being turned into art, so that it can be seen to be alterable and be treated as such.", "From the *Mother Courage* Model", 219, in: Willett (1964), 215-222.

components, especially their political implications, and Brechtian staging techniques have often been neglected.

My study will trace the predominance of this mode of reception from its beginnings in the late 1950s until the late 1960s and early 1970s when, with the rise of the 'New Wave', it was enlarged by a variety of other production styles. Rejecting British repertory and naturalistic norms, the 'New Wave' brought not only the first major generation of Australian writers[1] but also a new acting and performance style which were open to fresh ideas. At this time, theatre companies, especially those like La Mama and the Australian Performing Group (APG), not only accommodated new Australian drama, but played a vital role in the reception of Brecht's theories and plays[2] because they attempted to understand Brechtian aesthetics and ideology seriously and adapted them for their own purpose.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the New Wave and Brecht's influence - together with the influence of other European playwrights[3] - meant the end of naturalistic performance. Despite these influences, many producers and directors, especially in mainstream companies, continued to present naturalistic plays.[4] The tendency to adapt Brecht's plays to naturalistic norms persisted even after alternative companies had demonstrated different production styles.[5]

In his thesis, *Some Preoccupations in Australian Theatre Criticism from 1955 to 1978*, John McCallum observed that, by the mid 1970s, "naturalism versus non-naturalism had become a major issue in theatrical politics".[6] In 1979, the Goethe-Institute in Sydney responded to the spirit of the times by organising a weekend seminar entitled "Beyond the

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[1] Earlier attempts at Australian playwriting, like Louis Esson's and Vance Palmer's, were still looking towards England and Ireland for their models.
[2] For a more detailed analysis see the case studies.
[3] In this respect, it would be of great interest to study the influence of the French 'absurdist' playwrights.
[4] Cf. also Fotheringham's description about NIDA's strong influence on actor training promoting an institutionalised "performance style (realism) within an overall aesthetic (plays from the British tradition) and economic structure (the English provincial repertory theatres), R. Fotheringham, "Boundary Riders and Claim Jumpers", 27, in: Kelly (1998), 20-37.
[5] Cf. my analysis of the reception of Brecht in the late 1970s.
[6] McCallum (1981), 167.

Backyard".[1] The seminar invited playwrights to talk about whether they perceived their plays as naturalistic and whether directors and critics treated them as such.

It is of great importance that this growing interest in alternative ways of playwriting and staging coincided with a boom in productions of Brecht's plays and with some Australian directors beginning to demand a bold approach to Brecht's work.[2] At the same time, a number of productions in the late 1970s were conventionally naturalistic.

When interest in Brecht's work decreased, in the 1980s and 1990s, some directors continued to stage Brecht's work in conventional, often naturalistic ways, while others successfully tried alternative approaches. At the same time, the great influence of Brechtian techniques in all areas of performing arts were recognised increasingly; in the theatre, Australian directors used Brechtian devices in their productions of plays by other playwrights increasingly.

This simultaneous persistence of Brecht's influence and that of naturalistic style is captured in the following remark by Australian director Simon Phillips who noted that Brecht's "approach [to directing and performance] has been highly influential. (...) yet it is not a style of theatre that has been developed in Australia (...). For a long time we have been working in what is essentially versions of naturalism".[1]

Naturalistic theatrical norms influenced also the way theatre critics viewed the performances of plays by Brecht from the early reception period. Critics often misunderstood or dismissed Brecht's work altogether because it was evaluated against these norms. But even if their judgment was favourable, many critics were still constrained by the framework of naturalistic expectations.

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[1] The seminar took place on September 15 and 16 at the Goethe-Institute in Woollahra, Sydney. The term 'backyard realism' had been coined by the early director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Hugh Hunt. In the late 1950s, he had made the following statement: "Whilst it is, I repeat, too early to judge contemporary Australian dramatic literature, there is about the plays that have so far been performed a depressing similarity. From *Rusty Bugles* onwards, these plays have belonged to the 'slice of life' school. Now whilst the realistic play (...) has a rightful place in literature, it has obvious limitations and the limitations of backyard realism are considerable". Hunt went on to criticise that in this kind of drama, conflict was mainly expressed in monosyllables and by means of violent action, cf. conference programme. Cf. also Serle (1987), 199: "But most of these plays (...) (in the fifties) were confined to vernacular naturalism and stressed violence and low life; tended to take the theatregoer on guided tours of the contemporary scene; were curiously uneasy in their handling of middle-class characters; missed crucial aspects of contemporary life, such as social mobility; and were unadventurous in use of poetic language."

[2] Cf. my analysis of case studies.

As stated earlier, the naturalistic norms affected the staging style, the acting style, and the role Brecht ascribed to the audience. This can be seen in critics' reactions. Criticism about the staging style can be found as late as 1995.[2] The effects of the new acting style recur in complaints about the absence of 'fully rounded characters'.[3] The audience's role was criticised as early as 1959, when the first professional Australian production of *The Threepenny Opera* was mounted.[4]

Often the dual aspects of acting style and audience role were closely linked in the reviews. Many reviewers considered a performance as successful if the acting style allowed audiences to identify with the characters on stage by feeling for them, often to a degree that led to a theatre of illusion. Thus, "compassion" became one of the most commonly used words of praise in Australian reviewing because - as John McCallum explains- it was often implied "that it is compassion which is the mechanism by which fully-rounded characters are made interesting on stage".[5] In performances which did not allow for this immediate identification, many critics were looking for a 'subtext' underlying the performances which would reveal something familiarly human or they rejected the production altogether. It has already been stated that identification as the main purpose of a performance is directly opposed to Brecht's aims.

The legacy of the naturalistic norms in theatre criticism lasted even after alternative ways of staging Brecht's plays had been found. In 1973, Margaret Williams judged: "The critical assumptions brought to virtually all Australian plays even today are essentially those appropriate to well-made naturalism".[6] In the long run, however, the diversity in style which was a result of the New Wave and the growing number of alternative theatres induced critics to develop new ways in which to discuss plays and performance styles. As a result,

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[1] Interview with Joyce Morgan, in: *The Australian*, 26.8.94; Concerning tendencies in Australian playwriting, director Jean-Pierre Mignon reported in 1982 that he and his company tried to find "a new or experimental approach to plays" amongst Australian playwrights, but most plays "were naturalistically written", in: *National Times*, 12.9.82.

[2] Patricia Kelly acknowledged in *The Courier Mail* (27.5.1995) that Brecht did not have in mind to make the stage look like "a realist place', but she complained about the fact that the set "broke the tight dramatic thread" of *The Threepenny Opera*.

[3] This is a complaint voiced regularly by Harry Kippax; cf. also H.L.C. who suggested that Ron Haddrick playing Azdak "could have rounded out the character with more subtle unpleasantness.", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4.7.1964; from now on quoted as *SMH*. henceforth

[4] *The Bulletin*, vol.80, no.4120, 28.1.59.

[5] McCallum (1981), 158, 161.

[6] Williams (1973), IV.

the late 1970s can be considered as a "peak of sophisticated dramatic criticism".[1] The monthly theatre magazine *Theatre Australia*, launched by academics at the University of Newcastle in 1976, contributed to a rising quality in performance criticism. The involvement of academics in reviewing was characteristic of the changes taking place in theatre criticism. Beforehand, it had been possible that critics could review performances who were not specially trained in this area and had come from a different section of a newspaper. Now, some critics were not only experts in Australian theatre, but, in an ideal case, they were able to use a comparative approach when reviewing a performance because they were familiar with the development of theatre in Germany also. In the late 1970s, the outlook had broadened so much that Theatre Australia published articles on German theatre[2] thus shifting the attention from England and the US to more comprehensive information. Despite these changes, conservative and open-minded approaches to Brecht's work were used simultaneously in the press coverage just like in the productions.

Entertainment

While naturalistic norms and orthodox Brechtian theatre are incompatible by definition, it is possible to stage Brecht's plays in an entertaining way without contravening Brecht's intentions. However, most critics regarded the didactic dimension of Brecht's dramas and their expectation of entertainment as conflicting. In many cases, Brecht's plays and their performance were not directly labelled as 'dull'. Instead, the productions were condemned in context with his dramas' didactic dimension[3] and critics called them "lectures" and "sermons".[4]

As the beginning of the production history was characterised by a strong tendency to adapt Brecht's plays to Australian expectations, direct allegations that Brecht's plays appeared boring were rare. This changed when Australians witnessed Joachim Tenschert's 1973 production of *Mother Courage and Her Children*[5] which had not cut the didactic

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[1] Cf. Holloway (1981), XXXVI; Geoffrey Serle reports a higher standard in the daily and weekly press from the early 1970s, in: Serle (1987) 213. Richard Fotheringham observed that "Serious criticism of theatre by journalists and academics (...) did not exist in any sustained manner until the 1990s.", in: Richard Fotheringham, "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 75, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76.
[2] Cf. Morley (1978), Rorrison (1977).
[3] Cf. Harry Kippax's article of 1.8.1964 on Willett's *Brecht on Theatre*.
[4] Cf. for example Geoffrey Hutton's reviews, which will be analysed in the case studies.
[5] In the following, I shall use the short title, *Mother Courage*.

elements of Brecht's play because it followed Brecht's model faithfully.[1]

This label can be put down to two causes. The first one stems from a misreading of Brecht's theories, primarily by directors, the second one arises from a conflict in the functions ascribed to theatre.

The first cause is linked to Brecht's idea of 'entertainment', which is closely connected to the pleasures of a productive existence like learning and a critical attitude. It will be seen in the analysis of Brecht's theories that, for Brecht, theatre can be amusing as long as it fulfils the purpose of creating critical awareness.

The second reason for not according an entertainment value to Brecht's theatre arises from a conflict in functions ascribed to theatre which cannot be resolved. If the critics interpret 'entertainment' to mean facile amusement (a kind of anti-intellectualism), their expectations cannot be accommodated in a Brechtian production. As the development of a critical attitude towards what is happening on stage is one of the vital elements of Brecht's theories, his theatre is opposed precisely to the kind of 'entertainment' that leads to escapism.

The expectation that theatre should be diverting and thus distract from the worries of everyday life can be attributed to British[2] and American influence[3] and to Australia's own tradition of the music hall and vaudeville[4]. At the same time, the structure of the vaudeville with its variety acts and musical component is close to that of the cabaret. This explains why extracts of Brecht's plays and songs have been presented frequently and successfully in cabaret-evenings. One of the first successful 'Brecht-evenings' was Wal Cherry's production of George Tabori's *Brecht on Brecht* in 1965 and Robyn Archer has been using this formula successfully ever since.

Thus it is not surprising that - although less frequent than comments related to naturalistic norms - comments on the entertainment character of 'Brecht-productions' pervade the

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[1] J. Tenschert directed *Mother Courage* for the MTC in 1973. For reactions cf. Barrie Watts, *The Australian*, 29.6.73: "He [Brecht] can be a very tedious fellow.", Geoffrey Hutton reassessed John Sumner's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the MTC in 1971 as follows: "Perhaps it should have been drier and more didactic, but I would not have changed it". in: Hutton (1975), 75.

[2] Ralph Yarrow and Anthony Frost speak of a "traditional insularity and anti-intellectualism of public taste in Britain", in: Yarrow and Frost (1992), 227.

[3] Carl Weber describes the influence of the American "entertainment industry" on the reception of Brecht in his article "Brecht auf den Bühnen der USA: Ein Überblick und Anmerkungen zur Rezeptionsgeschichte", Weber (1993), 168.

[4] Brisbane (1977 (Summer)), 56- 70.

history of the reception of Brecht in Australia. In 1958, Hugh Hunt, then director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust[1], observed that theatre was not considered as a form of entertainment in its own right but as "part and parcel of the general background of entertainment, rather like a day at the races or a visit to the football club".[2] Two years later, he noted an expectation of 'fun' that is opposed to Brecht's critical thinking: "The middle-class, middle-aged theatre-going public was not inclined to tolerate anything but 'sophisticated upper-class comedy and the comedy-thriller' - a demand for thought was considered a denial of entertainment."[3]

In 1966, the concept of a theatre presenting ideas to the audience must have been still so unfamiliar to the critic H.J. Standish and his readers that he wrote the following comment about Brecht: "In recent years the theatre has become one of the principal mediums for the presentation of ideas, rather than being a simple source of entertainment, and Bertolt Brecht, who died in 1956, was in the forefront of this new trend."[4]

The change of expectations regarding entertainment in the theatre is closely linked to the shift in naturalistic expectations. The political climate of the late 1960s and the rise of the Australian 'New Wave Theatre' supported an intellectual kind of theatre that offered critical insight instead of a form of entertainment that avoided contentious issues. Some of the new theatre tried to combine critical thinking and entertainment.

From then on, some critics reversed the roles outlined above by condemning productions which turned Brecht's plays, especially *The Threepenny Opera*, into entertainment of the 'showbiz' type and neglected the critical components of his work.

2.3 Brecht's theories on theatre and their rendering in early translations

Before analysing how specific productions of Brecht's plays have been received in Australia and assessing individual reviews, it is important to clarify the conditions under which each play was received. One of the factors that influences reviewers' opinions is the state of information on Brecht's theories conveyed through English translations.

I shall here provide a short overview of Brecht's theories and introduce the theoretical

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[1] "The first public body for the performing arts, the Trust aimed to establish national drama, opera and ballet companies.", in: Parsons and Chance (1997), 31.
[2] *The Age*, 18.10.58.
[3] Serle (1987), 200.
[4] *Advertiser*, 10.3.1966.

texts by Brecht which have had the greatest impact on the Australian theatre scene from the 1950s until today. This will be followed by an analysis of some crucial aspects of their translation into English which will allow responses towards individual performances to be placed in the context of the general reception process of Brecht's theories.

Brecht's theories on theatre have had an enormous influence in Australia. Over time, many elements of his theories and performance practices have been integrated into 'normal' theatre practice without being identifiable.

In the interviews conducted for this research, most theatre people acknowledged a more or less direct influence of Brecht on current Australian theatre. As Brecht's name disappeared during the appropriation process, it is often difficult to point to individual Brechtian devices. This view is confirmed by a remark the Australian director Simon Phillips made in the programme notes for his production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1994. He stated that he felt the urge to "rekindle the aspects which made Brechtian theatre so revolutionary in its day, many of which have now been so absorbed into our theatrical culture as to be taken for granted".[1] Rather than re-invigorating Brechtian devices, Australian director Michael Kantor went one step further when staging *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in 1998. He noted: "A lot of Brechtian ideas are now the main stage of theatrical ideas (...). We did not need to be obsessed about that; we could move on from there."[2] It can thus be assumed that Brecht's influence is greater than generally recognised, especially on directing and playwriting; it would exceed the framework of this thesis, however, to study this aspect in full.

Despite this strong impact, the prejudices against Brecht's theories, practice and plays linger on.[1] Most of the misconceptions emerged from the early reception period. Thus, it is of benefit to look closely at the origins of the misconceptions and to trace the patterns of reception through the history of the Brecht reception in Australia.

The most important elements are the attitudes towards the 'epic theatre' and associated terms, such as *Verfremdung, Verfremdungseffekt* and *Gestus*. As the reception of Brecht as a playwright has been strongly affected by his reputation as a theorist these attitudes will be

[1] Simon Phillips, "Director's Note", in: *The Threepenny Opera*, Programme notes, STC 1994. Similarly, Robyn Archer acknowledged that "the legacy of Bertolt Brecht's stage theory and methodology pervades everything we see on the stage", in: Archer (1995), 144.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.

not be considered within this context but in the context of the reaction towards specific performances.

2.3.1 Brecht's theories: 'epic theatre', *Verfremdung, V-Effekt*

Brecht represents an exception amongst the playwrights studied in this research because his playwriting has been accompanied by theoretical considerations. Brecht's thoughts on 'epic theatre', *Verfremdung, Verfremdungseffekt* and, to a certain degree, on *Gestus* have had a strong, often emotionally charged, response in Australia. Most of the early reactions have appeared as short remarks in reviews of actual performances. As the structure of Australian newspapers does not allow for lengthy discussions about theatre, the few theoretical comments have been mainly presented in literary magazines such as *Meanjin*.

In order to assess Australian reactions towards Brecht's theories properly, it is helpful to clarify the Brechtian terms first and to look at how and when these theories became available to Australians.

Brecht himself was influenced by a great number of sources while developing his theories on theatre - and in his playwriting.[2] Even more important for the understanding of his theories, though, is his concept of society. It played a vital role for the function he attributed to theatre and had considerable consequences for the Brechtian stage. Although Brecht was never a member of the Communist Party, from the late 1920s, he always saw himself as an exponent of Marxist ideas.

Accordingly, he considered society as the crucial influence on the individual. Brecht also believed that, through a change of awareness and through education, individuals can ultimately initiate changes in society. It depends on the particular play how strongly these convictions are expressed; in some plays, especially the *Lehrstücke*, Brecht advocated revolutionary action in the Marxist sense, in others he confined himself to criticising the ills of his time. In his chart on "Dramatic and Epic Form" from 1935, he defines the basis of his theory accordingly: "Der Mensch ist Gegenstand der Untersuchung / Der veränderliche und

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[1] Paul Galloway refers to many of them in his review of *The Threepenny Opera*, performed at the QTC, *Brisbane News*, 7.6.95.

[2] Amongst these were the mystery plays of the Middle Ages, the classical Spanish theatre and the theatre of the Jesuits, Shakespeare's theatre, the chronicle plays and the tradition of Asian theatre. Brooker also points to the more recent influences on Brecht of "the political theatre of Erwin Piscator and German agitprop; the cabaret of Frank Wedekind and the work of the music hall comedian Karl Valentin; Charlie Chaplin and American silent film; Asian and revolutionary Soviet theatre", Peter Brooker, "Key words in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre", 187, in: Thomson (1994), 185-200.

verändernde Mensch".[1] In 1930, he had expressed his ideological convictions even more distinctly in the first version of the same table. There he had stated: "Das gesellschaftliche Sein bestimmt das Denken".[2]

Brecht considered theatre to be a means of changing society. He wanted to reveal to the spectator how society is constructed, how it is developing and how it can be developed. His intention was to present "die Welt, wie sie wird / Was der Mensch tun kann".[3]

This directly affected the playwriting and, ultimately, the production style. Brecht wrote his plays in such a way that the spectator could follow the action on stage critically. For this reason he avoided illusion and suspense as well as a strong focus on pure entertainment. He structured his plays in a montage-style consisting of autonomous "gestic incidents"[4] and he used *Verfremdungseffekte*, such as commentaries and songs, which interrupted the line of the plot, and short synopses which informed the spectator in advance about what was going to happen on stage.

One of the first texts demonstrating an approach to these ideas and Brecht's theories in general was "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", which was published in 1958 in Australia under the title "Theatre for Learning".[5] This publication is of great importance for the reception of Brecht as it was readily available to Australian theatre people who referred to it repeatedly in the early reception period. The text introduces the idea of *Verfremdung* and says that a complete emotional identification of the spectator (and the actor) with the characters and action on stage is to be avoided. As the performance is meant to address not only the spectator's feelings but even more his intellect, the spectator, like a scientist, is enabled to understand the reasons for what is happening on stage and to look for alternatives. This text also mentions some of the methods to be used to achieve this, which

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[1] "Epische Form", in: "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 109, in: Brecht (1993a), 106-117. Willett did not include this chart in his translated excerpts of "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction", in: Willett (1964), 69-77. Instead he provided the earlier version of the chart, as Brecht had published it in 1930 in his "Anmerkungen zu der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*": "the human being is the object of the inquiry / he is alterable and able to alter", in: "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre (Notes to the Opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*)", 37, in: Willett (1964), 33-42.

[2] "Zu *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*", 79, in: Brecht (1991), 74-86; "Social being determines thought", in: "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre", 37, in: Willett (1964) p33-42.

[3] "Epische Form", "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 109-110., in: Brecht (1993a), 106-117. Not part of the chart's earlier version in "Anmerkungen zu der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*" and thus not translated by Willett. A possible translation would be "The world as it evolves / What man can do".

[4] "Gestische Vorgänge", in: "Kleines Organon für das Theater", 92, in: Brecht (1993c), 65-97; "A Short Organum for the Theatre", 200, in: Willett (1964), 179-205.

[5] Translated by Edith Anderson, in: Brecht (1958).

became later known as *Verfremdungseffekte*:

> Die Bühne begann zu erzählen. Nicht mehr fehlte mit der vierten Wand zugleich der Erzähler. Nicht nur der Hintergrund nahm Stellung zu den Vorgängen auf der Bühne, indem er auf großen Tafeln gleichzeitige andere Vorgänge an anderen Orten in die Erinnerung rief, Aussprüche von Personen durch projizierte Dokumente belegte oder widerlegte, zu abstrakten Gespächen sinnlich faßbare, konkrete Zahlen lieferte, zu plastischen, aber in ihrem Sinn undeutlichen Vorgängen Zahlen und Sätze zur Verfügung stellte - auch die Schauspieler vollzogen die Verwandlung nicht vollständig, sondern hielten Abstand zu der von ihnen dargestellten Figur, ja, forderten deutlich zur Kritik auf.
>
> Von keiner Seite wurde es dem Zuschauer weiterhin ermöglicht, durch einfache Einfühlung in dramatische Personen sich kritiklos (und praktisch folgenlos) Erlebnissen hinzugeben. Die Darstellung setzte die Stoffe und Vorgänge einem Entfremdungsprozeß aus. Es war die Entfremdung, welche nötig ist, damit verstanden werden kann. (...)
>
> Das 'Natürliche' mußte das Moment des *Auffälligen* bekommen. Nur so konnten die Gesetze von Ursache und Wirkung zutage treten. Das Handeln des Menschen mußte zugleich *so* sein und mußte zugleich anders sein können.
>
> Das waren große Änderungen.[1]

Amongst the consequences to be drawn from this excerpt, three are important for the Australian theatre scene, especially in the early reception period when naturalism dominated the stage: Firstly, the application of Brecht's theories requires a break with the tradition of imitating reality on stage. Secondly, this affects the actors, calling for a new acting style. Thirdly, Brecht's theatre expects the audience to become intellectually involved instead of identifying 'passively', so that it can gain insights into how reality and especially society are constructed.

The second element needs to be looked at more closely in order to allow a qualified assessment of Australian responses to these changes. Many Australians associate the term *Gestus* closely to acting style, although Brecht himself did not restrict the term to this. Thus it is useful to expand on the term within the context of acting and audience reactions.

Brecht stressed that *Gestus* is not supposed to mean mere gesticulation but that it

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[1] "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 108; "The stage began to tell a story. The narrator was no longer missing, along with the fourth wall. Not only did the background adopt an attitude to the events on the stage - by big screens recalling other simultaneous events elsewhere, by projecting documents which confirmed or contradicted what the characters said, by concrete and intelligible figures to accompany abstract conversations, by figures and sentences to support mimed transactions whose sense was unclear - but the actors too refrained from going over wholly into their role, remaining detached from the character they were playing and clearly inviting criticism of him.
The spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play. The production took the subject matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. (...)
What is 'natural' must have the force of what is startling. This is the only way to expose the laws of cause and effect. People's activity must simultaneously be so and be capable of being different.
It was all a great change." , in: Willett (1964), 71.

includes also mimics, the verbal utterances, tone of voice etc.[1] He wants the actor to use all means of expressions available for the purpose of showing not individual but social relationships.[2] The idea that the actor should not convert fully into the character on stage is expanded on in "Der Messingkauf": "Um den V-Effekt zu setzen, muß der Schauspieler die *restlose Verwandlung* in die Bühnenfigur aufgeben. Er *zeigt* die Figur, er *zitiert* den Text, er *wiederholt* einen wirklichen Vorgang."[3] Brecht illustrates this concept through a comparison with a street-scene after an accident: "der Augenzeuge eines Verkehrsunfalls demonstriert einer Menschenansammlung, wie das Unglück passierte (...); die Hauptsache ist, daß der Demonstrierende das Verhalten des Fahrers oder des Überfahrenen oder beider in einer solchen Weise vormacht, daß die Umstehenden sich über den Unfall ein Urteil bilden können."[4]

Once again, Brecht's ultimate aim is to offer to the audience an insight into social patterns with the possibility of changing them: "[Der Schauspieler sollte] die Haltung des sich Wundernden einnehmen. Dies, (...) um in den Aufbau der Figur das 'Nicht-Sondern' hineinzubrigen, auf das soviel ankommt, wenn das Publikum, das die Gesellschaft repräsentiert, die Vorgänge von der beeinflußbaren Seite einsehen können soll."[5]

A comparison of Brecht's theories with the theatrical norms which influenced the early reception of Brecht in Australia shows a contrast with the naturalistic norms as described above. *Gestus* in acting prevents the audience from feeling 'compassion' for 'fully rounded

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[1] " Unter Gestus soll nicht Gestikulieren verstanden sein; es handelt sich nicht um unterstreichende oder erläuternde Handbewegungen. Es handelt sich um Gesamthaltungen.", in: "Über gestische Musik", 329. in: Brecht (1993a), 329-332; "Gest is not supposed to mean gesticulation: it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movements of the hands, but of overall attitudes.", "On gestic Music", 104. in: Willett (1964), 104-106.

[2] "Den Bereich der Haltungen, welche die Figuren zueinander einnehmen, nennen wir den gestischen Bereich.", "Kleines Organon für das Theater", 89. in: Brecht (1993c), 65-97; "The realm of attitudes adopted by the characters towards one another is what we call the realm of gest.", "A Short Organum for the Theatre", 198. in: Willett (1964), 179-205. Cf. also: "Über gestische Musik", 330, in: Brecht (1993a), 329-332; "On gestic Music", 104. in: Willett (1964), 104-106.

[3] "Nachtrag zur Theorie des Messingkaufs", 701, in: Brecht (1993b), 701-701-702. "To achieve the V-effect the actor must give up his *complete conversion* into a stage character. He *shows* the character, he *quotes* his lines, he *repeats* a real-life incident", Brecht (1965), 104.

[4] "Die Straßenszene", 371. in: Brecht (1993a), 371- 381; "[a witness demonstrates] to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place (...); the point is that the demonstrator acts the behaviour of driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident", "The Street Scene". 121. Willett (1964), 121-129.

[5] "Kleines Organon". 87; "attitude of a man who just wonders (...); in order to build into the character that element of 'Not - But' on which so much depends if society, in the shape of the audience, is to be able to look at what takes place in such a way as to be able to affect it.", "A short Organum", Willett (1964), 197; cf. also: "In diesem Fall tritt das Soziale besser in Erscheinung.", "Die Straßenszene", 374, in: Brecht (1993a), 371- 381 .

characters' as it was intended in Australian naturalistic performances. As a result, Brecht's plays lost the appeal which they could have had to those Australian spectators who approved of seeing working-class characters on stage.[1] Brecht takes an explicit stand against the concept of 'fully rounded characters' of the 'well-made play' saying, in the "street-scene", that "the character of the man being demonstrated remains a quantity that need not be completely defined. Within certain limits he may be like this or like that; it doesn't matter".[2]

It is important to stress that the character is open for interpretation only "within certain limits". This shows that Brecht did not want the actor to give up the depiction of a character altogether. Brechtian acting style is not meant to be reducing acting skills; on the contrary, acting is meant to be adding an extra dimension by not just 'rounding' a character in a given context, but also by examining it using different and contradictory perspectives.

Unfortunately, critics have tended to judge productions according to their overall impression and have paid little attention to the challenges Brecht's theories and plays present to actors.[3] *Der Messingkauf* was neglected in programme notes and reviews alike in spite of John Willett having translated it into English in 1965.[4] One exception was a staged introduction to Brecht's work for NIDA students directed by Willett in 1979. Willett drew the material for the performance[5] from *Der Messingkauf*, which added a new perspective to Brecht's work. However, he was aware of a lack of familiarity with this part of Brecht's theory in Australia and in much of the English-speaking world. He entitled the introduction "Twelve Poems, Two Scenes and an Argument" because he felt that *Der Messingkauf* "would [have] be[en] meaningless to non-Germans".[6]

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[1] This is the aim of contemporary Australian playwright Daniel Keene who noted that "the sort of characters that I attempt to write about aren't well served on the Australian stage - especially by the major theatre companies. (...) You know: great drama is not written about poor people. (...) I still believe that we are basically a blue-collar country, no matter how much people like to think we aren't.", *The Melbourne Review*, 15.11.95.

[2] "The Street Scene", 124; "Für unseren Straßendemonstranten bleibt der Charakter des zu Demonstrierenden eine Größe, die er nicht völlig auszubestimmen hat. Innerhalb gewisser Grenzen kann er so und so sein, das macht nichts aus." "Die Straßenszene", 375, in: Brecht (1993a), 371-381.

[3] One of the rare serious interview with actors was Peter Ward's interview with Kerry Walker who played Mother Courage in Jim Sharman's production for the Adelaide Lighthouse Theatre Company in 1982. Walker admitted that playing Brecht "presents special problems to Australian actors" because of the emphasis on naturalism during actors' training ; in: *The Australian*, 16.7.82.

[4] Brecht (1965).

[5] With Griffin Theatre Company, in association with NIDA and the School of Drama, University of New South Wales.

[6] Personal letter, 10.7.00.

Eventually, a clash between Brechtian and Australian naturalistic expectations towards theatre could not be avoided. What did not necessarily interfere with Brecht's concept of theatre was the expectation that theatre should allow for emotions and entertainment. Yet Australian critics declared repeatedly that Brechtian theatre had no room for these elements. In fact, Brecht considered them as important components of a production as long as they remained subordinate to the main purpose of creating a critical attitude. Accordingly, Brecht stated that emotions constitute a first step towards criticism: "Damit ist natürlich nicht gesagt, daß der Zuschauer prinzipiell verhindert werden muß, gewisse Emotionen, die vorgeführt werden, zu teilen; jedoch ist die Übernahme von Emotionen nur eine bestimmte Form (Phase, Folge) der Kritik".[1]

The same applies to the entertainment component of a performance. Even though the balance between learning and entertainment varied during Brecht's whole creative life, Brecht never dismissed the idea of entertainment altogether, as long as it did not lead to anti-intellectual theatre. After explaining the pleasure of learning, he stated in 1935 in "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?": "Das Theater bleibt Theater, auch wenn es Lehrtheater ist, und soweit es gutes Theater ist, ist es amüsant."[2] He reinforced the idea of entertainment and emotions being important parts of a performance in 1950[3]: "Tatsächlich ist das epische Theater eine sehr künstlerische Angelegenheit, kaum zu denken ohne Künstler und Artistik, Phantasie, Humor, Mitgefühl, ohne das und viel mehr kann es nicht praktiziert werden. Es hat unterhaltend zu sein, es hat belehrend zu sein."[4]

In summary, Brecht's theories presented the Australian theatre scene with challenges in all areas of theatre. He attributed a new function to theatre which opposed it directly to the naturalistic kind of theatre which continued to dominate the Australian theatre scene for a long time. The Brechtian style of production and acting did not exclude emotions and entertainment. These two elements were no longer self-sufficient, though, but served the overall purpose of promoting critical thinking and the will to change society.

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[1] "Die Straßenszene", 376, in: Brecht (1993a), 371- 381; "Of course this does not mean that the spectator must be barred on principle from sharing certain emotions that are put before him; none the less to communicate emotions is only one particular form (phase, consequence) of criticism.", in: Willett (1964), 125.

[2] "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 112.

[3] Year of publication.

[4] "Die Straßenszene", 378-379, in: Brecht (1993a), 371- 381; "And sure enough, the epic theatre is an extremely artistic affair, hardly thinkable without artists and virtuosity, imagination, humour and fellow-feeling; it cannot be practised without all these and much else too. It has got to be entertaining, it has got to be instructive.", in: Willett (1964), 126-127.

Despite Brecht's extensive writings on these theoretical aspects, many misunderstandings and prejudices have been involved in the interpretation of his work. In the comment quoted earlier, Hibberd attributed many misunderstandings to the lack of interest in Brecht's texts. The following analysis will also examine the effects which the quality of available translations had on the reception process.

2.3.2 The translation of Brecht's theories into English

Availability

When examining Australian reactions to Brecht's theories on theatre it is essential to consider when his essays became available in English and to take a close look at the translations. Although the question of translation, including of scripts, did not become important in the Australian reception history until the 1980s the translations are of great importance. They not only reflect the translator's attitude towards Brecht's ideas but, through the interpretation of Brechtian terms, they had the power to influence Brecht's reception in Australia. This becomes obvious in the reviews of actual performances because the reviewers tend to judge the productions by reference to Brecht's own theatrical language and terminology.

The amount of critical literature and translations relating to Brecht produced in Australia is small in comparison to the wider English-speaking market. It can be assumed that the general availability of Brecht's texts and critical essays in English was similar to the rest of the English-speaking world.[1]

1956 was marked by the Berliner Ensemble's productions of *Mother Courage, The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Trumpets and Drums* in London. It took some time until the productions were followed by translations of Brecht's theories. Translations of his essays into English appeared only sporadically.[2]

In Australia, publication and performance followed each other closely without being necessarily linked: In 1958, the Australian literary magazine *Meanjin* published a translation of "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?" under the title "Theatre for Learning"[3]. The translation had been provided by Edith Anderson, but no source was given. The editor,

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[1] Michael Morley points out that "there are still important essays, articles and commentaries that remain inaccessible to the English-speaking reader", in: Morley (1997), 336.
[2] Cf. Michael Patterson, "Brecht's Legacy", 273-274, in: Thomson and Sacks (1994), 273-287.
[3] Brecht (1958).

Clement Christesen, felt obliged to introduce Brecht through a footnote stating that "Bertold Brecht (1898-1956) was one of the greatest - and certainly one of the most controversial - literary figures in post-war Germany" and a brief bibliography. This publication was crucial for the reception of Brecht's theories in Australia as it provided Australians with the table contrasting "Dramatic Form" with "Epic Form" which was frequently referred to by reviewers.

In the same year, two of Brecht's plays were staged at the University of Melbourne: *Mother Courage* was performed in German at the Department of Germanic Languages and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was played in English by the Marlowe Society. In the following year, the first professional English performance of a play by Brecht after World War II[1] took place at the Union Theatre Repertory Company (UTCR): Wal Cherry directed *The Threepenny Opera*.

At the international level, the same year is marked by the publication of Martin Esslin's book *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*. Maro Germanou, in his article "Brecht and the English Theatre", assesses its role in the following way: Esslin argued that "Brecht's plays are good, despite Brecht, his theory and his politics".[2] Michael Patterson, in "Brecht's legacy", accords the major influence in making Brecht known in the United States to the translations and essays by Eric Bentley.[3] It was John Willett's merit, though, to allow English speaking readers proper access to Brecht's theories, first in *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* in 1959 and then in the anthology of Brecht's own writings in *Brecht on Theatre* of 1964, followed a year later by *The Messingkauf Dialogues*.

Three years earlier, in 1961, *The Tulane Drama Review*[4] made a whole range of texts by and on Brecht available to English speaking readers. Amongst them were a version of *The Seven Deadly Sins of the Lower Middle Class*[5], contributions by Kurt Weill, Max Frisch, Eric Bentley and a long article explaining "The Development of Brecht's Theory of Epic Theatre (1918-1933)" by Werner Hecht. Most important, however, was the fact that Anderson's article was reprinted and that Brecht's essay "On the Experimental Theatre"[6]

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[1] Before World War II, New Theatre Sydney had staged *Señora Carrara's Rifles* (1939) and *The Informer*, a segment from *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*.
[2] Germanou (1982), 213.
[3] Michael Patterson, "Brecht's Legacy", 274, in: Thomson and Sacks (1994), 273-287.
[4] Brecht (1961 (September)).
[5] English version used for the American premiere in 1959, translated by W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman, edited by Eric Bentley, 123-129.
[6] Brecht (1961 (September)).

was published in translation by Carl Richard Mueller. These last two, as well as some aspects of Willett's translations, are worth a close examination as they had considerable influence on the 'Brecht'-reception in Australia.[1]

'Alienation' / *Verfremdung*

Whenever recent international reception studies take into account the translations of Brecht's theories, they show a tendency to concentrate on the term *Verfremdung*[2]. It has been shown in several critical studies that Willett's choice of the term 'alienation' led to a misinterpretation of the concept of *Verfremdung*.

Before assessing the repercussions of this misconception for the Australian theatre scene, it is worthwhile examining Willett's translation by comparing the German and the English term. Michael Patterson explains the connotations of the English term as follows:

> Unfortunately, one of Brecht's key words, *Verfremdung*, probably best rendered in English by the ugly word 'distanciation', was translated by Willett as 'alienation', the equivalent of the Hegelian / Marxist *Entfremdung*. This is not a mere linguistic quibble; for the word 'alienation' implies that audiences should become either antagonised by the performance or detached from the stage action to the point of boredom.[3]

In order to recall Brecht's own explanation of the term, it is useful to quote another version of the definition taken from "Die Straßenszene" because the similar wording to the explanation quoted earlier on[4] emphasises how important the exact rendering of the term was to Brecht. Once again, he defines *Verfremdung* as follows:

> Es handelt sich hierbei (...) um eine Technik, mit der darzustellenden Vorgängen zwischen Menschen der Stempel des Auffallenden, des der Erklärung Bedürftigen, nicht Selbstverständlichen, nicht einfach Natürlichen verliehen werden kann.[5]

This definition shows clearly that Brecht did not include the idea of the spectators being antagonised, detached or bored, but rather wanted to create the opposite: a sense of surprise and astonishment about situations the audience considered as 'normal' and unchangeable in everyday life. Although Brecht himself used the terms *Entfremdung* and *Verfremdung* concurrently between 1936 and 1940[1], the context made it clear that 'alienation' was not the appropriate English term because of its negative connotations.

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[1] This has been confirmed by the interviews I have conducted.

[2] Regarding the influences on Brecht's concept of *Verfremdung*, cf. Knopf (1980), 378-383. Knopf, however, does not point to the concept of *ostranenie* in Russian formalism, cf. Iklovskij (1971).

[3] Michael Patterson, "Brecht's Legacy", 274, in: Thomson and Sacks (1994), 273-287.

[4] Cf. "What is 'natural' must have the force of what is startling (...)", in: Willett (1964), 71; "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 108.

[5] "Die Straßenszene", 377, in: Brecht (1993a), 370-381; "What is involved here is, briefly, a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, is not to be taken for granted, not just natural.", Willett (1964), 125.

(Ironically, the misleading translation was made by one of the most faithful of Brecht's translators and scholars.)

Thus an inadequate translation probably led to a number of inappropriate conclusions. But, disappointingly, reception studies remain fixated on the one key term in its translation. However, a deeper analysis of the reception of Brecht in Australia - and this is probably applicable to other English-speaking countries - shows that the term 'alienation' merely contributed to an already existing situation of misunderstanding, by no means does it represent its only cause. Thus, the false rendering of *Verfremdung* is rather a symptom of a whole range of widespread misreadings of Brecht than a single phenomenon.

When examining the reception of Brecht's theories and plays in Australia, it becomes clear that many people connected to the Australian theatre scene associated Brecht with 'antagonism', 'detachment' or 'boredom' even before Willett introduced the term and consequently without using the actual term 'alienation'. Thus, *The Bulletin's* theatre critic M. Skipper described Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* as follows: "Its audience is not shocked. It is not moved. It is titillated, certainly. Sometimes it is amused, even enlightened. But because it is not allowed to experience emotion it is not moved, and it is never shocked."[2] Skipper criticised a lack of audience involvement even before the term 'alienation' had been coined.

The effect of Willett's inappropriate translation has been often overstated, the term 'alienation' only hardened prejudices towards Brecht's theories that already existed before Willett's term became commonly used. Many of the misunderstandings and prejudices like the ones voiced by Skipper can be explained through the theatrical norms depicted earlier. It bears recalling the predominance of naturalistic performance style and its influence on audiences' and critics' expectations. Other misreadings of Brecht's ideas are closely connected to the different world view of the reader, spectator or reviewer. This also affected the translation of Brecht's theories.

As already mentioned, the early Australian publication of "Vergnügungstheater oder

[1] Knopf (1980). 379.
[2] *The Bulletin*. 28.1. 1959.

Lehrtheater?", as translated by Anderson is a useful source for this reception study.[1] Although this is probably not an Australian translation, this text seems to have fitted in neatly with Australian readers because it was the main essay referred to in the early reception phase. At an international level, it illustrates that, while attention towards the quality of translations of plays kept growing in the reception history[2], Anderson's translation of Brecht's theoretical considerations continued to be accepted without recognising the problems which arise from a comparison with the original, as my analysis will illustrate. Thus, Anderson's translation was reprinted without modifications in *TDR* in 1961 and again in 2000 in the *Brecht Sourcebook*[3], which considers itself to be "an indispensable resource for the scholar, a textbook for the student, and an exciting eye-opener for the general reader".[4]

When analysing Anderson's translation in the context of 'alienation', it needs to be stated that the original text still contains the Brechtian term *Entfremdung*: "Die Darstellung setzte die Stoffe und Vorgänge einem Entfremdungsprozeß aus. Es war die Entfremdung, welche nötig ist, damit verstanden werden kann."[5] But Anderson is aware of the difficulty of rendering *Entfremdung* and she provides the German and the term 'alienation' in brackets:

> The presentation exposed the subject matter and the happenings to a process of de-familiarisation [*Entfremdung* - alienation]. De-familiarisation was required to make things understood.[6]

Anderson's choice of 'de-familiarisation' renders well *Verfremdung* because it reproduces Brecht's idea of turning familiar situations into unknown ones in order to allow for a new approach to the circumstances. On the whole, though, and paradoxically, this perceptive translation of the key term *Verfremdung* is overridden by a tendency to translate the text in a way that corresponds to the prejudices connected to the term 'alienation'. This starts with a shortened translation of the title; Anderson calls the essay "Theatre for Learning" thus omitting the choice of "Theatre for Pleasure" included in Brecht's original title, which has

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[1] As *Meanjin* does not provide a source of origin, the nationality of the translator cannot be securely established. At the *Meanjin* archives, no correspondence related to the article could be found. When *TDR* reproduced the article in 1961 (vol.6, New York, Sept. 1961), it did not provide any specific information on Anderson but referred to the previous publication of her translation in *Meanjin*, cf. *TDR*, vol.6, Sept. 61, New York, 137. Neither does the *Brecht Sourcebook*, cf. Martin and Bial (2000).
[2] Cf. my later analysis.
[3] Martin and Bial (2000), 23-30.
[4] Richard Schechner, foreword.
[5] "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?", 109.
[6] "Theatre for Learning", ibid., 302.

been emphasised by the question mark.[1] As the essay is quoted by reviewers under this title right from the start and even Willett does not restore it to its full length, the wrong conclusion that Brecht's theatre is didactic and boring without trying to entertain the audience is understandable.

Consequently, Anderson's careful rendering of *Entfremdung* / *Verfremdung* as de-familiarisation failed to influence the reception of Brecht in Australia. However, this is not only due to the fact that she added some misleading translations in the remainder of the text but also to the attitude of her readers at the time. In 1959, theatre people and critics concentrated on the table paralleling 'Dramatic Form' and 'Epic Form' contained in the text, ignoring the remainder of Brecht's writing, which would have helped to clarify some of the misunderstandings.

In later quotations and interpretations published in theatre programs and newspapers, Willett's term 'alienation' is predominantly used. In 1964, Willett's translated the definition of *Verfremdung* quoted above using the term 'alienation':

"The production took the subject-matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation : the alienation that is necessary to all understanding."

Furthermore, the term 'alienation' had also established itself in other translations. Consequently, the Australian reader would have looked in vain for alternative translations when consulting Carl Mueller's translation "On the Experimental Theatre" in the *Tulane Drama Review* (*TDR*) in 1961.[2] In Mueller's words, Brecht's definition of *Verfremdung* reads as follows: "To alienate an event or character is simply to take what to the event or character is obvious, known, evident and to produce surprise and curiosity about it."[3] The idea of 'alienation' is reinforced later in the same text when Mueller translates the spectator's scientific attitude towards the stage as "He (the spectator) has the same attitude towards the images of the human world opposite him on the stage which he, as human

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[1] She does not omit Brecht's statement that "the contrast between learning and being entertained does not necessarily exist in nature: it has not always existed and need not always exist.". Brecht (1958). 303; "Nun, ich kann eigentlich nur sagen, daß der Gegensatz zwischen Lernen und sich Amüsieren kein naturnotwendiger zu sein braucht, keiner, der immer bestanden hat und immer bestehen muß.", "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?". 111; cf. also 112 on "lustvolles Lernen, kämpferisches und fröhliches Lernen."

[2] The *TDR* provided the following information on Mueller: "Carl Richard Mueller has translated plays of Schnitzler and Brecht. He is presently on a Fulbright Grant in Berlin gathering material for a critical examination of Brecht's plays.", in: *TDR*, vol.6. Sept. 61. New York. 137. (1964?) → '61

[3] Brecht (1961 (September)). 14: "Einen Vorgang oder einen Charakter verfremden heißt zunächst einfach, dem Vorgang oder dem Charakter das Selbstverständliche, Bekannte, Einleuchtende zu nehmen und über ihn Staunen und Neugierde zu erzeugen.", "Über experimentelles Theater". 554., in: Brecht (1993a).

being, has had towards nature during this century."[1] Clearly, an idea of the audience versus the stage had established itself which had its effect on performance style and audience expectations. Over time, Anderson's attempt to render *Verfremdung* appropriately was replaced in most cases by prejudices associated with the term 'alienation'.

'Dramatic Form' and 'Epic Form'

At the start of the reception of Brecht in Australia, it was not so much a single term but an extract from "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?" that shaped ideas on Brecht's theatre, namely his table on "Dramatic Form" and "Epic Form". In 1959, Wal Cherry included extracts of the table in the programme for the premiere of *The Threepenny Opera* and reviewers referred to it in their newspaper articles. In the same month, Arthur Phillips quoted parts of it in his article "The Influence of Brecht on Modern Theatre".[2] This makes Anderson's translation of the table highly important.

One of the first misunderstandings in relation to this table was caused by the fact that the essay "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater?" does not contain Brecht's highly important footnote added to its earlier version in "Zu *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*" stating that "this table does not show absolute antitheses but mere shifts of accent."[3] Thus, Australian readers had to wait for Willett's translation of the latter essay to become properly informed about this important commentary.[4]

The quality of Anderson's translation is mainly affected by the differences in her world views to Brecht's. In the introduction of Brecht's theory it became apparent that Brecht's ideas on theatre were intrinsically linked to his Marxist views of society. Anderson, though, seems to come from an intellectual background which considers the individual as free from social pressures. She rather seems to situate the individual within a context of moral values and pressures.

When Brecht states "Der Mensch wird als bekannt vorausgesetzt" ("Dramatische Form") and "Der Mensch ist Gegenstand der Untersuchung"("Epische Form") she applies this idea

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[1] "On the Experimental Theatre", 554., in: Brecht (1993a), underlined by me; cf. Brecht: "Er (der Zuschauer) bekommt den Abbildern der Menschenwelt auf der Bühne gegenüber jetzt dieselbe Haltung, die er, als Mensch dieses Jahrhunderts, der Natur gegenüber hat.", "Über experimentelles Theater", 555.
[2] *The Age*, 31.1.59.
[3] "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre", 37, Willett (1964), 33-42. "Dieses Schema zeigt nicht absolute Gegensätze, sondern lediglich Akzentverschiebungen.", 78, in: Brecht (1991), 74-86.
[4] Once again, the translation of the title "Zu *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*" as "The Modern Theatre is Epic Theatre" adds to the confusion.

to the stage only and translates: "The character is a known quantity" and "The character is subjected to investigation".[1] Of course, Brecht's ideological convictions influenced his characters on stage, but he ultimately wanted these changes to be connected to a transformation of man as a member of society in real life. This translation also makes it difficult to see Brecht's logical development to "Man unchangeable" ("Dramatic Form") and "Man who can change and make changes" ("Epic Form").

Anderson's table finishes by contrasting "The world as it is" ("Dramatic Form") with "The world as it is becoming" ("Epic Form"). But it omits Brecht's logical conclusion from this: "Was der Mensch tun soll / Seine Triebe" ("Dramatische Form") and "Was der Mensch tun kann / Seine Beweggründe" ("Epische Form").[2] Brecht's conclusion is of great importance for it recalls the 'old' theatre where the character is the site of conflict between nature and idea, between the shortcomings of human existence and a moral imperative. It opposes this view of theatre and the world to the 'new' theatre where man reacts to socially determined situations, but where critical insight into this situation allows him to take control.

The moral conflict of the 'old' theatre also comes into play when considering Anderson's translation of audience reactions which Brecht had added to the table. The original makes the audience of the 'epic theatre' say: "So darf man es nicht machen." Anderson's version reads "People shouldn't do things like that." The original, however, implies the idea of how something is done to another person in a social context, thus questioning the circumstances and the way society is organised. Anderson's translation evokes rather the question of what is being done in the context of a failure of morally adequate behaviour.[3] Willett's translation from 1964 as "That's not the way" confirms this analysis.[4] Consequently, Anderson's world view as well as shortcomings in her knowledge of German led to a misleading interpretation of Brecht's ideas.

A similar misreading can be found in Mueller's translation of "Über experimentelles Theater".[5] In general, this translation helps the readers to familiarise themselves with Brecht's ideas, especially as this essay contains Brecht's explanation of *Verfremden* as

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[1] Brecht (1958), 302; underlined by me.
[2] "What man should do / His drives", "What man can do / his motives". When no other source is given, the translations are mine.
[3] Underlined by me.
[4] "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction", 71, in: Willett (1964), 69-77.
[5] In: Brecht (1993a), 540-557; "On the experimental Theatre", Brecht (1961 (September)).

"*Historisieren*":

> Verfremden heißt Historisieren, heißt Vorgänge und Personen als historisch, also als vergänglich darstellen. Dasselbe kann natürlich auch mit Zeitgenossen geschehen, auch ihre Haltungen können als zeitgebunden, historisch oder vergänglich dargestellt werden".[1]

But like Anderson, Mueller approaches Brecht's ideas from a moral point of view. This becomes obvious when Mueller needs to define the purpose of Brecht's theatre: "Das Theater legt ihm [dem Zuschauer] nunmehr die Welt vor zum Zugriff." This sentence needs to be interpreted with Brecht's ideological position in mind . Mueller, however, translates it as: "The theatre now spreads the world in front of him to take hold of and use for his own good"[2] , thus evoking the idea of a 'morally good' behaviour.

In summary, the translations analysed so far show three factors which have influenced the interpretations of Brecht's work: the world views or ideological positions of the translators, the theatrical norms of the Australian stage and the simple inexpertise in German. The importance of Australian expectations of theatre have been demonstrated earlier and will be taken up again in the case studies. The analysis of the translations has also shown that, consciously or not, the translators naturalised Brecht's text, altering their meaning so that they would fit in with their own world views and attitudes. Ultimately, this has led to a de-politicisation of Brecht's work and to a tendency to isolate the theatrical elements from his political ideas. The following case studies will show how much this is influenced by the political background of the time by examining reactions to individual performances within their historical context.

2.4 Brecht and political theatre in Australia

So far, the background information for the case studies has concentrated on the theatrical aspects of his work. It has been pointed out, though, that a close connection exists between the aesthetic side of his work and his ideology.

Although Brecht never joined the Communist Party, from the late 1920s he always saw himself as an exponent of Marxist ideas and was perceived as such. The presentation of Brecht's theories has shown that Brecht's Marxist beliefs and his theories on theatre are intrinsically linked. However, during the reception process these two elements have been

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[1] Brecht (1993a), 554-555; "The process of alienation, then, is the process of historifying, of presenting events and persons as historical, and therefore as ephemeral. The same, of curse, may happen to our contemporaries, their attitudes may also be presented as ephemeral, historical, and evanescent.". Brecht (1961 (September)), 14.

[2] Brecht (1961 (September)), 15.

repeatedly separated. The political reception of Brecht cannot be assessed without taking into account Australian political history.

In many cases, the reception does not show an open conflict between Brecht's political convictions and his reception as a playwright. One of the reasons is a recurring feature of the reception of Brecht, which was especially strong before political theatre became widely acceptable in Australia; theatre practitioners and critics tended to use isolated aesthetic elements of Brecht's theories thus neglecting the strong link between his political and aesthetic ideas.[1] As shown earlier, a tendency to tone down Brecht's political message already existed in early translations like the one by Anderson published in *Meanjin* in 1958. A year later, the publication of Martin Esslin's book *Brecht: A Choice of Evils* reinforced the tendency to consider Brecht as a good playwright despite his politics and to 'tame' Brecht, the political playwright. Esslin expresses a judgement underlying many early reviews when he says:

> It is nevertheless remarkable how far Brecht succeeded in keeping the dead hand of orthodoxy and Marxist conformism out of his work. Whenever he failed to do it, he failed as a writer (...).[2]

As a consequence, many scholars and critics have distinguished between the *Lehrstücke* and the 'humanist' plays of Brecht's middle period like *Galileo, Mother Courage, The Good Person of Szechwan* and the slightly later *Caucasian Chalk Circle.*[3] Esslin himself applies this distinction when describing Brecht's "greatest plays":

> When he [Brecht] deals with human problems on the basis of his marvellously keen eye for human nature and human behaviour the sociological bias of his Marxist standpoint only adds spice and interest. The real content of these plays, moreover, does not spring from the conscious level but from the creative subconscious of a great poet.[4]

Like many critics and translators, Esslin distorts Brecht by reverting to traditionally accepted concepts which fit in with his own world view, in this case by using the idea of a quasi romantic inspiration which is stronger than the playwright's own political intentions.

In Australia, a change of attitude in this respect is closely linked to the development of alternative theatre companies and political theatre. An Australian political theatre with a

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[1] Similarly, when reviewing productions of Dürrenmatt's plays, such as *The Visist* under Doris Fitton's direction, some critics' interpretations showed a strong emphasis on moral components and a neglect of audiences' exposure to contemporary topics as well as issues more or less directly related to recent historical events. Cf. my analysis of the production.
[2] Esslin (1959), 213.
[3] Cf. Brooker (1988), 182 and Germanou (1982), 213.
[4] Esslin (1959), 176.

broad audience did not exist in the 1950s and early 1960s.[1] The exception was the New Theatre which was closely associated with the Communist Party and thus did not represent a mainstream movement.[2]

A broader use of theatre as a means of political expression evolved with the establishment of alternative theatres such as La Mama Theatre in 1967 and the rise of the Australian Performing Group in Melbourne and Nimrod Theatre Company in Sydney in the early 1970s. This was embedded in the general change of political climate following the student revolt in the late 1960s and the controversies concerning the Vietnam War. At this time the aesthetic and political elements in Brecht's theories on theatre were clearly combined in the reception process. However, even during the Brecht boom in the late 1970s, some directors and critics continued to reduce his plays to the storyline and to consider Brecht as a classic without political impact.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall it is communism itself which has fallen into disrepute and those directors who put on Brecht's plays in spite of this either ignore the political implications of his work or endeavour to interpret them in a light which emphasises personal politics rather than claims to universality. In summary, there was only a short period when Brecht's political message was taken up whole-heartedly and when his plays were chosen because of their political content.

3. BEGINNINGS - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE LATE 1950S

The first of Brecht's plays staged in Australia was *Señora Carrara's Rifles*.[3] It was performed in New South Wales by the leftist theatre group New Theatre in 1939, probably as an intellectual support for the Spanish Republic. However, this was rather an exception than the start of a series of performances. Brecht was only genuinely discovered in the late 1950s, after his death.

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[1] Similarly, West Germans were reluctant to embrace the political message of Brecht's plays during the Cold War. Cf. Schneider (1979), 26, Völker (1990), 63.

[2] The isolation of New Theatre in the 1950s is revealed by the fact that in some places, newspapers refused to publish their advertising and to review their productions, cf.: Parsons and Chance (1995), 200. The performance of *Señora Carrara's Rifles* in 1939 had probably not been perceived as threatening because as Katharine Brisbane and John McCallum express it, during the 1930s and 1940s "the work of leftist theatre groups was seen largely as intellectual exercise and not political subversion". K. Brisbane, J. McCallum, "Criticism and Journalism", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 172.

[3] This was followed in 1941 by *The Informer*. The press refused to review the performances at the New Theatre on political grounds, cf. Serle (1987), 197.

3.1 Characteristics of the 1950s, interest in Brecht

An overview of the political history of the 1950s is valuable because it provides possible political reasons why Brecht was not performed until the late 1950s apart from productions by New Theatre.

The 1950s were marked by two events. Firstly, the Menzies' government held a referendum in 1951 in which Australians decided on whether the Constitution should be amended in order to allow the government to ban the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and to make laws about communism. The referendum showed a divided society: 50.6 per cent of the voters were against the Bill, 49.4 per cent for it. On the one hand, this was a positive result because, as Bernie Taft puts it, "Australia had rejected the model of McCarthyism which was then dominating the United States"[1]. On the other hand, he acknowledges that nearly half of the voters had supported a referendum which would have restricted democratic rights and liberties in Australia.[2] The fear of communism was reinforced by the perceived Soviet threat, the Korean War and McCarthyism in the United States. Taft relates that all these factors contributed to an atmosphere of intolerance and even hysteria in Australian society.[3]

The second event was the 'Petrov -affair' in 1954 which reinforced this political climate. Following the desertion of Vladimir Petrov, the third secretary of the Russian Embassy in Canberra, a royal commission was appointed to investigate the systematic espionage and attempted subversion in Australia which Petrov had revealed to the Australian authorities. According to Taft, "the royal commission dominated the Australian political stage during 1954, and contributed to the public atmosphere of intolerance and suspicion".[4]

Yet, during this time, the Australian Labor Party was not unimportant in Australian politics. In the mid-fifties and the early sixties, it was close to winning federal elections twice. In 1954, public opinion polls showed that the Liberals were likely to be defeated in the pending federal elections, but the 'Petrov-affair' helped Menzies to win the election.[5] The second time that Menzies' power was threatened was in 1961 when unemployment was 2.1 percent, an unacceptable figure in those days, after the November 1960 credit squeeze

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[1] Taft (1994), 69.
[2] For example, any person who had been declared a communist could appeal to the High Court but the onus was on him to prove that this was not the case, cf. Carroll (1977) 77.
[3] Taft (1994), 72.
[4] Taft (1994), 73.
[5] Taft (1994), 72f.; Carroll (1977), 102.

had started a series of company crashes. Menzies only retained power by the narrowest margin of one seat.[1] The power of the social democratic forces were also weakened by internal rows and a split in the mid-1950s.

However, the election results did not signify that all Australians identified with bourgeois values and a complacent life style. As Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett report in the book *Seizures of Youth. The Sixties and Australia*, bourgeois morality was already under attack back through the supposedly complacent 1950s: "The sixties' protest culture can be seen to have emerged directly from the beatnik subcultures of the late 1950s".[2]

This is confirmed by an article in *The Age*. Its author points to the fact that in "the relatively palmy days of 1961 (...) leading Australian churchmen were starting to worry about the perceived connection between the slackening of 'morals' in young people and the increasing popularity of leftist political ideals".[3] In July of that year, the Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia, Dr Gough, alleged that atheism, 'self-expression' and 'free-love' were being taught at Sydney University, and that "this threw the door 'wide open' to Communism."[4]

This indicates that the label 'Communism' exceeded its strict political meaning and was applied to any kind of non-conformist and thus challenging behaviour in a wider sense. It shows at the same time that a wind of change was in the air.

This was the climate which shaped the reception of Brecht in a political sense.

As far as cultural history is concerned, the time was influenced by the phenomenon known as 'cultural cringe', a term that had been coined by Arthur A. Phillips a year earlier[5], which described Australians' intimidation by, and subservience to, Anglo-Saxon, or in respect to theatre, to Anglo-Celtic culture.[6] It is assumed to have flourished at least up to the early or mid 1960s, or until the end of the pre-Whitlam years (1972); there are claims

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[1] Carroll (1977), 209.
[2] Gerster and Bassett (1991), 40.
[3] Gerster and Bassett (1991), 40. No date or name provided.
[4] *The Age*, 14.7.61, no name given.
[5] Cf. Phillips.
[6] Cf. Bassett (1994), 81, Pearsall (1998), 2014; The influence of Irish playwrights should not be neglected. Louis Esson for example, was influenced by the Abbey Theatre as well as by W.B. Yeats and J. M. Synge.

that it even did not loose its effects up until today.[1] As far as theatre criticism is concerned, the influence of the cultural cringe can be detected clearly in the early reviews.

The other factor which influenced Australian society and culture decisively was the Australian postwar migration scheme which brought almost 2.5 million migrants to Australia between 1948 and 1959.[2]

For Australian theatre, the fifties were an important period because non-commercial professional theatre developed. The play that shaped the new Australian theatre, at least in retrospect, was Ray Lawler's *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll.* With the performance of Lawler's play at the Union Theatre Repertory Company (UTCR) in 1955, Australian Theatre had reached the first mile-stone on its quest for identity. *The Doll*, as it was often referred to later, brought Australian accent and content to the stage. What is even more important for the reception of Brecht, is the fact that *The Doll* was theatre in naturalistic style which was extremely successful and which, through this success, reinforced the theatrical norms of naturalism. The main difference in the predominant Australian expectations towards theatre at the time and Brecht's theories is exposed in the following quote describing a performance of *The Doll*. The critic of *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated: "a miracle happened. The theatre disappeared"[3], thus indicating that the audience had been entirely absorbed by the illusion on stage. It bears repeating that Brecht, however, wanted to avoid exactly this. He stated:

> The illusion created by the theatre must be a partial one, in order that it may always be recognised as an illusion. Reality, however complete, has to be altered by being turned into art, so that it can be seen to be alterable and be treated as such.[4]

Three years after the breakthrough of *The Doll*, Australians showed an interest in Brecht's plays. In 1958, *Mother Courage* and *The Threepenny Opera*[5] were performed in German, followed by two English productions in the following year, a professional performance of *The Threepenny Opera* and an amateur production of *The Caucasian Chalk*

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[1] Cf. in the order of reference: Hume (1993), 1; Phillips (1958), 89-96; Davis (1997), 184-207. The 2000 Melbourne Writers' Festival marked "Sixty Years of Meanjin" through discussing "whether Cultural Cringe [was] a thing of the past". The discussion showed that globalisation has affected the cultural cringe in the sense that a greater number of cultural centres all over the world have replaced the dominance of London and New York. (27.8.00)

[2] McDonald (1999a), 4.

[3] *SMH*, 14.1.56.

[4] In: "From the Mother Courage Model", 219, in: Willett (1964), 215-222.

[5] By the *Kleines Wiener Theater* in Sydney.

Circle[1]. The fact that three out of the four productions took place at university shows that, like in the productions of plays by other German-speaking playwrights[2], universities played an important role in the Australian reception of Brecht's plays.

The first two productions that will be analysed are the 1958 performance of *Mother Courage and her Children* in German by the Department of German Languages under the direction of Heinz Wiemann, and Wal Cherry's 1959 production in English of *The Threepenny Opera*. They are interesting for the chronological development of the reception because they show the approach of academics towards Brecht at this early reception time and the way in which the first professional production introduced Brecht to Australian audiences. Both productions represent a first encounter with Brecht and his ideas.

Their interest in Brecht was embedded in a growing general Australian interest in Brecht in the late 1950s, including at universities, leading to the proclamation "The Brecht revolution has reached Melbourne".[3] At Melbourne University, which was to develop the first professional theatre company in Australia, the discussion about Brechtian theatre was made public through its student magazine, *Farrago*. In 1958, when *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* were staged almost simultaneously, the interest in Brecht and his work reached a first high point. This is reflected by an article by Toni van Vliet providing detailed information on Brecht's work embedded in biographical information. He put Brecht's political convictions into an historical context and explained their influence on Brecht's work.[4]

As the discussions about Brecht and his work were limited to the staff and students of Melbourne University, it is important that the more widely read literary magazine *Meanjin*[5], published by the same university, printed Edith Anderson's translation "Theatre for Learning" in the same year. As shown earlier, this article had an enormous influence on the reception of Brecht in Australia.

As far as literary history is concerned, Australia's interest followed the United States,

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[1] By the Marlowe Society in Melbourne. The programme notes only list the actors' names and do not provide any information on intention, performance style etc.
[2] Cf. my analysis of early university productions of German classics and plays by Frisch and Dürrenmatt.
[3] Author's name not given. *Farrago*, vol.34, no13, 15.7.58; cf. also: Personal letter by Heinz Wiemann, 18.7.96.
[4] *Farrago*, vol.34, no13, 15.7.58.
[5] Brecht (1958).

where a more positive reception of Brecht began in 1954[1],and in Britain in 1956 when *Mother Courage* was performed by the Berliner Ensemble.

Consequently, a touch of novelty was attached to Brecht and his theories. This might have also enticed Bruce Grant, theatre critic for *The Age*, to attend the *Mother Courage* production by the staff and students of Melbourne University's Department of German Languages and to write a review about it. Normally, performances by non-mainstream theatres in Australia were not reviewed, but Grant attached special importance to this performance as it was "the first time Brecht, already established in theatres, both East and West of the Iron Curtain, has [had] been produced in Australia".[2]

The first productions were directed towards understanding Brecht's work and trying to produce elements of a style that was perceived as being Brechtian. This is where the characteristics of the Australian theatre scene play a role, such as the predominance of naturalistic style and the reluctance to produce performances which were politically engaged. In addition, the problems connected to the first translations of Brecht's theories into English, including those connected to the term *Verfremdung*, show their effect.

3.2 *Heinz Wiemann's production of* Mother Courage *(1958)*

Performances in the German language and at the German departments of Australian universities were closely connected to the emerging Australian theatre scene and thus made an important contribution to Australian theatre.[3]

Looking at the programme notes for *Mother Courage* and applying the criteria of political and aesthetic reception, it can be stated that the emphasis lay on the latter. The political component was mentioned only within the short biography contained in the introduction. However, the close link of Brecht as "a professed Communist"[4] and the implications for his theatre were not brought up in the programme notes. Thus, this academic introduction of Brecht to Australian audiences can be called representative for the approach to Brecht in the years to come. Brecht became de-politicised apart from the

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[1] Cf. (Weber, 1993), 171.

[2] *The Age*, 11.7.58. Thus he neglected earlier performances by the New Theatre and the *Kleines Wiener Theater* as well as the simultaneous production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

[3] Writing about the development of the Melbourne theatre scene in the 20th century, Peter Fitzpatrick stated that "the most significant force in the city's theatrical life emerged from the University of Melbourne.". Parsons and Chance (1995).

[4] Programme notes.

occasional reference to his biography.[1]

Accordingly, the author of the notes, who was not named, only ascribed a "revolutionary" aspect to the aesthetic side of "Brecht's theory of drama".[2] However, he or she was aware of how strongly Brecht's approach contrasted with contemporary audience expectations:

> He [Brecht] declared war on the ideas that the theatre represents a magical world from which one may escape from the worries of the day. Instead he aimed at shocking his audience into an awareness of reality.[3]

The author of the programme notes refrained from taking an explicit stand in this 'war' of theatrical convictions, but the fact that one of Brecht's plays was being staged makes the position clear.

The only technical term of Brecht's theories that was mentioned is 'epic theatre' with relation to the montage-style of his plays. Terms such as *Verfremdung* and *Gestus* were not introduced. One reason for this might be that, at the time, translations of Brecht's theories were not readily available in English yet. Thus, the approach of this early production of *Mother Courage* emphasised the performance of the play rather than the theories. The fact that the programme notes were entirely in English and provided an English synopsis of the action allowed English speaking spectators to follow at least parts of the performance.

This is also how the critic Bruce Grant from *The Age* followed the performance, which is not unlike the situation of the London performance of the Berliner Ensemble two years earlier.[4]

In his review, Grant related the performance back to a traditional form of drama where the protagonist is opposed to the forces of destiny. Therefore he called Mother Courage a "symbol of the virtue of survival".[1] Grant attached some social relevance to the play, but he still thought that Brecht aimed at portraying a social situation in its status quo rather than laying bare its conditions which would allow for change. According to Grant the "idea - that art which does not tell us how to survive, is ultimately frivolous - is central to Brecht's

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[1] Michael Schneider reported a similar tendency in West Germany in the 1950s: "Brechts Stücke mußten im Westen allerdings erst gegen einen antikommunistischen Brecht-Boykott durchgesetzt werden." For the GDR, he noted: Der Stückeschreiber avancierte "in der DDR, vor allem durch die Aufführungen des Berliner Ensembles, schon bald zum neuen sozialistischen Klassiker".. in: Schneider (1979), 26; cf. also: Völker (1990), 63: "Brecht's choice of the GDR effectively produced a boycott of his works in FRG during the Cold War mentality of the 1950s: people shied away from the political ramifications of the works of this Communist poet, who lived in that other Germany."

[2] Programme notes.

[3] Programme notes.

[4] As the Berliner Ensemble performed in German most London critics over-emphasised the visual aspects of the performance. The Melbourne production differs in so far as it was an amateur production.

philosophy." Grant mistook Brecht's play as a manual for everyday life rather than interpreting it as an invitation to look for necessary changes to social and political factors which might have caused Mother Courage's misery. Thus he continued to consider a performance as a self-contained presentation which leaves reality outside the theatre untouched. His misunderstanding indicates that the discussion in *Farrago* did not extend its influence to the general public. If Grant had read van Vliet's article, he would have been aware of Brecht's "uncanny force of making people think"[2] rather than presenting unchangeable facts.

The way it is, Grant interpreted Brecht's theatrical theories within the framework of the theatrical norms he was used to. This corresponds to the reception of many translators who altered the meaning of Brecht's texts so that they would fit in with their own world views and attitudes which did not allow them to reach a full understanding of the aesthetic and political consequences of Brecht's theories.

3.3 Wal Cherry's production of The Threepenny Opera *(1959)*

In the history of the Australian reception of Brecht, the first milestone was Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for the UTCR in 1959.[3] As the first professional performance in English, it introduced Australian audiences to Brecht and received reviews by the major newspapers of the time.

Thus, Cherry's interpretation of Brecht's theories and critics' reactions towards the performance play a crucial role in the reception process. The reactions range from interpretations of Brechtian theories, which are strongly affected by the predominant Australian theatrical norms, to more comprehensive readings, where, in one case, the critic was no longer using the parameters of traditional drama.

It bears repeating that, at the time of Cherry's production, some of Brecht's ideas had become available in Australia through Anderson's translation of "Theatre for Learning", published in 1958. In 1959, John Willett's *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*[4] and Martin Esslin's *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*[1] were published. Cherry himself had seen the Berliner Ensemble during his study tour of theatre in Europe.

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[1] *The Age*, 11.7.58.
[2] *Farrago*, vol.34, no13, 15.7.58.
[3] The programme notes do not give the name of the translator.
[4] Cf. Willett (1964).

Although it would appear that the general state of information of Brecht had improved in 1959 and the political atmosphere was relaxed, retrospective assessments of critics in the 1970s and 1980s show that Cherry took a risk when he decided to mount a play by Brecht after his return from Europe.[2] This judgement can be understood when considering the predominance of naturalistic and entertaining theatre at the time and the conservative attitude of the UTCR.[3] However, the majority of the contemporary newspaper reviews show that *The Threepenny Opera* was not rejected. As this is one of the rare cases where audience figures are available, it can be taken into account that the audience attendance was not low. Thus, retrospective reviews show a greater awareness of the clash between a performance of a play by Brecht and theatrical norms than did their colleges at the time. At the time of performance, audiences and critics seemed to be ready to be introduced to aspects of Brecht's work despite this clash of expectations.

Political level

It is difficult to judge Cherry's exact position regarding Brecht's ideology without having seen his production because he did not take a direct political stand in the written material available, such as the programme notes. However, in an article he wrote shortly after he had seen performances by the Berliner Ensemble, entitled "Brecht's Theatre in East Berlin", he characterised Brecht's plays as being "concerned with man's political awareness" and added "but man is more than politically aware".[4] Thus, Cherry did not entirely reject Brecht's political commitment, but he did not seem to be ready to adopt it fully either.

In selecting *The Threepenny Opera*, Cherry chose a play, whose political component has been frequently toned down throughout its performance history. This reinforces the perception that Cherry's interest in Brecht was at least not primarily political.

At first sight, he seems to grant an important role to the political content of the play in the programme notes for *The Threepenny Opera* because he noted in accordance with Brecht:

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[1] Esslin (1959).

[2] Cf. Leonard Radic's obituary in *The Age*, 10.3.1986: "Wal Cherry's program was adventurous. For example, he introduced Brecht to Melbourne audiences with a production of *The Threepenny Opera*."; cf. also Hutton (1975), 40-41: "Some playgoers took fright [because Cherry produced a play by Brecht], and I have been told that Cherry gave his public nothing but Brecht in his last season with the company. In fact, record shows that he produced only one Brecht play".

[3] Cf. Peter Fitzpatrick on the MTC, the successor of the UTCR, in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 354: "Its detractors have seen in it a mixture or social conservatism and theatrical imperialism, and a tendency to conform to the English repertory model at the expense of challenging forms of theatre from other cultures and of local writing in particular."

[4] *The Age*, 5.7.58.

> Brecht took Gay's plot, and many of his characters, and by placing them in the world of contemporary business methods, proceeded to infer that there were many similarities between the laws which govern the activities of beggars and criminals and the laws which govern the world of morality and commerce.[1]

However, the power of this interpretation is weakened because Cherry did not apply it to the contemporary conditions in Australia. Instead of reinforcing the political statement, he undercut it in the following anticlimactic sentence: "It [*The Threepenny Opera*] is a bitter stabbing work, a true play of the underdog, an opera for the poor."[2]

While the first part of the sentence was still powerful, the last reduced the impact of Brecht's political commitment in favour of broader - and thus more widely acceptable - humanist aims, a way of seeing Brecht which was not unlike Esslin's interpretation above. The critic of *The Age* interpreted the last part of the sentence accordingly and elaborated it as follows: "John Gay's 18th century Beggar's Opera is turned into a modern opera for the poor, a bitter lecture on loving the destitute."[3]

Phrasing it emphatically, one could say that the image of Brecht as Communist[4] had been obscured and been metamorphosed into Brecht the Humanist. Once again, Brecht's political intentions were interpreted in a way which allowed the reader and spectator to comfortably adapt the play to their own world views.

The middle part of Cherry's sentence, "a true play of the underdog", served the same purpose. Although the expression 'underdog' originates in the America of the 1900s[5], it is a term close to Australians because it has a strong connection to the 'Australianist legend'[6], which can be traced to the support system of convicts transported to Australia. Dennis Carroll, in his book *Australian Contemporary Drama*, refers to "the 'mateship' or brotherhood of working men" as "an especially hallowed relationship"[7] and many people would still regard this as valid today.[8]

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[1] Cf.: "Was ist ein Dietrich gegen eine Aktie, was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gruendung einer Bank?", *Die Dreigroschenoper*, 305, in: Brecht (1988a), 229-392.
[2] Programme notes.
[3] *The Age* Theatre Critic (no name given), *The Age*, 10.1.1959.
[4] Although *The Threepenny Opera* is not a Marxist *Lehrstück*, its content shows a considerable amount of criticism towards capitalist society. Brecht had read *Das Kapital* two years before he wrote this work.
[5] Cf. Barnhart (1988), 1184.
[6] Cf.: H.G. Kippax (about Douglas Stewart's *Ned Kelly*): "Here all the birds in the bush of the 'Australianist' legend come home to roost - the underdog and his fight against society (...)"15, in: Kippax (1963).
[7] Carroll (1995), 4.
[8] Australian comedian Rod Quantock noted about his latest show in the context of economic rationalism: "I get very nostalgic and angry and depressed. (...) We are losing a lot of things: mateship, egalitarianism, then there's the fact that 30 per cent of Australians live on or below the poverty line.", *The Age*, 10.6.98.

Although the underdog is closely connected to "his fight against society"[1], the subversive content of this expression is toned down because it is associated to "fighting against the odds"[2]. More importantly, the underdog is usually an individual - although sometimes helped by his 'mates' - who "has little status in society"[3] and who struggles against the hardship of life with the intention to survive and not with the intention to change social conditions. In this light, Bruce Grant's earlier critique of Mother Courage as the "symbol of the virtue of survival" can be seen as an interpretation of Brecht in the tradition of the Australianist legend. Thus Australians related well to Brecht's plays presenting working-class characters[4] without taking up the political message which Brecht attached to them.

By referring to the familiar expression of 'the underdog', Cherry not only appropriated Brecht's political message in terms of the 'Australianist legend', but he also toned down the message considerably thus avoiding being dismissed as a 'Communist' himself.

This was reinforced by the rest of the programme notes where Cherry took over Anderson's translations without modifying them. It bears repeating that the translation of "Der Mensch ist Gegenstand der Untersuchung"("Epische Form") as "The character is subjected to investigation"[5] suggests that any changes are restricted to the stage. Although Cherry also included the sentence "Man who can change and make changes" in the programme notes, he did not quote any of the passages presenting theatre as a means to change society such as "Was der Mensch tun kann / Seine Beweggründe" ("Epische Form")[6]. Again, this considerably weakened Brecht's political message.

Consequently, Cherry's attitude towards Brecht's strong political commitment remained ambiguous. Although he did not altogether neglect the political aspect of Brecht's theories, either he was unwilling or unable to embrace them to the full extent.

In an interview with Richard Morphett in 1966, Cherry phrased the political dimension of

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[1] Kippax (1963).

[2] Margaret Lee (Historian), in: *The Age*, 27.6.98, cf. also: Delbridge, Bernard, and als (1997), 2299: "the loser or expected loser in a competitive situation, fight etc." and Pearsall (1998), 2014: "a competitor thought to have little chance of winning a fight or combat".

[3] Pearsall (1998), 2014.

[4] Contemporary playwright Daniel Keene considers Australia "basically a blue-collar country, no matter how much people like to think we aren't" and writes his plays about "poor people". *The Melbourne Review*, 15.11.95.

[5] Brecht (1958), 302; underlined by me.

[6] "What man should do / His drives", "What man can do / his motives". Cf. Brecht (1958), 303: "The theatre entered the province of the philosophers (...) who wanted not only to explain the world but also to change it".

his theatrical work as follows:

> I am more interested in the theatre as a function of terrible work politics [sic] and society and the function of our educational system and the function of us as a people than I am in theatre as a showcase of what we would like to think we are like.[1]

Critics have interpreted the political message of *The Threepenny Opera* differently. Unfortunately, none of them stated directly how politically orientated the performance itself was. The political comments in the reviews refer to the play or to Brecht himself rather than to the performance. As stated already, *The Age* theatre critic described Brecht's intention within the framework of a humanist world view. But as with Cherry, his understanding of Brecht's political ideas was not free from ambiguity. On the other hand, the critic failed to realise the importance of Brecht's ideology as a basis for his aesthetic ideas. He listed what he called Brecht's "radical social philosophy" as part of the "comedy" together with "poetry, saucy satire about poverty, and (...) the tuneful ditties of Kurt Weill".[2] He failed to understand that, in Brechtian theatre, the juxtaposition of these different elements served the purpose of *Verfremdung* enabling the spectator to look at Macheath's story critically instead of becoming involved.

On the one hand, he reported how, as a spectator, he felt "intellectually uneasy" after the performance. This could be interpreted as the description of a bad conscience within a philanthropic world view. It could be the case also that the plays offered him some kind of critical insight, which would come closer to Brecht's intention. He also noted that "*The Threepenny Opera* is a play partly out of its time, written for anything but a comfortably fed Australian audience."[3] This observation supports the idea that the performance achieved Brecht's aims at least partly. It is all the more important as it anticipates the demand for relevant performances which only began to become important from the late 1960s onwards.

M. Skipper[4], the theatre critic of *The Bulletin*, which was conservative during the late 1950s[1], did make the point that Brecht's ideology is the underlying principle of his ideas for the stage. However, he did not explain how this principle actually works and merely used it to dismiss Brecht. He chose the following pejorative phrasing to reject Brecht: "The

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[1] Morphett (1966).
[2] *The Age*, 10.1.59.
[3] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine an unadapted play in which many characters are beggars to have a big impact on a society which, according to Barry Humphries, can be characterised by the motto "24 hours of sunshine", in: McDonald (1999a), 2. Ironically, one year later the credit squeeze caused a high level of unemployment which would have made the performance very topical.
[4] *The Bulletin*, 28.1.59. It is not clear whether the critic was female or male. As most critics at the time were men, the masculine forms will be used.

majority of Mr Brecht's views are Leftist and mostly old-fashioned at that."

One could conclude that Australian theatre critics were not ready or willing to accept Brecht as a political playwright if it were not for an article by Arthur Phillips. Except for a short reference to Cherry's production, Phillips did not review *The Threepenny Opera*; his intention was to explain "The influence of Brecht on modern theatre"[2]. Phillips did not only put Brecht's theories into an historical and international context, but he also explained how Brecht's ideology and his aesthetics are connected. Without mentioning the term *Verfremdung*, he explained how Brecht tried to avoid a "hypnotised audience" because "he wanted an audience which was prepared to learn". Phillips developed the idea of the stage as a platform for "social analysis" in a logical way:

> [Brecht] turned away from the traditional methods of creating illusion, of lulling the audience into the suspension of disbelief. His stage became virtually a platform, or rather, ceased to conceal the fact that it was a platform. On it a process of social analysis was conducted.

Through criticising the theatre of illusion for leading to escapism and lacking social analysis, Phillips is the only critic to fully embrace Brecht's political message. However, he did not go so far as to apply Brecht's criticism of society directly to Australian conditions of the time. The fact that he 'was hiding' behind the neutral style of presenting the ideas of another person could point to the fact that, like Cherry, Phillips wanted to avoid being directly associated with a playwright who supported Marxist ideas. He wrote:

> [Brecht] was convinced that the theatre of his day was being used to soothe the audience into the acceptance of established, and false, social conventions, to lay a flattering function to the soul of an organically diseased society.

It was up to the reader whether to apply this criticism to Australia's theatre and the political conditions of the time or not.

Aesthetic level

When comparing the programme notes for *Mother Courage* in 1958 with Cherry's programme notes for *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959, two similarities become apparent. The only technical Brechtian term they both use is 'epic theatre' and both oppose it to the theatre of illusion. This indicates a similar state of information. It also confirms the strong influence of the theatre of illusion explained earlier. Cherry' s definition of 'epic theatre' reads as follows:

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[1] Personal interview with Bernie Taft, 28.12.98.
[2] *The Age*, 31.1.59.

> Epic theatre removes any attempt at illusion from the stage. The audience is not caught up in the suspense of the development of the plot or the revelation of the character, but is asked to observe. The purpose of coming to the theatre is to observe the artistry of the actor in his revelation of what the writer had to say.[1]

The beginning of this definition corresponds to Brecht's theories. However, the idea of the actor revealing the playwright's message skilfully and the audience appreciating this skill does not match Brecht's theories and comes as a surprise in this context. For Brecht, skilful acting was not an art to be admired for its own sake; it was ultimately purpose-orientated and fitted into the general idea of provoking change. The audience was meant to be too busy thinking about what was happening on stage and looking for alternatives to be carried away by admiration for the actors' artistry.

Thus, the last sentence asking the audience "to observe the artistry of the actor in his revelation of what the writer had to say" must be rather directed towards audience behaviour in Australian theatre of the time than to 'epic theatre'. Therefore, Cherry used his interpretation of Brechtian theatre to indirectly criticise the conditions of contemporary Australian theatre.[2]

When Cherry explained in the programme notes how Brecht avoids illusion, a similar observation can be made. Cherry described Brechtian theatre as follows:

> Immediately, one considers the stage as a platform on which the actor acts and does not pretend to be something which he is not and the auditorium as a place where the audience actively participates with full awareness of what is being said and done, the theatre reaches something like glory.

Presumably, this description of Brechtian acting style refers to the actors stepping out of their role. Like the quotation above, this definition of Brechtian theatre implies an indirect criticism of the state of Australian theatre. By enumerating the characteristics which make Brecht's theatre reach "glory", Cherry shows what, in his eyes, Australian theatre lacks.

Cherry's criticism is of general importance because it provides a personal insight into the state of Australian theatre at the time. Cherry elaborated on his criticism of Australian theatre in two articles, entitled "Snobs and Middle-Class Misfits in the Theatre" and "Brecht's Theatre in East Berlin"[3]. "Snobs and Middle-Class Misfits in the Theatre"[1] was published in the same month that *The Threepenny Opera* was performed. It dealt with

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[1] Programme notes.

[2] Cherry reused the term 'artistry' in a description of the ideal spectator (*The Age*, 17.1.59) as the "theatre lover (...) who does not seek sensationalism, but craftsmanship and artistry". The similarity in those two definitions confirms that Cherry used the explanation of Brechtian theatre quoted above as a vehicle to voice his criticism of contemporary theatre.

[3] *The Age*, 5.7.58.

audiences' tastes in Australia. The title gives the impression that Cherry might have had a strong political commitment. However, as already uncovered in the analysis of Cherry's political attitude, this impression proves wrong. Cherry did not suggest that "snobs and the middle-class misfits get out of the theatre" for political reasons, but because they did not appreciate skilful acting and good plays.[2]

In the article "Brecht's Theatre in East Berlin", published six months earlier, Cherry voiced his criticism of Australian performing and acting style. He blamed Australian theatre for having half adopted the English tradition of "the well-made play and the exploration of character" and the American influence of the entertainment industry, without having developed a coherent Australian acting style itself. According to Cherry, acting had "become a naturalistic orchestration of the wit and the word," and was associated with "claptrap" and "make-believe-I'm-a-fairy".[3]

To Cherry, Brecht's theatre offered what he called "the opposites"[4] of local theatre. In "Brecht's Theatre in East Berlin" he described how, as a spectator, he followed well rehearsed and skilfully presented performances. He came to the conclusion "that some of the ideas which Brecht crystallised are exactly what we need to infuse a new strength into the Western tradition of exploring the individual man".[5] As I have pointed out, in the context of "a true play of the underdog", the idea of exploring the individual relates back to traditional drama rather than to Brecht, who intended to show the social and political context the individual was embedded in. Similarly, a theatre which is attended by audiences "to observe the artistry of the actor in his revelation of what the writer had to say"[6] does not necessarily have to stage Brecht's plays. This role could be fulfilled by any traditional play with a theatrical message that is well performed and received.

Consequently, Cherry interpreted Brecht's theories in a special light. When considering Brechtian theatre as a kind of remedy against the ills of Australian theatre, Cherry's way of

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[1] *The Age*, 17.1.59.

[2] Regarding audiences' tastes, cf. my analysis of early productions of plays by playwrights other than Brecht.

[3] In his speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival, Kosky reiterated Cherry's criticism of 'make-believe' acting when describing some productions of plays by Shakespeare. However, Kosky was more positive regarding the general quality of Australian acting.

[4] "Brecht's Theatre (...)".

[5] To a certain degree, Cherry's reaction corresponds to the role the Berliner Ensemble played for many young directors from West Germany in the mid 60s. Klaus Völker describes how "the Berliner Ensemble gradually became a theatrical Mecca", in: Völker (1990), 64.

[6] Programme notes for *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959.

receiving Brecht's work corresponds to a form of intercultural exchange in theatre described by Erika Fischer-Lichte. Using the example of the cultural exchange between the theatres of East Asia and Europe at the start of this century, she develops the following theory in "Vermittlung des Fremden oder produktive Rezeption?":

> Sie [die Entwicklung des Austausches] entsprang vielmehr einer spezifischen historisch-gesellschaftlichen Situation, in der sich die von der je eigenen Kultur überlieferten Modelle zur Lösung der anstehenden sozialen und ästhetischen Probleme als unzureichend und untauglich erwiesen. Die neue Form der interkulturellen Inszenierung sollte die Funktion erfüllen, durch produktive Rezeption bestimmter Elemente aus fremden Kulturen Strategien zur Lösung der konkreten Probleme in der eigenen Kultur zu entwickeln.[1]

Similarly, Cherry focused on selected elements of Brecht's theories, such as the freedom from the illusions and tendencies of escapism which, in his eyes, hindered the progress of Australian theatre. He also appreciated that Brecht had developed a coherent acting and staging method which was appreciated by his audiences. Therefore, Cherry considered Brechtian theatre as a means to enhance the quality and status of Australian theatre. Brechtian theatre was meant to act as a catalyst and thus help Australian theatre reach "something like glory".

Due to this function which Cherry ascribed to Brechtian theatre, he rejected those elements which did not correspond to his ideal concept of theatre. He summarised his criticism of Brechtian theatre in the last paragraph of "Brecht's Theatre in East Berlin": "Brecht over-emphasised the intellect and underestimated the emotions, his plays are concerned with man's political awareness, but man is more than politically aware."

Firstly, this remark confirms that Cherry did not adopt Brecht's political convictions. Secondly, it reinforces the impression that Cherry's concept is linked to traditional drama in many respects. Although Cherry had not been caught up in the misunderstanding that Brecht allegedly attempted to ban all emotion from the stage, he still would like to see a stronger audience involvement in his plays. Regarding the production of *Mother Courage* by the Berliner Ensemble, which he attended, he reproached that the spectators "are never encouraged to become immersed."[1] Ultimately, this means that Cherry rejected Brecht's concept of *Verfremdung*, which avoids audiences' complete immersion in order for them to gain a critical insight into social and political structures. At this stage, Cherry followed the

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[1]Fischer-Lichte (1991), 215. "It [this exchange] originated in a specific socio-historical situation, in which the traditional models of the 'home' culture proved to be inadequate and inappropriate for solving the social and aesthetic problems which it was facing. The new form of intercultural production was meant to provide strategies for solving concrete problems of the home culture through a productive reception of elements from foreign cultures."

world wide tendency to separate the political and the aesthetic aspect of Brecht's work, which has been exemplified by Esslin.[2] Cherry received only a few elements of Brecht's theories in isolation.

Given the fact that Cherry only accepted Brecht's theories to a limited degree, the question arises why Cherry chose Brechtian theatre as the model for Australian theatre rather than another playwright or theatre practitioner.

One reason for selecting Brechtian theatre is related to the favourable financial conditions the Berliner Ensemble enjoyed. Thus, Cherry begins and ends his article "Brecht's theatre" with admiration for the money spent on rebuilding theatres in Germany and the subsidies for the Berliner Ensemble. Like some British directors, Cherry was deeply impressed by the Ensemble's facilities.[3]

Another reason for Cherry's interest in Brecht was the fact that Brecht's theories represented a systematic approach towards all areas of theatre. Thus they presented a counter model to performances described by Cherry as an "orchestration" of various elements. This corresponds to the retrospective assessment of Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* by Australian scholar Peter Fitzpatrick: "Brecht represented a strong conceptual tradition. This was understood as an intrinsic critique of a culture they [the Australians] perceived as formless."

However, rather than feeling threatened by the Brechtian systematic approach, Cherry became inspired by it. Throughout his life, he tried to contribute to the systematic improvement of acting conditions, starting with The Union Theatre Drama School at Melbourne University.[4] In 1961, together with George Whaley, he proceeded to found his own ensemble, Emerald Hill. The project of a fully professional ensemble was an idea ahead of its time, especially as public subsidies had not yet been introduced.[1] He tried to 'educate' audiences through repertoires which were progressive for their time. In this way, the inspiration from the Berliner Ensemble turned out to be productive. As far as the Australian reception of Brecht is concerned, Cherry continued to make valuable contributions

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[1] "Brecht's Theatre (...)".

[2] My analysis of Cherry's collaboration with John Willett on *The Threepenny Opera* (1975) will illustrate how Cherry's interpretation of Brecht's work evolved.

[3] Maro Germanou describes George Devine's interest in a subsidised permanent company in: Germanou (1982). 211.

[4] Cherry wanted "to raise the standard of student drama, particularly on the technical side", *Farrago*, vol. 34, no.3, 28.3.58.

throughout his life. Amongst these were *Brecht on Brecht* for Emerald Hill in Melbourne in 1965, a production of the rarely staged *The Seven Deadly Sins*[2] in 1974 and collaborations with John Willett such as on another production of *The Threepenny Opera* 1975.[3] It will be seen that these productions reflect changes in Cherry's attitudes as a director which, to a large degree, mirror general developments in Australian theatre.

In summary, Cherry's reception of Brechtian theatre needs to be assessed in the context of the conditions of Australian theatre at that time. Since Cherry's main aim was the development and support of local theatre, his interest did not lie in Brecht's theories and theatre primarily. Although he respected them greatly he used them ultimately as a means for his own purposes. This resulted in Cherry's selective reading of Brecht's theories. Cherry's reception of Brecht also illustrates that Brecht's theories and performance practice and, in Cherry's case, Brecht's work at the Berliner Ensemble had an impact in Australia which exceeded the mere productions of plays and their reception by audiences and critics.

Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* served the purpose of introducing local audiences to Brecht. At the time, Cherry did not feel the need to adapt the play itself to contemporary audiences. As the question of relevance became important only a decade after Cherry's production[4], it is all the more surprising that the critic of *The Age* included this consideration already writing that *The Threepenny Opera* was "partly out of its time, written for anything but a comfortably fed Australian audience".[5] Without an adaptation, it is most likely that the first professional production of a play by Brecht in Australia ended up being a 'museum-piece'.[1]

When it comes to critics' reactions towards Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera*, the phenomenon of "cultural cringe" plays an important role. Cherry himself referred to it in his article "Snobs (...)" calling it "the national inferiority complex". He blamed the

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[1] Cf. Leonard Radic's comments in the obituary, *The Age*, 10.3.86.

[2] Cherry's production was performed for the opening of the Space at the Festival Theatre in Adelaide. The only other performance in Australia was with Marianne Faithful. It was conducted by Jason Osborn and performed at the concert hall of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in 1991.

[3] For New Opera South Australia.

[4] Moreover, my analysis of productions of Dürrenmatt's and Frisch's plays will show that, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a direct application of their content to local reality was still unthought of.

[5] *The Age*, 10.1.1959. Much later, the same contradiction was noticed when Simon Phillips directed the play at the Sydney Opera House. "Phillips (...) acknowledges the irony of presenting the work by the Marxist playwright to that most bourgeois of audiences (the STC's) in the most plush of venues.", *The Australian*, 26.8.94.

fact that Australians paid too much respect to American and English drama for a lack of Australian drama. Interestingly, Cherry himself must not have perceived Brecht as an unwanted influence from outside.[2]

The cultural cringe has clearly affected Skipper's review in *The Bulletin*.[3] However, Skipper showed the reverse of the overly reverential attitude to foreign influence by rejecting unwanted interference from outside. His rejection of Brecht was based on his view that Brecht was an 'outsider' who, like an imposter, claimed to have invented new theatrical ideas. Skipper granted himself a position of authority when he declared that Brecht's ideas for the theatre were not new.[4] His dismissal of 'epic theatre' seems overly casual. He called the 'epic theatre' "Great stuff!" and Brecht's theories "this trail-blazing German's notions, quirks and ambitions".[5]

This dismissal of Brecht's theories as "quirks" points to a deeper problem of understanding Brechtian theatre. This has two reasons. Firstly, Skipper's point of reference was the Australian naturalistic theatre of the late 1950s. Consequently, he made no attempt to understand Brecht's ideas as such but judged individual aesthetic devices against familiar norms. Secondly, Skipper separated the aesthetic means and the political intentions of Brecht's theories. This way they ceased to explain each other, the result being that many aesthetic devices appeared as superfluous, purposeless "quirks".

Skipper began his review of the performance by quoting from the table on "Dramatic Form" and "Epic Form", analysed previously. It is likely that he referred to Cherry's programme notes or Anderson's translation.

Skipper based his analysis on the sentence "This person's suffering shocks me, because there might be a way out for him. This is great art: nothing is self-evident. I laugh over the weeping. I weep over the laughing."[1] As this is the only quote Skipper used, it lost its context and Skipper interpreted the idea of "shock" in the traditional emotional sense instead of in the sense of an intellectually based indignation. He understood Brecht's

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[1] A year earlier, the *Kleines Wiener Theater* had adapted the play for their Sydney performance in the original language: "Unserer Aufführung liegt eine eigene dramaturgische Fassung zugrunde. Ein besonders geschaffener Rahmen soll die Lehre verdeutlichen, die das Stück verkündet.", Programme notes.
[2] My study of the Australian New Wave, especially the APG, will point to a similar attitude.
[3] *The Bulletin*, 28.1.59.
[4] As the "Kleine Liste der beliebtesten, landläufigsten und banalsten Irrtümer über das epische Theater" shows, he is not the only critic to express this reproach. cf. Brecht (1993b), 316; "A little private Tuition for my Friend Max Gorelik", in: Willett (1964), 163.
[5] *The Bulletin*, 28.1.59.

sentences against the background of naturalistic theatre, where a good performance required the audience's emotional involvement. This also involved the ideal of the spectators feeling compassion for fully rounded characters, which I have pointed out earlier. Once again, the performance did not fulfil Skipper's expectations and he dismissed the characters in *The Threepenny Opera* as "doll-like".[2]

As Skipper's thinking remained within a naturalistic framework he failed to realise that what he reproached the performance for was, to a certain degree, Brecht's aim. "*Threepenny Opera* is more often than not an intellectual experience. Its audience is simply not shocked. It is not moved."

Brecht's aim to make spectators look critically at what he presented to them on stage rather than complete emotional identification can be valued only if measured against his political objective of provoking change through critical awareness. As Skipper failed to do so, and as his yardstick for judging the success and validity of *Verfremdung* was the expectations of contemporary Australian audiences, he was bound to dismiss it.[1] Consequently, Skipper became the first Australian reviewer to criticise Brecht's theatre for what would be labelled later 'alienation', in the sense of lacking involvement and emotion.

However, one Australian critic took Brecht's own theories rather than contemporary theatrical norms as a point of reference for understanding Brecht's aesthetics. Arthur Phillips did just that in his article "The Influence of Brecht on Modern Theatre". The article shows that although no Australian theatre magazine existed at the time, an exchange amongst theatre critics took place. Phillips' article was an indirect reply to Skipper's accusation that Brecht's theatre does not have a sound structure and therefore does not work. Like Skipper, Phillips quoted the table on "Dramatic Form" and "Epic Form", taken from "Theatre for Learning" but he did so in depth, asking for the validity of this theory. He concluded: "Does it [the theory] develop a coherent logical structure? Clearly, I think, it does."

Phillips' own introduction to Brecht's theories made sense because he linked Brecht's

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[1] *The Bulletin*, 28.1.59.

[2] This description suggests that Skipper perceived what he saw as a lack of skill. I have pointed out, though, that true Brechtian acting style, though, goes beyond the rounding of a character in a given context, by endowing it with a commentary from the person who is playing it and by using different and contradictory perspectives. Regarding the importance of an acting style creating compassion cf. also my analysis of Doris Fitton's production of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*.

intentions to the formal aspects of Brecht's work. As far as technical terms are concerned, he only introduced 'epic theatre' in comments such as the above, but his explanation of Brechtian ideas was more complex. For instance, he connected the concept of *Verfremdung* to the idea of learning, just as Brecht did in the remaining parts of "Theatre for Learning" which had been neglected in the comments studied so far. He minimised the potential threat of Brecht's ideas by putting them into an historical context and by comparing them with concepts developed by Bernard Shaw. Phillips' article corresponded to the other reviews in so far as he introduced the term 'epic theatre' but did not mention the concept or term *Gestus*.

In short, Phillips was the only critic to give a comprehensive introduction into Brechtian theatre, explaining both political and aesthetic aspects of his work. Unlike his colleagues, he was open to a new theory on theatre rather than seeking to confirm the norms of Australian contemporary theatre connected to naturalism and the theatre of illusion.

Overall, the reactions toward the first professional production of *The Threepenny Opera* showed a strong influence of contemporary theatrical norms, as well as pointing to the first prejudices which have continued to mark the early reception of Brecht in Australia.

4. SEARCHES FOR APPROACHES - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S

4.1 Characteristics of the 1960s, interest in Brecht

The word which characterises this period is change. Changes took place on a political, social and cultural level. The large-scale post-War immigration to Australia had affected Australian society and culture, eroding "Anglo-Saxon notions of national and cultural identity"[2] and leading, gradually, to a multicultural society.

The economic growth during this period allowed Australians to continue a relatively undisturbed and secure lifestyle. For many, it was even a boom in prosperity with an increasing emphasis on materialism.[1] However, this steadiness was soon perceived by the younger generation as the bourgeois lifestyle of the parent generation. The older generation was seen as opposing the changes in society the younger generation was aiming at. Thus,

[1] The difference in audience expectations also becomes clear when Skipper defends the 'passive' attitude of traditional audiences, saying that "didactic theatre (...) must not expect too much of an audience."
[2] Carroll (1995), 7.

two contrasting groups of society and two opposing attitudes created a generation conflict.[2]

By the late 1960s, many young Australians "began to practise a brand of experimental, individualised politics which played with allied notions of revolutionary Marxism and uninhibited sexual expression".[3] Ultimately, the atmosphere of social unrest vented itself in the student movements. The protest against American and Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, centred on the university campuses, unified dispersed movements and came to symbolise the generation conflict and an opposition against bourgeois values. When, in 1969, the *Sun-Herald* interviewed a range of people in a weekly column, for people "who wanted to be 'with it' (...) being 'against the war' was a sign of integrity"[4].

John Docker describes how the opposition to the Vietnam war seemed to unleash a range of pent-up antagonism to established power structures in Australia. "The questioning of Australian political behaviour externally seemed to lead naturally to a questioning of Australian political and cultural life internally".[5] World political events like the 'Prague Spring' and the student and worker rising in Paris contributed to politicise artists and theatre practitioners.

Attitudes towards Britain were mixed. While the post-war generation "saw with dismay Britain's behaviour in the Suez crisis [and] the abandonment of the Commonwealth trade partnership to the European Economic Community"[6], cultural changes coming from Britain, such as The Beatles, were embraced with enthusiasm.

As far as the development of the arts is concerned, the 1960s can be considered as a transitional period which was not free from contradictions. In the late 1950s, the public changed its attitude towards the arts; according to Geoffrey Serle, "a decisive change in fashion and taste, a recognition that the arts *mattered*, became evident among the upper middle-class and the younger educated generation".[7] The benefits of this shift in attitude became obvious through the support given to the development of Australian drama and

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[1] Cf. Serle (1987), 178.
[2] Barry Humphries captures the clash between generations in a description of the dances which were fashionable at the time. While their parents were taking lessons in ball room dancing to acquire the correct 'poise', the younger generation was interested in rock'n roll, cf. McDonald (1999b), 5.
[3] Gerster and Bassett (1991), 54.
[4] *Sun-Herald*, 1.6.1969; cf. also: Gerster and Bassett (1991), 43.
[5] Docker (1974), 156, 158.
[6] Brisbane (1989), XI.
[7] Serle (1987), 179.

theatre. From a "cottage industry"[1] in the early 1960s, theatre developed to an art form which was finally granted state patronage by the newly established Australia Council for the Arts in 1968.[2] At the same time, campaigns challenged censorship practices in the individual states. In the following years, Australian theatre flourished.

To encapsulate the enormous progression at the time, a few important steps should be mentioned. In 1963, the Old Tote Company, the Sydney equivalent of the UTCR and MTC, was founded as well as the first drama department at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. The second drama department opened four years later with Wal Cherry teaching at Flinders University in Adelaide. In 1966, Jane Street Theatre in Sydney staged a season of all Australian plays. The following year, the alternative La Mama theatre opened in Melbourne. In 1970, the Nimrod Theatre Company was founded and the Australian Performing Group was formed, both supporting the 'New Wave' of Australian Theatre.

In 1950, the first biennial Adelaide Festival of the Arts took place, aiming at becoming "the southern hemisphere Edinburgh Festival"[3]. In Perth, the annual summer Festival of Perth, founded in 1953, continued.

In the years to come, the Labour government, elected in 1972, would make a limited subsidy available to 'fringe' theatre. In 1973, when the publishing house Currency Press was founded, important Australian plays began to appear in print.

Gradually, the standard of the press improved also. Serle reports:

> The foundation in 1964 of *The Australian*, which became the first daily to achieve wide national distribution, inspired *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Melbourne Age* and *The Canberra Times* to better their standards. Regrettably, *The Australian* declined in quality. In 1971 the weekly, radical *National Times* was established, while *The Bulletin* became again a highly competent journal. Despite the continuing dangerous concentration of ownership, the serious daily and weekly press became comparatively varied in opinion and much closer to fulfilling its proper critical function. (...) The press began to give more attention to the arts (and publicity for the artists) than ever hitherto.[4]

In this climate, the productions of Brecht's plays became more frequent. In the 1960s, he was the only German author, apart from Hochhuth[5], who was relatively widely performed. While part of this increase in performances might be attributed to the higher number of theatres, the reviews indicate a genuine interest in Brecht's work.

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[1] Cf. Brisbane (1977 (Summer)), 58.
[2] Its forerunner, but set up with a far wider brief, had been the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust with Hugh Hunt, an Englishman, as its first executive director, cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 72.
[3] Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 45, in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57.
[4] Serle (1987), 213.
[5] Cf. my analysis of the short-term interest in Hochhuth's *The Representative*.

This interest continued to grow, especially in intellectual circles and at university level. In the press and in theatres, the tendency to separate the political and aesthetic components of Brecht's work and to view his plays through the lens of one's own world view persisted. Concerning criticism of performances of Brecht's plays, a greater number of reviews can be found for the mid 1960s, but their quality varied. Generally, a more sound understanding of Brechtian theatre and performances started with the next generation of critics who had a special interest and often an education in theatre and related fields.

It took until the late 1960s for Brecht to be discovered by a number of both theatre practitioners and critics as a playwright who represented political as well as aesthetic challenges to Australian theatre. This coincided with the protest movements emerging; Brecht became the writer of the '68 generation.

4.2 *Richard Campion's production of* The Caucasian Chalk Circle *(1964), Wal Cherry's production of* Brecht on Brecht *(1965), Jeana Bradley's production of* Mother Courage *(1965)*

The analysis of three performances of the mid-1960s will show the general attitude towards Brecht's ideology at the time. To be considered first are Richard Campion's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the Old Tote in Sydney in 1964 and Wal Cherry's production of *Brecht on Brecht* for Emerald Hill in Melbourne in 1965. Regarding the plays' political dimension, Campion had modified the text to such an extent that the performance had become apolitical. In Cherry's production, the political component was less repressed, but it still allowed critics to interpret it according to their own world view. As the reactions towards both productions are characteristic of the strong tendency in the mid-1960s to blunt Brecht's political message, they will be analysed together.

The third case study is Jeana Bradley's *Mother Courage* with the University Drama Society of Western Australia for the Festival of Perth in 1965. This production showed the first indications of a topical choice of play and the first review which acknowledged the political relevance of Brecht's work. I shall draw on the programme notes for *The Exception and the Rule*, performed by the New Theatre in 1965 in order to complete the picture of the reception at the time.

When, in 1964, Richard Campion staged *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the Old Tote in Sydney, his production played a similar role to Cherry's *Threepenny Opera* in Melbourne. It was generally perceived as an introduction of Brecht's work to local audiences and one

critic even took it for the first Australian professional performance of a play by Brecht.[1] At the time, there were many similarities between the Old Tote in Sydney and the UTCR in Melbourne because of their close links with the respective universities.[2]

For his introduction of Brecht, Campion chose a play which is generally considered as being part of Brecht's 'humanist' plays.[3] Already the analysis of Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* has shown how easily a play by Brecht could be turned into a classic with an almost undetectable political message. The programme notes of Cherry's production indicate that he at least acknowledged the political component of Brecht's theatre. Campion, however, made so many changes to the text that the political content became non-existent.[4] According to H.L.C., the critic of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Campion added "special music", so that the singer created some of the "most moving moments" instead of producing a *Verfremdungseffekt.*[5] Campion used "free paraphrasing and untiring invention"[6] and cut "the chorus"[7] and the prologue, which are meant to reinforce the political message of the play[8]. These alterations led to a performance which reduced *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* to its storyline and turned it into an exotic and moving performance.[9] It seems as though Campion came close to transforming *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into a fairy tale, as has happened many times during its world wide production history.[10] Consequently, the political commitment of Brecht's play was lost.

When Cherry produced George Tabori's highly successful compilation and translation of texts by Brecht, *Brecht on Brecht*, Cherry had left the UTCR and had founded his own Theatre Emerald Hill in an attempt to realise his ideas of an ensemble-type company. His

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[1] Francis Evers. *The Australian*. 18.7.64. This comment not only ignores Dorris Fitton's production of *Galileo* for the Independent Theatre in 1961, but also Cherry's *The Threepenny Opera*. This was partly due to the fact that performances did not travel between the major theatre cities. Regarding the evolving concept of "an 'Australian' theatre rather than a number of semi-autonomous regional dramatic movements", cf. Richard Fotheringham, "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 75, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76.

[2] The Old Tote was also closely linked to NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art).

[3] Cf. Brooker (1988), 182 and Maro Germanou, Brooker (1988), "Brecht and the English Theatre", in: Bartram and Waine (1982), 208-224.

[4] No comments by Campion could be found so that this analysis has to rely on the critics' reports.

[5] *SMH*, 4.7.64.

[6] *SMH*, 4.7.64.

[7] The critic was probably referring to the singer.

[8] The cutting of the prologue gives some indication of how strongly the political message of a performance is meant to be expressed. Thus, Bentley cut it for the premiere at the Carlton College in Northfield, Minnisota (4.5.48) and it was also cut for the West German premiere in 1955 in Frankfurt, cf: Mews (1990), 359-362.

[9] Cf. H.L.C., *SMH*, 4.7.64.

[10] Siegfried Mews describes how *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was turned into "reines Märchendrama ohne politische Tendenz" on the American stage, in: Mews (1990), 362.

production did not avoid political statements. For instance it contained texts like "Questions from a Worker". It has been shown already, though, that Cherry's interest in Brecht was not political primarily. His attitude seems not to have changed since 1959, because the programme notes, this time not by Cherry himself[1], concentrated on Brecht's theories on theatre. In the only sentence referring to Brecht's intentions, their author declared that Brecht "was for change", but did not specify in which respect. Thus, the programme notes and the range of texts performed both left room for interpretation by spectators and critics.

The reviews confirm that the plays were freely interpreted. As political theatre had not yet become widespread, several critics associated a politically engaged performance with the idea of 'sermon' and 'preaching'. Most critics were superficially aware of Brecht's ideology, but they still viewed him through the lens of traditional drama, which offered a moral, and by their own world views. This applied to the preview of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by the (Sydney) *Herald* music and drama critics.[2] They labelled Brecht's political commitment as rigid, stating that "as it is a Brecht play, the moral is offered without apology". What the critics presented as the moral, though, was an abridged version of Brecht's text which read as follows: "what there is shall go to those who are good for it....the children to the motherly... the carts to good drivers". This quote omitted the reasons for reallocating the children and the carts, which indicates Brecht's political motivation and points to a changed concept of right of ownership. For instance, the carriages should belong "to the good drivers, that they are driven well." While the translation on which Campion's performance was based used the expression "go to", an alternative translation by James and Tania Stern[3] used "belong", reinforcing the idea of property. Although it is not clear whether the reviewers shortened Brecht's text themselves or whether this had been done in the performance already, once again Brecht's political message had been blunted and turned into a general humanist concern.[4] The cutting of the chorus and the prologue in the performance stressed this tendency, so that the political idea of a changed right of ownership was being entirely ignored.

While the authors of the preview still attributed a message to drama and theatre, their

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[1] Programme notes by John Gooday.
[2] No names given, *SMH*, 1.7.64.
[3] "That what there is shall belong to those who are good for it, thus / The children to the maternal, that they thrive / The carriages to the good drivers, that they are driven well.", translated by James and Tania Stern with W.H. Auden, in: Brecht (1970 cont.), Vol.7, 237.
[4] For a similar approach to Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, cf. my analysis of Doris Fitton's production.

college, H.L.C., who reviewed Campion's a-political performance, emphasised its entertaining and escapist character. The critic was content with Campion's production because the elements of "good theatre" the play offered, that is, the "moving moments" and the exotic elements, prevailed: "All this [the 'story'] raises innumerable fascinating issues, but none are distracting to the main purpose of providing good theatre."[1] As a result, Campion's version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was a variation on the storyline rather than a production of a play by Brecht in line with his intentions.

As no programme notes for Campion's production could be located, the degree to which the above changes were based on decisions which the director had thought through clearly cannot be determined. A comparison with the reception of Doris Fitton's production of Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*[2] will show, though, that this kind of naturalisation without reflection, combined with a tendency to moralise plays, is representative of the times. However, the naturalisation of Brecht's and Dürrenmatt's plays by Australian directors cannot be interpreted as a sign of confidence or indifference to the plays' aesthetics. Generally, at the time, explicitly defying the 'untouchable' status of a drama text was inconceivable. My study will show that a bold approach depended on changes in attitude, such as those taking place in the late 1960s and, again, in the 1990s.

In the late 1950s and first half of the 1960s, the naturalisation of plays in production was generally approved by the critics who, in turn, felt free to interpret the productions according to their own expectations and world perspective. Once again, it is difficult to determine whether they were aware of this happening. One striking example involves Madeleine Armstrong, who drew the following conclusion when reviewing Campion's production for the *Bulletin*: "*The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is strongly reminiscent of the New Testament. The atmosphere of the play is more Christian than Communist."[3]

While this kind of misreading can be put down to the alterations the play has undergone under Campion it comes as a surprise that, even in the case of Cherry's *Brecht on Brecht*, critics did not hesitate to mould Brecht according to their own beliefs. Thus, in 1965, Frank Murphy from the *Advocate* stated, in line with Armstrong, that "Brecht's compassion for humanity is intensely Christian"[4], whereas Howard Palmer from *The Sun* considered Brecht

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[1] H.L.C., *SMH*, 4.7.64.
[2] The production took place in 1963 at the Independent.
[3] *The Bulletin*, 18.7.64.
[4] *Advocate*, 21.10.65.

as Jewish[1]. It is most likely that these misunderstandings are due to a selective reception of those texts which *The Melbourne Herald's* critic, Harold Standish, called "the more conventionally dramatic ones"[2].

Although at the time the overall tendency was to ignore or blunt Brecht's ideology, there were exceptions. One young unacknowledged reviewer in Melbourne seized the political component in *Brecht on Brecht*, claiming it to be "a piece of political ammunition- an early salvo in the anti-Vietnam-war battle soon to be joined".[3] This strong political interpretation of a performance which did not stress the political component of Brecht's work is uncommon, though, and proves, as explained earlier, that the mid-1960s were a time of transition and contradictions.

There were more moderate attempts to acknowledge the political elements in Brecht's work. In 1965, Geoffrey Hutton defended Brecht's commitment against the prejudice of 'preaching' by saying, in his review of *Brecht on Brecht* for *The Age*, that Brecht's ideas "are rather an attitude than a sermon", thus including unintentionally the idea of *Gestus*. However, he reverted to the semantic field of preaching when reviewing Joachim Tenschert's production of *Mother Courage* for the MTC in 1973.

Francis Evers was the only critic to realise that Brecht's ideology was the basis for his work. He reviewed *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the recently founded *Australian*. The fact that Evers had read the play in translation[4] verified, as indicated above by Serle, that the standard of criticism was rising. As he was in the position to compare the translated play to the performance, he assumed that Campion's production was an intentional "knockabout satire"[5] thus confirming that this production had altered Brecht's work to a degree where it could no longer be ascribed to Brecht. Ironically, Evers failed to realise that he had seen a

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[1] *The Sun*, 15.10.65. Brecht had been considered as Jewish in the past, cf.:Voigts (1996), 105: "Brecht himself was probably aware that he was thought of as Jewish in anti-semitic circles. Even in 1933 he began a (probably fictitious) interview with the words: "No, I am not Jewish."; Palmer, however, has probably been influenced by the story of "The Jewish Wife" rather than the history of the reception of Brecht.

[2] H.A. Standish, *The Melbourne Herald*, 15.10.65.

[3] Worby (1987), 31. Worby does not give the source of the quotation.

[4] Fancis Evers, *The Australian*, 18.7.64. My analysis of the reception of Hochhuth's *The Representative* will show that, once again, Evers was one of the few critics who reviewed the production in a well informed and balanced way.

[5] Cf. "Mr. Campion elected to test the play as knockabout satire", Fancis Evers, *The Australian*, 18.7.64.

genuine attempt to stage Brecht's play.[1]

This shows that - intentionally or unintentionally - the political implications of Brecht's work continued to be removed in Australia. Also, in some cases, his aesthetic ideas had been adapted to such a degree that his plays became distorted.

However, Australia was not the only English-speaking country with a strong tendency to blunt the potential impact of Brecht's work. In English theatre, the majority of directors treated Brecht as a classic until the 1970s[2], and parts of American theatre show a similar attitude up until today. The American director Peter Sellars mocked that "Brecht has been domesticated like a lap-dog. At the best, the productions show the storyline and not much more".[3] This judgement could have been easily referring to Campion's performance and applies to many Australian reactions towards Brecht's work in the mid-1960s.

Consequently, Campion's and, to a degree, Cherry's production raise the question why Brecht's work appealed so strongly to Australians if the interest in Brecht's political commitment was slim. One answer lies in Brecht's aesthetics.

The reviews indicate an increased awareness of Brecht's aesthetic theories amongst critics. This is probably due to the fact, that, in 1964, the first systematic introduction to Brecht's theories in English became available through Willett's translation *Brecht on Theatre*.[4]

Many critics seemed to be overwhelmed by the theories and thus dismissed them as "half-understood jargon"[5]. Harold Standish declared in the *Melbourne Herald* that "the ardent disciples of Brecht who tend to theorise at great length about his work and his methods do not always do a service either to the playwright or to his potential audience".[6] This quote shows on the one hand the great interest in Brecht at that time, and on the other hand that public discussions about theatre and its aesthetics were a novelty. The expression "ardent disciples" probably reflects, as explained earlier on, that some Australians felt intimidated by

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[1] This might be partly due to his being not entirely familiar with the Australian theatre scene. *The Companion to Theatre in Australia* describes him as "a young Irishman and friend of Samuel Beckett. (...) the first of a new generation of theatrical critics outside the journalistic hierarchy.", Katharine Brisbane, John McCallum, "Criticism and Journalism", 175, in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 169-176.
[2] Cf. Maro Germanou, "Brecht and the English Theatre", in: Bartram and Waine (1982), 208-224.
[3] Weber (1997b), 60: "Der Regisseur Peter Sellars spottet, daß 'Brecht wie ein Schoßhund domestiziert worden sei', und daß 'die Aufführungen bestenfalls die Fabel zeigen und kaum mehr."
[4] Willett (1964).
[5] The *Herald* Music and Drama Critics, *SMH*, 1.7.64.
[6] *Melbourne Herald*, 15.10.65.

Brecht's theories because they represented a systematic approach towards drama and theatre.[1] The (Sydney) *Herald* music and drama critics were equally reluctant to provide explanations of Brechtian terms, although they indicated that they had heard of 'alienation effect' and of 'epic theatre'. They stated: "To dwell on Brecht's 'alienation effect', on principles of 'epic theatre' at this point would be misleading and unhelpful".[2] This reluctance to provide concise definitions of technical terms could indicate either an unwillingness or an inability to explain them.

However, most critics, now familiar with the term 'alienation', took up the discussion of Brecht's aesthetics which concentrated on the concept of *Verfremdung*. My analysis of the English term has indicated that it is misleading, as it evokes the idea of 'antagonism', 'detachment' or 'boredom'. I have shown also that often the damage attributed to this translation has been overstated. As far as the Australian reception was concerned, these prejudices had been caused and reinforced by the clash of Brechtian and local expectations towards theatre even before the term had been coined.

By the mid-1960s, *Verfremdung* was generally associated with a 'cold' theatre which excluded the audience's emotional involvement entirely. Armstrong's definition of 'alienation' in *The Bulletin* was representative of this interpretation: "According to his [Brecht's] theory, all these devices are supposed to alienate the audiences from the story: to stop them from feeling and make them think."[3] I have pointed out earlier that this is a misreading, as Brecht did not aim to prevent the spectator "from sharing certain emotions".[4]

Many critics were not aware of this and indicated that Brecht's 'alienation', as they understood it, did not work because the audience became involved in the performance. This is the conclusion Anderson drew after her definition of 'alienation'.[5] Geoffrey Hutton called this apparent contradiction "the essential paradox of Brecht's theory of non-involvement".[6]

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[1] Cf. Peter Fitzpatrick: "Brecht represented a strong conceptual tradition. This was understood as an intrinsic critique of a culture they [the Australians] perceived as formless." and Skipper's reaction in *The Bulletin*, analysed earlier. Concerning Cherry's Emerald Hill, Guthrie Worby reports that it "suffered form a backlash of suspicion which crystallised in the pejorative tag, 'Method'.". Guthrie Worby, "Emerald Hill and the Ensemble Ideal", 23, in: Holloway (1981), 21-33.
[2] *SMH*, 1.7.64.
[3] *The Bulletin*, 18.7.64.
[4] "Die Straßenszene", 376; "Of course this does not mean that the spectator must be barred on principle from sharing certain emotions that are put before him; none the less to communicate emotions is only one particular form (phase, consequence) of criticism.", in: Willett (1964), 125; Especially in his late work Brecht developed ways to combine reason and emotion.
[5] "But this is not what happens at all (...)", *The Bulletin*, 18.7.64.
[6] *The Age*, 15.10.65.

Replacing the concept *Verfremdung* with the meaning of 'alienation' caused prejudice and the expectation of no emotion on stage. Consequently, four out of five reviews expressed their surprise at the emotional component of *Brecht on Brecht*, heading their reviews with such phrases as "Moving evening", "A fascinating evening".[1]

All of the critics attributed the failure of their expected 'alienation' to Brecht. They neither questioned the term's translation nor took into consideration the performance style. My analysis of Campion's production, however, has shown that some directors had altered Brecht's aesthetics considerably.

It seems that Cherry's staging of *Brecht on Brecht*, which was less opulent at least, came closer to Brechtian style with five actors reading the texts without props or stage sets and with an emphasis on lighting.[2] In spite of this, critics reported strong emotional involvement when it came to the story of "The Jewish Wife".[3]

In summary, it was due partly to the directors' styles and partly to a misinterpretation and misleading translation of the term *Verfremdung* that critics felt compelled to point out that 'alienation' in the sense of complete avoidance of emotional involvement was unsuccessful.

As far as directors are concerned, the sources are restricted to the programme notes for Cherry's *Brecht on Brecht*.[4] At first, they seem to reflect a stronger familiarity with Brecht's theories[5] than shown in Campion's production. The notes for *Brecht on Brecht* provided alternative phrasing for *Verfremdung*, perhaps anticipating the potential misunderstanding of 'alienation'. They explained that Brecht "set them [the characters] at a distance" and that "the actor must make himself observed standing between the spectator and the text".[6]

The last quotation appears to be taken directly from Brecht's "Notes to *Die Mutter*" which Willett had translated under the title "Indirect Impact of the Epic Theatre". However, in the programme notes, no source had been provided. A closer look at the translation

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[1] *The Sun*, 15.10.65, *The Melbourne Herald*, 15.10.65.

[2] Frank Murphy, *Advocate*, 21.10.65. Cherry's way of staging seems to have corresponded to Tabori's original style, cf.: Martin Kagel, introduction to : Tabori (1997), 70. A short extract of the production was shown in *Time Exposure*, ABC Television, 26.9.99.

[3] "The audience heard the night in silence, except for a sudden welling of applause after a long dramatic recital by Joan Harris of a Jewish woman leaving her husband for his own sake.", Howard Palmer, *The Sun*, 15.10.65.

[4] Programme notes for Campion's production could not be found.

[5] Guthrie Worby, explains in "Emerald Hill and the ensemble ideal", that the members of Emerald Hill were, amongst others, familiar with acting techniques used by the Berliner Ensemble, in: Holloway (1981), 21-33.

[6] Underlined in the programme notes.

shows, though, that both the German original and Willett's translation recommend that the actor "make[s] himself observed standing between the spectator and the event"[1], rather than "between the spectator and the text".

Thus the programme notes questioned the role of the actor as mediator of the text and theatrical signs, as though this role were a novelty in Brecht's theatre. However, this is an inherent characteristic of all kinds of theatre. Australian naturalistic theatre, like any naturalistic theatre, only tried to hide this actor's function in order to provide the illusion of the spectator's unmediated immersion.

Brecht, in the original text, and Willett, in his translation, put no emphasis on the actor's role as a mediator but on the way he or she presents what is happening on stage, "the event" as Willett expressed it. Brecht wanted to stress that this acting style allowed audiences "to form an opinion" through critical distance. This becomes obvious in Brecht's original text where Brecht uses the terms "Beschauer" instead of "Zuschauer" and "Vorgang" instead of "Handlung". In this respect, this quotation from Brecht's "Notes to *Die Mutter*" anticipated Brecht's description of the "Street Scene" in which Brecht elaborated on the role of the actor as "demonstrator" and the spectator as curious onlooker.[2]

In the programme notes for *Brecht on Brecht*, however, it seems as if Brecht wanted to turn the actor into an obstacle hindering rather than facilitating communication in the theatre. Consequently, Brecht's aesthetic theories appeared hostile towards the spectator.

Yet, despite this misunderstanding, the programme notes generally conveyed Cherry's attempt to come to terms with Brecht's work. Like his programme notes for *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959, the remainder of the notes for *Brecht on Brecht*[3] were characterised by the rejection of a theatre of illusion and of escapism. They emphasised that

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[1] "Indirect Impact of the Epic Theatre (Extracts from the Notes to *Die Mutter*)", 56, in: Willett (1964), 57-62. "Der Schauspieler dieses einer nichtaristotelischen Dramatik dienenden Theaters wird dabei alles tun müssen, um sich als zwischen Beschauer und Vorgang stehend bemerkbar zu machen.", in: "Anmerkungen zu *Die Mutter*", 118-119, in: Brecht (1991), 115-135.

[2] Cf. "der Augenzeuge eines Verkehrsunfalls demonstriert einer Menschenansammlung, wie das Unglück passierte (...): die Hauptsache ist, daß der Demonstrierende das Verhalten des Fahrers oder des Überfahrenen oder beider in einer solchen Weise vormacht, daß die Umstehenden sich über den Unfall ein Urteil bilden können.", "Die Straßenszene", 371, in: Brecht (1993a), 371- 381; "[a witness demonstrates] to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place (...): the point is that the demonstrator acts the behaviour of driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident", "The Street Scene", 121, Willett (1964), 121-129. Brecht compiled both texts together with other notes as "9. Versuch 'Über eine nichtaristotelische Dramatik", Brecht (1993b), 1021-1022.

[3] Although this time Cherry is not the author of the programme notes, it can be presumed that he authorised John Gooday's remarks.

Brecht's theatre "aims to make men think" and that "no emotional tricks were allowed".

When comparing the programme notes for *The Threepenny Opera* with those for *Brecht on Brecht* it becomes obvious that both were not free from ambiguities. However, it seems that the latter no longer promoted Brecht's theatre as a means of changing local theatre. This might be due to the fact that, in 1961, Cherry had realised a version of his ideal theatre when founding Emerald Hill.[1]

By contrast, Campion's approach towards Brecht's work, clearly favoured what Cherry rejected - a theatre that allowed strong emotional identification and exotic escapism. Although there are no programme notes this became obvious in the performance style of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.* So considerably did Campion alter Brecht's play and theories, the epic structure of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* must have been the only element of Brechtian theatre left untouched. The fact that Campion broke with one of the conventions of naturalistic theatre was reason enough for Armstrong to praise Brecht's theatre because "he is not stuck with naturalism, with exactly copying everyday life". The critics of the (Sydney) *Herald* seemed to hail Brecht as a welcome 'new' influence even before having seen the performance.[2]

By now, 'Brecht' had become a label for 'new theatre' even if it was not performed according to Brechtian style or content. Maro Germanou makes a similar observation for English theatre, where Brecht came to stand for novelty breaking the limits of naturalistic theatre also.[3] Consequently, the theatre practitioners' and critics' tendency to receive Brecht's work in a predominantly aesthetic framework, which ignored the significance of Brecht's ideology was not Australia-specific. Paradoxically, in the early 60s, Brecht became fashionable as a tamed classic.

The situation was summed up by Harry Kippax' review[4] or John Willett's introduction to Brecht's theories in English translation, entitled *Brecht on Theatre.*[5] It played an important role because Kippax was a respected, even though at times controversial, Sydney critic.[6] At

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[1] In retrospect, Cherry assessed his own "idea of theatre" of the mid-1950s as "pretty naïve", in: Morphett (1966). My analysis of his collaboration with John Willett on *The Threepenny Opera* in 1975 will illustrate how his work on Brecht's plays evolved.
[2] *SMH*, 1.7.64.
[3] Cf. Maro Germanou, "Brecht and the English Theatre", 218, in: Bartram and Waine (1982), 208-224.
[4] *SMH*, 1.8.1964.
[5] Willett (1964).
[6] Concerning Kippax's role cf. McCallum (1981), Parsons and Chance (1997), 152 and James Waites, "Harry Kippax re-viewed", in: *New Theatre Australia*, vol 5, no 1, (March) 1989, 4-5.

first sight, Kippax seemed to summarise and fight the prejudices which dominated the attitude towards Brecht at the time. On the political level, he went beyond the simplified label of 'Brecht the Communist' and made a more subtle remark: "He was an unorthodox Communist; that alienates all of us, Communists and non-Communists alike". This remark points to Kippax's rejection of Brecht's ideology as well as explaining that Brecht's contentious position had been partly caused by him not fitting any ready made labels of ideology.

On the aesthetic level, Kippax stressed that Willett's book deserved merit[1] because it allowed English speaking people proper and systematic access to Brecht's ideas amongst the confusion caused by misleading interpretations: "It therefore helps us to cut through the outpourings of confusing and often confused interpreters and commentators and find out exactly what the man himself said."[2] In the article, Kippax did not neglect the important fact that Brecht's theories on theatre had developed over time. He also went through great length to refute the prejudice that 'alienation' meant "the opposite of entertainment". This way, he indirectly confirmed that the expectation toward theatre as an entertaining art form played an important role at the time.

As explained in the introduction, the prejudice that Brecht's plays did not allow for entertainment, was brought up repeatedly in context with his plays' didactic dimension. Thus, Kippax emphasised that "not until 1936 does the phrase 'alienation effect' appear in his [Brecht's] writings. Even in these writings he insists on 'fun'".

Despite these insights, Kippax did not refrain from adapting Brecht's theories to his own world view and his image of theatre. When explaining the aim of Brecht's theatre, Kippax turned Brecht into "a humanist" and a "storyteller". He explained that Brecht rebelled against the theatre of illusion because it converted the spectators "into so much emotional putty for actors and distracted them from what was real and meaningful in drama." Consequently, Kippax failed to understand the underlying function of *Verfremdung*. He did not realise that Brecht's emphasis was on insight into social situations and into conditions for change, so that the story became a means instead of an end. Although Kippax fought many ossified prejudices against Brecht in this article, he did not liberate the critical

[1] For Willett's considerable contribution to the Australian reception of drama by German speaking playwrights, cf. my analysis of Willett's collaboration with Cherry on *The Threepenny Opera*, of his lectures at NIDA as well as of his participation at the conference "Beyond the Backyard".
[2] *SMH*, 1.8.1964.

potential of Brecht's work because he put him on the pedestal of the untouchable classic.[1]

Overall, the above responses towards Brecht's theories on theatre and his plays illustrate that, within the strong tendency to naturalise Brecht's work, reactions differed, thus reflecting individual attitudes as well as the times. They also show how difficult it is to explain individual reactions in retrospect, especially if some documents are no longer available.[2]

Jeana Bradley's production of *Mother Courage*

In 1965, Jeana Bradley directed *Mother Courage* for the Perth Festival.[3] This framework was important for the performance's reception because audiences at festivals tend to be more open-minded than regular Australian audiences.[4] Moreover, the performance took place in a outdoor theatre in the landscaped gardens at the University of Western Australia.[5]

Bradley provided a booklet with detailed programme notes on "Brecht in theory and practice" and on the play itself. The performance and the reactions towards it indicate that, at the same time when Brecht was turned into a tamed classic, universities saw the first careful steps to take on board the political and aesthetic challenges of his work.

The only review available was by Katharine Brisbane for the *West Australian*.[6] It is of particular interest, as Brisbane belonged to a new generation of well trained critics who were in many cases closely associated to universities and academics. Brisbane became an important figure in reviewing and publishing. For instance, she was the nationwide reviewer for *The Australian* from 1967 to 1973 and co-founded the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and Currency Press.

Bradley did not make any overt political statements in her programme notes. When she

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[1] "He stands to the drama as Dickens did to the Victorian novel and Breughel did to Flemish art."

[2] As Campion's production took place at the Old Tote, it is likely that programme notes existed. This points to the important role of Australian archives storing material on Australian performance history.

[3] The festival was founded in 1953. Since 1960, state governments supported this festival and the Adelaide Festival of the Arts. The Perth festival had also strong community support; cf. Serle (1987), 213; Bradley's productions in the open-air Sunken Garden contributed to the decision to establish the Perth Festival in 1953, cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 96.

[4] For instance, in 1994 Margaret Mills stated in an interview: "At a festival, the audience comes prepared to see stuff they won't know about. (...) I don't understand why they wouldn't be hungry for new work in the meantime.", Kim Trengrove "What's the point? Three performers share their views on being viewed" , 518, in: Richards and Milne (1994 (Spring)), 515-523; this remark can be also considered as valid for 1965.

[5] Brisbane called the outdoor theatre "Perth's most innovative contribution" to Australian theatre at the time, in: Katharine Brisbane, "Australia", 45, in: Rubin (1998), 40- 57.

[6] *West Australian*, 1.2.65.

pointed out that Brecht wanted that "People should think at the theatre"[1] the political implications of this objective were not explained. At the given time, however, the choice of play indicated political awareness. *Mother Courage* is often considered as one of Brecht's classic plays, which can be turned into a 'humanist play' easily. Staging *Mother Courage* in Australia in 1965 meant to choose a highly topical play. In this year, Menzies' Liberal-Country Party introduced a new National Service scheme. Conscription had caused bitter debates in Australia frequently in the past. In 1962 and 1964, Australia sent a small number of army instructors to support South Vietnam and began sending combat troupes in 1965. By this time, frustration and illusion replaced wartime idealism in Australia.[2] Five years earlier, Alan Seymour's *The One Day of the Year* had "ruffled a lot of feathers by daring even to examine the national institution of the Anzac Day."[3]

In this context, the play's advertisement did not need to be any more direct when it announced *Mother Courage*: "Written in 1939 by Bertolt Brecht, this tremendous war play which is bitterly anti-war, made a great impact on Paris audiences some years ago".[4] Thus, Bradley was the first director outside the New Theatre movement to stage a play by Brecht which was politically and socially relevant.

In her review, Katharine Brisbane introduced the play as follows: "It is a magnificent, ugly, funny, piteous play about the wasted sufferings of the underdogs who have to keep living in wartime."[5] Like Cherry and some reviewers of *The Threepenny Opera*, Brisbane referred to the 'underdog'. As explained previously, this expression connotes the individual fighting against the odds and confirms current conditions rather than changing them. Therefore, it belongs to a traditional concept of drama rather than to Brecht's idea of theatre provoking change. When Brisbane mentioned the underdogs' "wasted sufferings" this fitted into the same line of thinking. However Brisbane did not realise that Mother Courage is an ambiguous figure who not only suffers from the war but makes profit from it

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[1] Programme notes.
[2] Serle (1987), 178
[3] Carroll (1977), 153. In *The one Day of the Year*, Seymour calls what Kippax refers to in the introduction as "Australia's one authentic national celebration" a "Waste of lives, waste of men". Seymour (1962), 19, 36. In 1948, a critical look at the army had been already presented by Sumner Locke Elliott in *Rusty Bugles*.
[4] *West Australian*, 10.2.65.
[5] *West Australian*, 1.2.65.

also.[1] It is not clear whether Brisbane's impression of Mother Courage as a victim is a personal conclusion or whether this was suggested by the production. On the one hand, Bradley, in her programme notes, characterised Mother Courage and her family as "the lice of the war, the parasites who live on it and by it" and therefore would have avoided an acting style producing sympathy with Mother Courage. On the other hand, she stated: "There are no heroes. He [Brecht] offers no solution and meant us to see nothing to admire. But somehow, the very vitality of the figures carries them beyond the author's control and we sympathise in a fashion outside the Brechtian ideal."[2] These contradictory remarks make it difficult to assess the acting and production style favoured by Bradley and Brisbane's review in retrospect.

These contradictions and ambiguities in the context of Bradley's production allude to the contradictory character of Mother Courage. This has caused many spectators and critics world wide to relate to her more strongly than Brecht would have liked them to, and caused Brecht to edit the text.[3]

At least it is clear that Brisbane did not relate to the characters' sufferings in the traditional way of complete identification. She took up the criticism expressed in the play judging "Of all Brecht's sprawling, epic plays it is the simplest in line and the most direct in its attack." However, she did not apply the critical content to contemporary Australian issues.

While Bradley and Brisbane phrased their political comments carefully, this was not the case in the programme notes for the New Theatre's production of *The Exception and the Rule* of 1965. This is not surprising because New Theatre was strongly influenced by left ideas. One of the few plays which New Theatre Melbourne repeated over the years was this *Lehrstück* by Brecht. Perhaps due to the fact that some newspapers refused to review their

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[1] Brisbane's impression seems to be similar to audiences' reactions straight after World War II. Brecht criticised them in the following way: "Die Zuschauer des Jahres 49 und der folgenden Jahre sahen nicht die Verbrechen der Courage, ihr Mitmacher, ihr am Krieg mitverdienen wollen; sie sahen nur ihren Mißerfolg, ihre Leiden.", in: "Die Courage lernt nichts", 273, in: Brecht (1991), 271-274.

[2] Brecht himself stated: "Zuschauer mögen sich mit der stummen Kattrin in dieser Szene identifizieren; sie mögen sich einfühlen in dieses Wesen und freudig spüren, daß in ihnen solche Kräfte vorhanden sind - jedoch werden sie sich nicht durch das ganze Stück eingefühlt haben; in den ersten Szenen zum Beispiel kaum.", in: "Die dramatische Szene", in: "Couragemodell 1949", 231, in: Brecht (1994), 169-398; "Members of the audience may identify themselves with dumb Kattrin in this scene [with the drum]; they may get into her skin by empathy and enjoy feeling that they themselves have the same latent strength. But they will not have experienced empathy throughout the whole play, hardly in the opening scenes for instance.", "Theaterarbeit", 221, in: Willett (1964), 220-222.

[3] Cf. "Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder. Wirkung", in: Brecht (1989b), 392-401.

productions from the late 1950s until the early 1970s, no reviews could be found for this performance.[1] In line with New Theatre's ideology, the programme notes called Brecht's concept of theatre "an extension of Marx's dictum that 'philosophers have but variously interpreted the world, what matters is to change it.' Theatre could be an active element in the processes bringing about such change".[2] Apart from Phillips' article in 1959, programme notes and reviews had not clearly stated change as the basis for Brecht's theories. The author of the programme notes was aware of an uneasy relationship between parts of the Australian theatre scene and Brecht, but he or she[3] did not attribute "the general helplessness of Australian productions of Brecht" to the omission of the political element in Brecht's work, but, rather, to a "lack of translations of his theoretical writings". However, after Willett's 1964 publication, this should no longer have been the case.

That only a "radical group"[4] expressed the connection between Brecht's ideology and aesthetics clearly, indicates that a great part of Australian theatre in the mid-1960s was still a conservative cultural force not yet greatly influenced by the generational conflict. Part of Australian theatre remained dominated by "the middle-class, middle-aged theatre-going public" which Hugh Hunt, the director of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, had described in 1960.[5]

Regarding Brecht's aesthetics, Bradley, like Phillips, provided a balanced view on Brecht's theories putting his ideas into an historical context and indicating that they were modified during Brecht's lifetime. Along with the (Sydney) *Herald* critics[6], she referred to Brecht's technical terms as "jargon"; however she aimed to make Brecht's work accessible, not to dismiss his theoretical framework. She tried to destroy the image of Brecht as the new and complicated playwright and theatre practitioner by stressing the familiar elements in his theories. For instance, she demonstrated similarities between 'epic theatre' and the Shakespearian chronicle play. She also explained *Verfremdung* and *Verfremdungseffekte* without mentioning the technical terms, emphasising that Brecht's main aim was to avoid

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[1] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1997), 200; the article does not state when the refusal to review performances finished, but the time frame can be established by the review that has been written for a review for *The Exception and the Rule* in *The Australian* in 1972.
[2] Programme notes; no names given.
[3] No name given.
[4] According to Parsons and Chance (1997), 200.
[5] "The middle-class, middle-aged theatre-going public was not inclined to tolerate anything but 'sophisticated upper-class comedy and the comedy-thriller' - a demand for thought was considered a denial of entertainment.", in: Serle (1987), 200.
[6] The *Herald* Music and Drama Critics, *SMH*, 1.7.64.

the "naturalistic theatre of illusion which strives to create a 'real' world" and to make the audience think. When she did introduce a technical term for *Verfremdung*, she called it 'estrangement'. Although used in the context of relationships mainly, this word can mean "to remove from accustomed surroundings or keep at a distance".[1] While not an ideal choice, 'estrangement' is a more appropriate option than 'alienation'.

Bradley's decisions on performance style reflected her comprehensive knowledge of Brecht's work. In her eyes, 'boxing ring' lighting and the position of the musicians on stage had lost their original function of creating "strangeness" because "they are now so well known as to appear merely tricks which irritate rather than surprise". So she decided to bypass them. Bearing in mind the reviews analysed so far and the fact that Bradley was a theatre practitioner from England, it is quite likely that her theatrical experience and her audiences' differed enough for these devices to still have appeared original to a great number of the local spectators. Possibly, her decision was influenced by the tendency for festivals to attract different kinds of audiences to local performances.

Bradley did not give any explanations or hints concerning the production's function. Most likely she directed *Mother Courage* for its political and social relevance and out of interest in Brecht's aesthetic ideas.

In her review, Brisbane displayed the increased knowledge of the new critics when she criticised the way the songs had been presented. She did not consider them successful and explained: "the reason, I think, was the missing proscenium arch (in the sunken garden). The characters should come out of the play to sing them not hold up the action within a realistic situation." This remark indicates a sound understanding of the functioning of songs in Brecht's plays.

The author of the programme notes for *The Exception and the Rule* displayed an equal knowledge of the aesthetics of Brecht's theories. Accordingly, he or she presented the narrator and the titles functioning as *Verfremdungseffekte* and related the purpose of *Verfremdung* back to the theatre's objective to change the wrongs of society directly. Despite this familiarity with Brecht's ideas, no technical terms were used. This might be because he or she wanted to keep the notes simple or because he or she was aware of the negative associations connected to expressions like 'alienation'.

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[1] Steinmetz (1987).

Although both Bradley's and the New Theatre's performances displayed an increased knowledge of Brecht's work and, to varying degrees, showed the connection between the political basis of his work and his aesthetics, none of them considered an overall adaptation of the plays to Australian audiences.[1]

4.3 *John Ellis' productions of* The Caucasian Chalk Circle *and* Mother Courage *in collaboration with Elijah Moshinsky (1966, 1967)*

In tune with the social and cultural developments at the time, John Ellis' production represented a challenge to the majority of productions considered so far. These developments included early signs of the youth movement and student protests, which would come to fruition in the late 1960s. In contrast with protests to come, the Melbourne Youth Theatre and its productions of plays by Brecht did not provoke by radical political action. Rather its organisational and working method were in contrast with established Australian theatres at the time and its liberal approach to Brecht's texts and their traditional production style were a challenge.

In his review of Ellis' production of *Mother Courage* for *The Bulletin*, Phillip Adams assessed the importance of the Melbourne Youth Theatre accordingly. He considered it "a resistance movement which defies the totalitarianism of the cultural nose-count". Phillips regarded the emphasis on box-office success as a long lasting influence of local commercial theatre with its "funeral processions of Broadway comedies and a cacophony of Merry Widows and Funny Girls".[2] The analysis of concurrent productions at the UTCR[3], such as *The Representative*, will show that it, too, mainly was driven by box-office results as "the theatres' rating system", which Adams criticised in his review[4]. At the time, the UTCR was looking at consolidating its position rather than experimenting with new styles and approaches. The MYT, on the other hand, challenged the UTCR's dominance in the Melbourne theatre scene[5] and its traditional attitudes by presenting close to professional productions with young people under 25, who were prepared to follow a rigorous rehearsal

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[1] The programme notes for *The Measures Taken* in 1972 show that the group had now adapted the play: "The original setting in China we changed to Latin America, without altering Brecht's intention."

[2] *The Bulletin*, 13.5.67. My analysis of Doris Fitton's production of *The Visit* will point to other influences of commercial theatre brought about by Williamson's 'the Firm', such as the star-system. Regarding the role of success at the box office, cf. also my analysis of the reception of Handke's plays.

[3] In 1968, the UTCR became the Melbourne Theatre Company.

[4] *The Bulletin*, 13.5.67.

[5] In a personal interview (27.3.00), Ellis spoke of the MTC' s "monopoly" at the time. Cf. also Davidson (1980), 487.

schedule without receiving wages. Amongst them was director and designer Elijah Moshinsky, who gave *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* their visual impact through his costume and stage designs.

Like Moshinsky, many of the production's participants were connected to a university. This link between universities, especially the drama-in-education courses, and new drama groups grew even more important when the New Wave emerged in Melbourne with companies like La Mama and the Australian Performing Group (APG).[1] From 1966 onwards, Ellis himself worked at the Monash Teachers' College[2] while running together with Lois Ellis the Melbourne Youth Theatre (MYT), which, apart from Moshinsky, nurtured talents such as the actors Peter Curtin, Max Gillies, Wendy Hughes, Robert Meldrum and Bruce Spence.[3]

In an interview for Monash University's student magazine, *Lot's Wife*, Ellis defined the purpose of the Melbourne Youth Theatre as follows: "Melbourne Youth Theatre is an attempt to provide a focus for the creative talents of young people who want to express themselves through a contact with vital plays."[4]

This quote points to two important characteristics of Ellis' and his students' work. Firstly, MYT provided young people with an opportunity to *explore* plays and production styles instead of encouraging them to blindly accept traditions and authorities. Secondly, MYT was among the first groups to perform plays which they considered as "vital" and relevant.[5]

The exploration of plays and production styles had important repercussions for the production of Brecht's plays because I have shown that, so far, his plays had been predominantly treated as tamed classics and that his theories had tended to be reduced to the misleading concept of 'alienation'. Ellis was aware of 'alienation' being "interpreted as creating an artificial distance" and of Brechtian theatre being "supposedly purely intellectual

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[1] Katharine Brisbane and Nick Enright report "a steady exchange of theory and practice between the open stages of La Mama, the Australian Performing Group's Pram Factory and the Open Stage at the Secondary Teachers' College", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 22.

[2] Now, in different form, part of Deakin University.

[3] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 22.

[4] Interview with Ruth Dyttman and Ian Topliss, *Lot's Wife*, 18.4.67. The interviewers refusing to proceed in a logical order and the nonsense-style kind of jokes are a strong indication of the challenging of tradition which was part of the youth movement at the time.

[5] Amongst the other plays which the MYT staged were plays by Shakespeare as well as Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* as well as possibly the first Australian production of Genet's *The Balcony*.

theatre".[1] Therefore, he disregarded traditional approaches to Brecht's work and proceeded in a similar way to Peter Brook's suggestions in his introduction to *Marat / Sade*. Ellis noted: "I went along the involvement line, but then I would cut against that in order to open other dimensions. Thus, the empathy and narrative would be underscored."[2] This was an early reassessment of Brechtian *Verfremdung* which incorporated recent developments in German theatre such as Weiss' dramaturgy, who had, to a degree, married concepts by Brecht and Artaud. At this stage of Australian production history, Ellis' attitude towards Brechtian dramaturgy was novel because it allowed Brechtian theatre to mix intellectual and sensual elements without adapting it to naturalistic norms.[3]

Moshinsky's costumes and stage design made an important contribution to productions which incorporated the senses and could be spontaneously enjoyed. They were part of the theatricality which Ellis and Moshinsky emphasised in their productions. Accordingly, Graeme Blundell, in his review of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for Monash University's student magazine, spoke of "exuberance and folksy traditions".[4] When Richard Murphet reviewed *Mother Courage* in the following year he said: "It was unashamedly a play."[5]

For this purpose, Ellis and Moshinsky worked thoroughly on the plays' rhythm and the dynamics of each scene. At a time when most directors and actors concentrated on the relationship between the actor and his role, Ellis and Moshinsky took an unusual approach which Ellis recalls as follows:

> Before we went into rehearsal [of *The Chalk Circle*], Elijah Moshinsky and I would tease out the action flow and try to translate it into space on stage. We used books on the floor [as a kind of model] in order to come to terms with the spatial dynamics of every scene.[6]

Apart from creating a truly theatrical experience, one of the aims of this approach was to pick up "for audiences, who were not used to it, a kind of epic sweep"[7]. Thus, the productions aimed at relating to the audience their various degree of pre-knowledge about Brechtian theatre, without resorting to the traditional method of naturalising the play by

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[1] Personal Interview, 27.3.00.
[2] Personal Interview, 27.3.00. Brook described Weiss' play as "designed to crack the spectator on the jaw, then douse him with ice-cold water, then force him to assess intelligently what has happened to him, then give him a kick in the balls, then bring him back to his senses again.", in: "Introduction to *Marat / Sade*", VI, in: Weiss (1965), V-VII.
[3] It has been shown that some productions included emotions in order to allow spectators to feel for the characters on stage, but that these productions disregarded the principle of creating critical distance altogether.
[4] *Lot's Wife*, 28.6.66.
[5] *Lot's Wife*, 9.5.67.
[6] Personal Interview, 27.3.00.
[7] Personal Interview, 27.3.00.

adapting it to traditional production styles. It is even possible to draw parallels to Kosky's much later suggestions in his speech at the Shakespeare Youth Festival in so far as Ellis' and Moshinsky's productions were not exclusively text-orientated; in a similar vocabulary to Kosky's, Richard Murphet called their production of *Mother Courage* in his review "bold, vital and challenging"[1]. Although Ellis and Moshinsky did not go as far as changing the original dramatic text, they succeeded in creating productions in which the concepts of "vital plays"[2] and vitality were closely connected.

It appears that the only possible downside of these vibrant performances could be a tendency in *Mother Courage* to involve audiences too much, a reproach made by Murphet.[3] Murphet's impression seems to be confirmed by a more recent statement which Moshinsky made when talking to Margaret Throsby about the time when he became involved in theatre productions. He noted: "When I started, the fad was Brechtianism. All theatre productions had to have a social and didactic point of view. Everything became lit by white light."[4] The above analysis has shown that Moshinsky did not conform to this production style. Ellis remembers that one result of Moshinsky's unorthodox approach was that "within the theatre world, Moshinsky's work was seen by many as precocious" at a time when "any classic, including modern classics, were seen in reverential terms".[5]

Yet, those critics who reviewed the productions responded in a positive way. It needs to be added, though, that the reviewers consisted of Phillip Adams, known as an open-minded intellectual, and of two reviewers who would later become involved in innovative theatre projects themselves. Thus Graeme Blundell, who wrote about *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, became a founding director of La Mama Company, the later Australian Performing Group, and Richard Murphet, who reviewed *Mother Courage*, encouraged innovative work at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Thus Ellis' and Moshinsky's innovative approach met critics who were ready to embrace new work on the stage. All of the critics emphasised the productions' visual impact.

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[1] *Lot's Wife*, 9.5.67.
[2] Interview with Ruth Dyttman and Ian Topliss, *Lot's Wife*, 18.4.67.
[3] *Lot's Wife*, 9.5.67. In contrast, *The Chalk Circle* seems to have put greater emphasis on *Verfremdung*. Blundell reported that the costumes led to "a sort of self-assured historicism, an estrangement in terms of time, relating past to present, present to past", *Lot's Wife*, 28.6.66.
[4] Interview with Margaret Throsby, ABC Classic FM, 13.8.98.
[5] Personal Interview, 27.3.00. The production also went against the tradition by using an original music score by George Michell; cf. *The Bulletin*, 13.5.67; Adams also reported the use of "interesting film material".

Further, it is remarkable that, after his criticism of the high degree of audience involvement in *Mother Courage*, Murphet used the term 'relevant', noting that the play deserved attention "in terms of its relevance to our times".[1] This comment was the first to introduce relevance as a criterion for measuring a play's and production's impact. Its general use only came much later when the student protests and the New Wave demanded local plays, that is, those which were perceived as having a connection to local audiences. Thus, not only Ellis' and Moshinsky's productions but also the related criticism anticipated things to come in Australian theatre and in the reception history of plays by German speaking playwrights. Ellis' and Moshinsky's production of *Mother Courage* was also going to be a point of reference for those spectators who went to see Joachim Tenschert's production of the same play in 1973.

4.4 *John Sumner's production of* The Caucasian Chalk Circle *for the MTC (1971) and Brian Davies' production of* The Exception and the Rule *for La Mama (1969)*

John Sumner's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC) in 1971 and Brian Davies' *The Exception and the Rule* for La Mama in 1969 followed each other closely. Sumner's production is of interest because his directing was similar to Campion's, but, unlike Campion's, it is possible to access his intentions through his memoirs. Davies' production took place at La Mama, an alternative venue inspired by American coffee-house theatres in America, which Betty Burstall had opened in 1967. In 1969, Leonard Radic, theatre critic for *The Age*, acknowledged its role as follows: "La Mama is a rarity in Australian theatre - a non-establishment theatre where new ideas and new ways of expression can be tried out and where there is complete freedom of expression".[2] Thus, the two performances are very suitable for a comparison of approaches towards Brecht's work in mainstream and alternative theatres in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle was the first play by Brecht which Sumner directed. His memoirs, *Recollections at Play*, provide some valuable information about the climate for the reception of Brecht in contemporary mainstream theatre. They indicate that the

[1] However, he did not follow up his promise to take the matter up in the next issue of *Lot's Wife*.
[2] *The Age*, 19.7.69.

association of Brecht with novelty, detected earlier, had developed into a 'Brecht-fashion'[1]. Also the memoirs confirm two tendencies which have been apparent in comments from the mid-60s. Firstly, awareness of Brecht's political and aesthetic theories had increased, but few people understood them soundly. Sumner reports that "His [Brecht's] work was on many intellectual tongues, passed on from hearsay to hearsay; I felt swamped by so much second-hand knowledge". This remark might indicate the feeling of being overwhelmed by a strong systematic approach in theatre also, as discussed earlier, and a certain reluctance to study Brecht's theories. Secondly, Brecht's ideology was associated with the idea of preaching still; Sumner calls some of the people interested in Brecht "would-be apostles"[2] indicating his own reluctance to become involved in the discussion closely.

When Sumner described his approach towards Brecht's work, he seems to express many of Campion's attitudes in directing and can be regarded as typical for Australian mainstream theatre at the time. Reluctant to embrace Brecht's ideology, which he considered "black-and-white"[3], he decided to edit the text "to humanise the argument and the political message"[4]. Once again, a play by Brecht was naturalised. Brecht was turned into a humanist and the play became a classic.[5] Although the message "That what there is shall belong to those who are good for it" was included in the programme notes and acknowledged by the critic for *The Sun*, its validity seemed restricted to the storyline. Sumner's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* had been transformed too much into an entertaining and moving play to bear any relevance for contemporary audiences.

The political climate at La Mama was the exact opposite of the MTC's. Radic reports that John Romeril, John Hawkes and Lindzee Smith had joined La Mama in 1968 as former students from Monash University, the then "hotbed of student radicalism". They "brought with them a hard-core political dedication which was to stiffen the group's resolve, and to lead it into new agit-prop areas including street theatre".[6] Lindzee Smith, who acted in *The Exception and the Rule*, recalls: "We were heavily involved in the student movement; at the

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[1] "There was a considerable vogue for the work of Brecht at the time", in: Sumner (1993), 210. It seems strange, though, that Sumner still attributed this fashion to the Berliner Ensemble's performance of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the 1950s.
[2] Sumner (1993), 211; cf. also Geoffrey Hutton, *The Age*, 15.10.65: "He never preaches a sermon".
[3] Sumner (1993), 211.
[4] Sumner (1993), 212.
[5] In the programme notes, it is called a "masterpiece".
[6] Radic (1991), 56.

time we were radically supporting the NLF in Vietnam".[1] The mere choice of a *Lehrstück* indicates a political interest in Brecht.

Sumner's reluctance to get involved with Brecht's theories resulted in him making "his own decisions". He adapted the play and Brecht's theories to the naturalistic play and entertaining performance style he was used to, making three important changes. Firstly, he adjusted the elements which could have created *Verfremdung*; thus, he avoided the historical distance by feeling his "way into the play" through the costumes as indicator of "the people, the period and the behaviour".[2] This most likely allowed his audience the same means of identification through presenting a tableau of the period. The songs were transformed from a critical comment into an element of entertainment; Hutton assesses them as such calling them "an occasional song for variety".[3] Secondly, he prevented the play's epic structure from having an impact on the suspense necessary for audience involvement, making it "engrossing theatre, never relaxing the pressure or the sense of surprise through its six long scenes".[4] In the performance, he "went for the undoubted entertainment offered by the adventure of a simple servant and an aristocratic child struggling together for survival".[5]

As a result, the political parable was reduced to its storyline and became, according to Hutton, a "fairy story"[6]. Consequently, in his review, Hutton considered Brecht's intentions and concepts as completely irrelevant to this production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, advising: "I would not worry about the Alienation Effect, the didactic or the epic qualities until afterwards. While it is playing the audience is completely and happily absorbed".[1]

This suggests that many theatre practitioners and critics of the time considered that the appropriate way of staging Brecht's plays was a radical adaptation of Brecht's work to the theatrical norms they were used to, in short a naturalisation of his plays.

Only after Joachim Tenschert from the Berliner Ensemble had produced *Mother Courage* for the MTC according to Brecht's model, was an alternative approach towards the plays

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[1] Personal Interview, 26.10.98.
[2] Sumner (1993), 211; this contrasted with Moshinsky's costume design for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, mentioned earlier, which worked on Brecht's concept of *Historisieren*.
[3] *The Age*, 30.4.71. Although the songs would have been sung in English, there are parallels between the singers not exploring the tension between the songs' lyrics and their music to Archer's experiences of "the repertoire (...) in danger of being romanticized", in: Archer (1995), 147.
[4] Hutton (1975), 75 and *The Age*, 30.4.71.
[5] Sumner (1993), 211-2.
[6] *The Age*, 30.4.71.

taken into consideration. Thus Hutton wrote in hindsight:

> Some who had seen it [*Mother Courage*] at the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin claimed that it [Sumner's production] was not Brechtian in style. Perhaps it should have been drier and more didactic, but I would not have changed it.[2]

Within the mainstream theatre, the idea that Brecht's plays could be staged as a relevant contemporary comment in an up-to-date way remained unthought of. However, the approach of presenting Brecht's work as topical could be found in alternative theatres like La Mama. As *The Exception and the Rule* was part of a short season of three plays by Brecht and only played for a few nights, neither reviews nor programme notes could be located.[3] Instead, Lindzee Smith's recollections of the performances provide a useful source of information about the way *The Exception and the Rule* was staged:

> [Some people] in the group were also interested in radical staging techniques: it seemed that Brecht's was the ideal theatre to open up from the proscenium stage and to do all sorts of things with it and certainly to involve cinema.

This time, Brecht was not labelled as 'new' in order to vitalise traditional drama, like in Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera*. By questioning traditional staging styles and the relationship to the audience his work was perceived as a challenge to contemporary theatre practitioners. Through including contemporary cultural tendencies like environmental theatre, cinema, television and rock'n roll, the group continued Brecht's own ongoing creative process of developing concepts and devices he had created earlier.[1] Smith describes the performances as follows:

> Brian Davies, one of the leading directors at La Mama, was a film maker; the production involved Rock'n Roll: there was a Rock'n Roll Band; the whole show was staged like a movie with a boom mike for the dialogue, there was a mock camera crew and the production moved around that tiny little La Mama space using all of the room including nooks and crannies and the staircase; it seems that Brecht's plays were ideal for that idea of environmental staging.

This description shows that members of La Mama did not consider Brecht and his work as classics or supreme models which could not be touched any longer, but as a basis for creative work. In this production, the idea of staging the play like a movie did not only make Brecht's work seem up-to-date, but also might have helped on a formal level to create a kind of *Verfremdung* in this intimate venue by introducing another medium. At the same time, it relates to the strong influence the cinema had on Brecht himself. The inclusion of

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[1] *The Age*, 30.4.71.
[2] Hutton (1975), 75.
[3] No reviews could be found. *The Exception and the Rule* was performed at Gallery A, Toorak and at La Mama (late June), together with *The Elephant Calf* and *In the Jungle of the Cities*. The choice of plays indicate Davies' strong interest in those Brecht's plays, which had not been performed on the Australian stage yet and which were not part of the 'classical' Brecht-repertoire.

rock'n roll music would have made the performance attractive to young audiences who had welcomed The Beatles enthusiastically in Melbourne four years earlier. The production had some resemblance to Ellis' and Moshinsky's productions of Brecht's plays. They changed the performance style so that contemporary audiences could relate to Brecht's plays.

The 'fringe' of Australian theatre had started to develop a bold approach towards the 'classic' playwright Brecht. La Mama's approach towards Brecht marked the beginning of theatre practitioners and reviewers outside academia asking for the validity of Brecht's plays for contemporary audiences[1], thus leading towards the concept of ownership as suggested by Kosky.

Overall, the analysis of the two productions shows that the late 1960s and early 1970s were a transition period in the reception of Brecht's work for theatre. My analysis of productions of plays by Dürrenmatt and Frisch will show that mainstream theatre's tendency to blunt Brecht's political message was representative of the overall reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights at the time. However, while mainstream theatre tended to tone down Brecht's political message and to adapt his aesthetics to naturalistic theatre, alternative theatre no longer tried to turn the political dimension of Brecht's work into humanist concerns. At the same time alternative theatre companies developed a bold approach towards Brecht's aesthetics. In the years to come, the growth of the alternative theatre movement reinforced this new angle of interpretation of Brechtian theatre.

5. RISING INTEREST - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE 1970S

5.1 Characteristics of the 1970s, interest in Brecht

In the federal election of December 1972, the Australian Labor Party won office from the Liberal-Country Party coalition which had been in power since 1949. The new Labor government introduced a number of sweeping changes including the abandonment of conscription and withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam, the diplomatic recognition of China and East Germany and the introduction of a national health system. The change of government increased the pace of Australia's social and cultural development by such

[1] Cf. Brecht's encouragement to Giorgio Strehler in 1956 to adapt *The Threepenny Opera* for the staging in Milano. Bertolt Brecht / Giorgio Strehler, "Ein Gesprächprotokoll", 139, in: Hecht (1985), 134-143.

strategies as the encouragement of multiculturalism and a more multi-faceted society; it was to this end that the 'White Australia Policy' was abandoned. McDonald and Humphries note that "the opening-out in people's acceptance of divergence of various kinds was real, to the point that what was once called 'deviance' (and that was the educated person's term) would become more or less mainstream".[2] The new Labor government also transformed education and the arts policies. University fees were abolished and increased funding was made available through scholarships and financial assistance. As a result of generous funding[3] and greater public interest, "art became repulsively popular"[4], as Barry Humphries put it.

This increase in artistic activity saw the establishment of alternative theatres like La Mama and the Australian Performing Group (APG) in Melbourne and Nimrod in Sydney. They were closely associated to a 'New Wave' style of staging and playwriting. Many of the New Wave playwrights had a university background and had been involved in the student protest movement of the late 60s. They were interested in an increased variety of approaches to playwriting and felt free to tackle a wide range of subjects. Australian directors experimented with a range of novel staging techniques.

Both playwrights and theatre practitioners sought to promote an authentic Australian writing and performance style. Although some would have preferred to exclude all foreign influence from the Australian stage, others were open to overseas experimental and alternative theatre and this contributed to a liberation from traditional forms, above all naturalism.[5]

A very strong force among the foreign stimuli was Brecht, especially as his work was perceived as combining aesthetic and political challenges in an ideal way. The general politicisation of the arts through the youth movement and Vietnam War protests led to greater political awareness among theatre practitioners, critics and audiences. For the new

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[1] It bears repeating that the reaction by *The Age* theatre critic in 1959 can be considered an early exception. As mentioned earlier, Richard Murphet had used the term 'relevant' when reviewing John Ellis' and Elijah Moshinsky's production of *Mother Courage*, noting that the play deserved attention "in terms of its relevance to our times", *Lot's Wife*, 9.5.67.

[2] McDonald (1999a), 139.

[3] The support for the Australian Council for the Arts consisted in 1972 of $8.4 million and in 1974 (under Whitlam)of $22 million; it subsequently declined during the Fraser years, cf.: Serle (1987), 215.

[4] McDonald (1999a), 119; cf. also Radic (1991), 116: "Gough Whitlam made the arts his personal responsibility, thereby giving them a prominence and respectability which they had hitherto lacked."

[5] Cf. also my study of the production and reception of Handke's plays in the mid-1970s.

writers, "theatre was a natural [political] forum".[1]

As a result, the development of Australian theatre had reached a stage where Brecht could further the development of non-naturalistic, politically engaged local theatre and drama. As seen in the case of La Mama in 1969, New Wave received Brechtian theatre as a way to break with conventional drama and staging; in turn, the success of the new plays and experiments in staging increased Australian audiences' and critics' familiarity with a type of non-naturalistic, politically orientated theatre which smoothed the way for a positive reception of Brecht. A state had been reached where Brecht and the New Wave enhanced each other.

The favourable attitude towards Brecht in the theatre scene was reinforced by a continued interest in Brecht's plays and theories at universities. A production of *Mother Courage* at Monash University in 1973 directed by John Wregg was accompanied by a "Mother Courage Forum. Brecht's Theatre" for instance.[2] This was all the more important as universities were considered to be at the forefront of theatrical and political developments. In Melbourne, where no drama school existed until the foundation of the Victorian College of the Arts in 1976[3], universities continued to provide a focal point for those interested in theatre. Similarly to the developments in the late 1950s, universities gave momentum to crucial developments in Australian theatre. However, such students could only pursue their interest on a limited basis within the framework of an Arts degree. Australian director Lindzee Smith confirms the crucial role played by universities in circulating new ideas about theatre when he describes the situation in the late 1960s:

> Richard Murphet, John Romeril, John Hawkes and I were there; the Alexander Theatre had just been built; but as you could not study drama theoretically in a course, we found out by reading the books. (...) Some lecturers were also very influential in our thinking.[4]

Discussions that accompanied performances were important for spreading the knowledge on Brecht both on campus and beyond. The close relationship between theatre and the universities continued until the late 1970s; Monash University, for instance, had close ties with the APG at the Pram Factory because it had produced several writers who later

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[1]Radic (1991), 5; cf. "Youth and the assumed values of youth (political progressivism, sexual liberation, social openness) were the cornerstone of their dramatic practice", in: Meyrick (1999 (June)), 19. The strong Australian interest in Hochhuth's *The Representative* in the mid-1960s created an awareness of documentary theatre. However, my analysis will show that most Australians were reluctant to apply the critical component of German documentary theatre to their own experiences.

[2] Alexander Theatre, 11.8.73.

[3] I have pointed out the important role of Monash Teachers' College in my analysis of John Ellis' work.

[4] Personal Interview, 26.10. 98.

worked there.[1] Workshops at Monash University strengthened the links between the campus and the APG.[2] The proximity of La Mama to student life at Melbourne University was not inconsequential to the careers of Jack Hibberd and David Williamson.

The 1970s also saw some ground-breaking Australian studies of Brecht. In 1974, the Australian academic John Milfull's study *From Baal to Keuner* [3] appeared. It was of significance because he concentrated on a wider range of plays than those considered to be 'humanist' and because he supported his studies through research at the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. He also rejected Esslin's "political bias" against Brecht.[4] Michael Morley, who is a member of the International Brecht-Society and who has been involved in the musical aspects of many productions of Brecht's plays, published his study on Brecht in 1977.[5]

As far as reviews are concerned, the number of well-informed critiques of performances of Brecht's plays grew. This was due on the one hand to the emergence of theatre critics who were thoroughly trained and, on the other, to the critics' widening experience in describing non-naturalistic theatre. Peter Holloway notes, in *Contemporary Australian Drama*, how critics had to develop new ways to discuss plays when Patrick White's plays were staged in the early 1960s. He detects "the first serious literary considerations of the new wave of Australian drama" around 1972 / '73 and observes the peak of sophisticated dramatic criticism in the late 1970s.[6] The monthly magazine *Theatre Australia*, launched by academics at the University of Newcastle in 1976 and aiming at comprehensive national coverage, contributed to a rise in the quality of performance criticism.

5.2 *Jim Sharman's production of* The Threepenny Opera *(1973)*

1973 saw the production of two plays by Brecht which marked changing attitudes towards his work. Jim Sharman, directing *The Threepenny Opera* for the Old Tote, was among the first to adapt one of Brecht's plays for contemporary mainstream theatre-goers.

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[1] Radic (1991), 56.

[2] Cf. Australian actor Julie Forsyth: In the late 1970s, "the absurdists were in. We did Albee, Pinter, Stoppard, Beckett, Louis Nowra and Brecht. At the time, professionals were invited to run workshops at the campus, which is where I met people like Rob Meidrum and Jenny Kemp who were working at the Pram Factory.", 171, in: Trengove (1991), 169-181.

[3] Milfull (1974).

[4] He says about Esslin's biography (Esslin (1962)): it "virtually disqualifies itself by its political bias", Milfull (1974), 11.

[5] Morley (1977). Morley is also Professor of Drama at Flinders University, theatre critic, musician and musical director.

[6] Holloway (1981), XXXVI.

In the same year, the MTC invited the Berliner Ensemble's Joachim Tenschert to direct *Mother Courage.*

By the time of Sharman's production of The Threepenny Opera for the Old Tote the latter had become a state company after its separation from NIDA, the National Institute of Dramatic Art, in 1969. Reactions towards the production are important in two respects. In the first instance, they indicate a growing awareness among theatre critics of the critical component of Brecht's work; secondly they show how the question of relevance started to be applied to mainstream theatre by theatre practitioners and critics alike.

Sharman adapted *The Threepenny Opera* "to apply to depression Sydney and then sprinkled in a few gags about a forthcoming Royal visit for topicality value"[1] and most critics appreciated the entertainment value of the performance[2], though several of them noted that the play's critical dimension was missing. Katharine Brisbane, in *The Australian*, regretted that this production had lost its "satirical point (...) that the motives and methods of the captain of industry and the captain of crime are too alike for comfort". *The Sunday Telegraph's* critic remarked that "we should have been squirming ill-at-ease in the Opera House plushy surrounds".[3] Even if the latter comment ignored the success of *The Threepenny Opera* as entertainment in its international reception history, it did nevertheless indicate an increased awareness of the critical component in Brecht's work across the range of newspapers.

While critics had previously rejected this aspect of Brecht's work out-of-hand or referred to it in terms of humanistic concerns[4], the reactions towards Sharman's production indicate a greater sensitivity to the fact that social conditions are the primary object of Brechtian critique.

Sharman decided to "revamp"[5] *The Threepenny Opera* and to set it in depression Sydney. Many critics regarded this strategy as unsuccessful without specifying reasons.[6] Katharine Brisbane was the only critic who tried to explain in any detail what she considered the

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[1] *The Sun*, 9.10.73. In 1978, George Whaley adapted the play in a similar way when he directed it for NIDA, cf. SMH, 21.10.78.
[2] *The Sun*, 9.10.73, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 14.10.73, *The Daily Mirror*, 10.10.73, *SMH*, 8.10.73.
[3] *The Sunday Telegraph*, 14.10.73; no name given; cf. also: "it detracts from Brecht's original conscience-stirring motives", *The Sun*, 9.10.73.
[4] Cf. *The Age* Theatre Critic (no name given) who called it "a bitter lecture on loving the destitute", *The Age*, 10.1.1959.
[5] *The Sun*, 9.10.73.
[6] H.G.Kippax called the local allusions "an imposition", *SMH*, 8.10.73.

shortcomings of Sharman's production. According to Brisbane, an adaptation to Sydney in the 1920s failed for historical reasons although the play's critical component was still relevant in contemporary Australia.[1] Sharman had "tried to imply some superficial relation between post-war Australia and post-war Germany. It does not work; he is trying to compare an exhausted, demoralised society with that of a country not yet weaned". Brisbane's comparative approach was effectively a new way of judging a performance of a play by Brecht. Her conclusion is couched in social-historical terms: "Decadence we are simply not old enough to know about".[2]

Irrespective of the adaptation's success, it is important for the overall development in attitudes towards Brecht, that the focus of reception began to shift from the attempt to merely come to terms with Brecht's work to a discussion of relevant ways of staging his work. My analysis of plays by other German-speaking playwrights will confirm that asking for a production's relevance was a first step towards a search for ways of owning it, ultimately leading to considerations about ownership like Kosky's. In relation to Australian theatre history, Sharman's adaptation was in line with the increasing demand of Australian theatre practitioners, theatre-related institutions and financial supporters for relevant productions.[3] It was Sharman's special merit, though, to attempt to stage a relevant production in a mainstream theatre[4]; my analysis will show that the majority of innovative productions were staged in alternative theatres.

5.3 *Joachim Tenschert's production of* Mother Courage *(1973)*

While London audiences had the opportunity in 1956 to see performances which Brecht himself had prepared for the Berliner Ensemble's visit to England, Melbourne audiences had to wait 17 years for a production of *Mother Courage* which involved a member of the Berliner Ensemble. Until recently, the majority of productions of Brecht's plays in mainstream theatre had been adjusted rigorously to the naturalistic norms of Australian theatre, the political aspects of Brecht's theatre either ignored or blunted. The problem with

[1] " (...) not without its references on a wider plane in 1973", *The Australian*, 8.10.73.
[2] *The Australian*, 8.10.73.
[3] Cf. the report of the "Industries Assistance Commission on the performing arts" in 1976 as related by Brian Hoad in his article "The vain quest for relevance", *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77 and my analysis thereof in context of the reception of Handke's plays.
[4] Sharman persisted in his efforts to prevent mainstream theatre from becoming set in its ways when he took over the South Australian Theatre Company, renamed it Lighthouse Company and produced new work. Cf. also my analysis of Sharman's production of the *Lulu* plays.

Australian responses to Brecht was summed up effectively by Ian Robinson in his review of Joachim Tenschert's production for *The National Times*: "The Melbourne Theatre Company finally discovered Brecht's plays about three years ago. Now they have discovered Brecht".[1]

While part of the Australian theatre scene continued to ignore the political implications of Brecht's work, others looked for ways of making Brecht's plays meaningful and topical for Australian audiences. In this climate of mixed reception, the function of a production, which was considered by many as authentic and the reactions towards it are of special interest.

Firstly, the question arises as to why the performances took place exactly at that time. In Sumner's *Recollections*, it appears initially as though the timing was accidental.[2] An in-depth look at the history of Australian theatre shows, though, that Australian theatre flourished at the time. In the early 1970s as the State Companies established themselves, drama departments were founded and Australian plays were written and produced in greater numbers. Australian theatre could look beyond mere survival and include stimuli from countries outside the English-speaking world. The prevailing taste for Brecht at the time created a favourable climate for the reception of *Mother Courage*.

The programme notes compiled by Tenschert quoted extensively from Brecht's notes to the play and included allusions to the political dimension of his work. Because the play was staged according to the *Mother Courage Model*, the play's political content was also stressed in the performance.

Despite such a clear line of interpretation, the critic Geoffrey Hutton seemed to work entirely within the framework of a-political naturalistic productions when reviewing the production. Although he had defended Brecht against the accusation of 'preaching' in his review of Cherry's production of *Brecht on Brecht* eight years earlier, claiming that Brecht's ideas "are rather an attitude than a sermon", his reactions to *Mother Courage* read like a change of mind. He reverted to judging Brecht's ideology and aesthetics with expressions from the semantic field of preaching. Hutton's interpretation was that Brecht was a playwright with a distinctly authoritarian mind-set, as can be seen from references to "Brecht's preaching" and "propaganda", the view that the audience "must learn something"

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[1] *National Times*, 2.7.73.

[2] "When Yolande Bird, our London representative, told me Joachim could be interested in coming to Australia to direct it, I asked her to follow up the idea.", Sumner (1993), 249.

and the insistence that the actors address the audience "as he directed that they should".[1] It can be assumed that Cherry's production of *Brecht on Brecht* must have kept Brecht's ideology within acceptable limits for Hutton. Tenschert's overtly political and didactic production, however, seems to have exceeded the critic's tolerance level.[2] Thus, Hutton's reaction is representative of the response of a number of Australian critics, such as Kippax, who reacted favourably towards a production as long as it had been naturalised.

Although Hutton acknowledged Brecht's ideology in general, he attempted to declare it invalid in the context of this particular play. According to Hutton, Brecht's "playwright fingers do not entirely obey his teacher's head". The foundation of this opinion was a concept of the playwright's activity which was closely allied to the notions of inspiration and genius. His claims recalled Esslin's assessment of Brecht as a good playwright despite his politics as expressed in *Brecht: A Choice of Evils.*[3] It was this view that allowed Hutton to misinterpret everything he saw on stage in terms of the conventions of naturalistic performance and hence to treat the play as a study of Mother Courage's character, thus ignoring the political side of the performance.

Ian Robinson, writing for *The National Times*[1], did take the political level into account, but paid limited attention to it because he considered the performance irrelevant to contemporary Australian audiences. The reason for this has more to do with the aesthetics underlying the production, and will be analysed in the following.

Regarding Brecht's aesthetics, Tenschert's work helped to increase familiarity with Brecht by means of staging-techniques which reproduced the Brechtian model and by providing comprehensive information. Before arriving in Australia to direct the play, Tenschert sent his own extensive notes on "The Visual World of *Mother Courage*", notes on the characters, intended to be used "not only for the casting", and comments on the role

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[1] *The Age*. 22.6.73; Brecht himself noticed that his notes give an "impression of forced solemnity" and explained: "It just isn't easy always to make an analysis of this sort convey the lightness and insouciance which are essential to the theatre.", in: Willett (1964), 221.

[2] Hutton's negative impression could have been reinforced by the fact that Tenschert's express reference to Brecht's *Mother Courage Model* had made Hutton aware of Brecht's systematic approach towards directing and staging. However, this interpretation would ignore Brecht's flexibility when working on a production and on a model. Cf. Brecht's "From the Mother Courage Model": "They [the models] are intended not to render thought unnecessary but to provoke it: not as a substitute for artistic creation but as a stimulus.", in: Willett (1964), 216 (215-222); cf. also: "For the model is not set up in order to fix the style of performance; quite the contrary. The emphasis is on development: changes are to be provoked and to be made perceptible.", in: "Masterful Treatment of a Model (Foreword to *Antigone*)", 212, in: Willett (1964), 209-215.

[3] Esslin (1959); cf. the reactions towards Cherry's *The Threepenny Opera*.

of Mother Courage "written for the actress of the performance in Melbourne in 1973"[2], who was going to be Gloria Dawn".[3] He also included Brecht's notes about "The Dramatic Curve of the Play", Brecht's "Notes about the Play", which were later included in the programme notes, extracts from "A Short Organon for the Theatre", as well as photos of the Berliner Ensemble's production in 1949, drawings for the stage by Heinrich Kilger and ground plans for individual scenes. Apart from the extracts from "A Short Organon for the Theatre"[4], Tenschert provided the material in German and it was translated in Melbourne.[5]

The programme notes for the performances were detailed and comprehensive, unlike those for previous MTC productions of Brecht's plays. They comprised extracts from Brecht's notes for the play, information on the Thirty Years War, the text of the Courage song and notes on "Epic Theatre" from *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*[6].

The same high standard also applied to the definition of *Verfremdung*. The programme notes quoted Brecht saying: "One of the main points [of the *Courage* film, 1951] will be to keep the spectator at a distance from Courage (..)". This explanation comes close to the neologism 'distanciation' which is in common use today.

Reviewers also seemed to be aware of the problematic nature of the term 'alienation', as can be surmised from the fact that none of the reviewers made use of the term. In *The Age*, Hutton described Tenschert's style as a conscious attempt "to avoid empathy" and demonstrated that he continued to view Brechtian theatre through the lens of naturalistic theatre with its emphasis on empathy, identification and compassion with the characters being one of its main aims.[7] In the same vein, he criticised the "flat roles" in the play, which did not meet the standard of naturalistic 'fully rounded characters'. In general, he treated *Mother Courage* like a character study, dubbing Mother Courage "Mother Greed" and condemning her for sacrificing her children.[1] As Hutton ignored the social context of the character's behaviour and attributed it to a universal vice, he 'universalised' the play and thus allows himself and his readers to maintain traditional ways of receiving a theatrical

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[1] *National Times*, 2.7.73.
[2] "Für die Darstellerin von Melbourne 1973 geschrieben".
[3] Unpublished.
[4] Translation taken from Willett (1964).
[5] Translator's name not given.
[6] The translation of "Epic Theatre" seems to have been taken out of Willett (1964).
[7] Cf. McCallum (1981), 158-161: "As a term of praise, 'compassion' is one of the most commonly used words in Australian reviewing"; often it is implied "that it is compassion which is the mechanisms by which fully-rounded characters are made interesting on stage".

performance.

Robinson's definition of *Verfremdung* in *The National Times* was a direct response to Hutton's remark:

> Courage should not be seen as an 'unnatural' mother who sacrifices her children for greed. Indeed, the question of whether she is to be despised or admired does not really arise. Like real people the characters in the play are fraught with contradictions and Brecht is very careful to make sure we identify with none of them.
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> Rather than being involved in or judging the people of the play Brecht wants us to be aware of the action and to judge the situation - to say simply 'Look, what they are doing' and more importantly, 'Look what the situation is doing to them'.[2]

Such an explanation took Brecht's work out of the naturalistic context in which Hutton had assessed it and judged it in its own terms, stressing the insight into social situations as its main focus. The reviewer did not use any technical term for *Verfremdung*, but described the performance instead as being free from "emotional entanglements".[3]

Tenschert's production succeeded in putting Brecht's model into effect in a mainstream Australian theatre. It was considered "the authentic version"[4] of the play, by Hutton amongst others, and was thought to show "how a definitive production should be done".[5] Twenty years later, Leonard Radic would even use it as a point of reference for assessing Jean-Pierre Mignon's production for Anthill.[6]

The fact that the majority of earlier productions of Brecht's plays had not achieved this, is confirmed by the indignation Howard Palmer expressed in his review for *The Sun* about the fact that the play is "episodic with moments or years between the scenes" leading to "detraction", "too much apparent reconstruction of the stage" and "flashing of the slides on the 'clothes line' white curtains".[7] At the MTC at least, Brechtian devices of staging a play were still a novelty. Tenschert was the first director to follow Brecht's *Mother Courage Model*.[8]

Twenty four years had passed however since the Model itself had first been published and a modification, which Brecht himself had introduced when staging the play in Britain in 1956[9], seemed to suggest itself. This indeed must have been Tenschert's original intention

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[1] *The Age*, 22.6.73.
[2] *National Times*, 2.7.73.
[3] *National Times*, 2.7.73.
[4] G. Hutton, *The Age*, 22.6.73.
[5] Sumner (1993), 249.
[6] *The Age*, 10.6.93. Concerning the dispute this caused cf. the analysis of Mignon's production in 1993.
[7] *The Sun*, 22.6.73. Although he admits that "this is deliberate" he does not approve of this way of staging.
[8] After Tenschert's production Sumner did not direct any plays by Brecht any more.
[9] Cf. "Our London Season", in: Willett (1964), 283.

as expressed in a letter concerning the Melbourne production: "Here is some material illustrating one possibility of the stage, the scenery and the costumes of *Mother Courage*". The material, he continued, was intended to provide "stimulations and suggestions [as to] what can be used, what can be developed and modified, what must be changed."[1] In effect, he considered the model as a foundation for the development of new ideas for the Australian stage.

As far as the topic is concerned, Tenschert regarded the play itself as having great social and political relevance. In a reflection about Australians' experiences with war he argued:

> So erscheint die Welt des Kriegs in der theatralischen Erscheinungsform der Courage-Bühne zugleich als Parabel, als künstlerisches Gleichnis für die Wirklichkeit, für die Welt nach dem letzten (oder muß man nach Vietnam sagen: vorletzten) großen Krieg, für das Europa und in erster Linie für das Trümmer-Deutschland am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Als Parabel ist diese Bildwelt übertragbar, übersetzbar: sie kann Wahrzeichen sein für eine heile Welt, die den Krieg nicht oder nicht unmitttelbar kennengelernt hat.[2]

Tenschert seems to be justified in pointing to the potential relevance of the play for Australian audiences, especially in the light of the recent public debates about conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.[3] He did not seem to be aware, however, of the function of the Anzac [Australia New Zealand Army Corps] tradition as part of national mythology nor of the fact that the Australian playwright Alan Seymour had critically examined that very tradition in 1960 in his play *The One Day of the Year*.[4] Building on Seymour's ideas as well as on recent debates about the Vietnam War might have been one way of turning *Mother Courage* into a highly topical play. However, Tenschert's translator omitted his direct reference to the Vietnam War. As an indication of the general climate within which Tenschert was to direct the play, and of the conservative

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[1] Letter to Richard Prins and Hugh Colnan, 6.4.73, 1. Equally, when, after 1977, Tenschert worked with Manfred Wekwerth on coproductions for the Berliner Ensemble, they put emphasis on the reevalution of Brecht's work instead of staging repeats of earlier productions.

[2] Letter to Richard Prins and Hugh Colnan, 6.4.73, 3. "So appears the world of the war in its theatre form on the Courage-stage at the same time as a parable, as an artistic image of the reality, for the post-war Europe and especially for the ruin world of Germany after the second world war. As parable this visual world is transferable, translatable: It can be a sign of warning for a world which has not yet, or not yet directly, experienced war." The APG's production of *The Mother*, two years later, showed how relevant Tenschert's connection to contemporary issues was.

[3] Cf. "Australia, as a member of the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation, had sent a small number of army instructors to support South Vietnam in 1962 and 1964, and then began to send combat forces in 1965. (...) By 1968 there were more than 8000 Australian men, (...) in Vietnam. They included conscripts. (...) During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, and the conscription issue, became the focus of bitter public debates.", in: Bassett (1994), 326-327.

[4] Seymour (1962). Cf. also Sumner Locke Elliott's critical look at the army in *Rusty Bugles*, which premiered in 1948.

mainstream ethos of the MTC, the omission seems a significant one[1] though the actors themselves would have had a chance to become acquainted with Tenschert's view during rehearsal.

Robinson's review for *The National Times* shows that the MTC favoured spending money on an expensive set rather than on additional rehearsal time[2] which would have allowed Tenschert and the actors to adapt the play to the contemporary Australian political context. As a result, Tenschert endeavoured to do his best with the play in the short available rehearsal time by copying closely the *Mother Courage Model* thus contradicting his own conviction that "A theatre is truly understandable and meaningful only in the social and cultural reality in which it exists".[3]

This had two consequences for Australian perceptions of Brecht as a playwright and theatre practitioner. Firstly, the presentation of what was viewed as a 'faithful' Brechtian production led to the false impression that Brecht intended his plays to be "stark" and "sombre"[4]. Reviewing *Mother Courage* for *The Australian*, Barrie Watts reiterated the misleading view that Brecht's theatre was designed to be hostile towards the spectator, that Brecht preached at his audiences and provided "dramatised lectures" instead of plays.[5]

Secondly, lack of attention to the issues of the day left an overriding critical assumption intact: the view of performances as independent units of entertainment removed from audiences' lives. Critics tried to come to terms with this production's Brechtian style without giving thought to the broader function of Brechtian devices and in general failed to consider the notion, so important to Brecht, that a play's purpose extends beyond the fourth wall of the stage through its topicality. The performance came across as a dry and didactic museum-piece, "undeniably out of its epoch"[6], thus illustrating what both Peter Brook and

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[1] Gordon Graham remarks in connection to Alan Hopgood's *Private Yuk Objects* that the MTC was "an establishment dominated medium unsympathetic to" the Vietnam debate, in: *The Australian's Review of Books*, vol. 4, issue 5, June 1999, 21.

[2] "In fact it might have been better if some of the money spent in staging the show had been spent on longer rehearsal time for, although the set and costumes mirror the Berlin production, here they are much more lavish and at times the play is weighed down by the rich, elaborate and expensive tawdriness of its environment.", *National Times*, 2.7.73.

[3] *National Times*, 2.7.73. According to Willett, Tenschert was pleased with the actors' achievements, cf. Willett (1977), 101.

[4] *The Sun*, 22.6.73. Sumner had formed this opinion even before Tenschert's production: "The play is certainly stark: death and corruption are shown dispassionately." in: Sumner (1993), 250.

[5] Cf. "Brecht has a capacity to go on and on until, by sheer weight of blows, he bludgeons people out of their seats. He can be a very tedious fellow." *The Australian*, 29.6.73. It has been shown that this prejudice was already part of the programme notes of Cherry's production of *Brecht on Brecht*.

[6] *The Australian*, 29.6.73.

Barrie Kosky called "deadly theatre"[1].

In the mainstream press, Robinson alone was willing to ask whether Tenschert's production was relevant to Australian audiences.[2] Outside the mainstream, the same question was put much more forcefully by Nicholas Croft, who reviewed *Mother Courage* for the student magazine *Farrago*. His description of Brecht as a 'dead classic' confirms the politicisation of universities detected earlier:

> The main lesson of the evening is that when Brecht becomes accepted (...) there is not much left. In fact, what is left is so subversively antisocialist and reactionary that it should be banned as an obscenity, if only in memory of Bertolt Brecht, which is about all he is now, a memory.[3]

Croft is the first reviewer to indirectly suggest what Roger Pulvers would call an "irreverent approach" six years later and what would eventually lead to a bold approach towards Brecht's plays. His criticism also bears similarities to Kosky's speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival in so far as he pointed to the danger of preserving Brecht's work as that of a dead classic.

Members of the original audience[4] recall the performance as contrived and dull in contrast with Ellis' and Moshinsky's performance which they remember for its visual impact[5]. As their production had been characterised by both being vital and showing vitality, it was in stark contrast with Tenschert's production which resulted in a museum piece. Thus, Robinson summed up the lack of audience connection in Tenschert's production by saying "the MTC have fathered a production that breaks no new ground and may fail to really grip Melbourne audiences as fully as it might."[6]

5.4 *Lindzee Smith's production of* The Mother *(1975), Wal Cherry's production of* The Threepenny Opera *(1975)*

Tenschert's and Sharman's productions had distinguished themselves from other performances because Tenschert reproduced the Brechtian model and incorporated its original political dimension while Sharman adapted Brecht's play but underemphasised its political implications. The year 1975 saw two productions of plays by Brecht which

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[1] Cf. my introduction.

[2] My analysis of Robinson's review of Handke's *My Foot My Tutor* will show that he was aware of the nature of communication in the theatre and that he took the audience's role into account.

[3] *Farrago*, vol.51, no11, Melbourne, 6.7.73.

[4] Tenschert's production represents a special case because many members of the original audience remember his visit as an important event.

[5] Cf. Phillip Adam's comment in *The Bulletin*, 13.5.67: "It was as a visual production that this *Mother Courage* was truly memorable."

[6] *National Times*, 2.7.73.

reflected a more comprehensive approach towards Brecht's plays. Both the production of *The Mother* by the Australian Performing Group (APG) and Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for New Opera South Australia aimed at combining the political and the aesthetic dimension of Brecht's work; they were both aware of the need to adapt the original plays for contemporary audiences. The two productions are highly interesting case studies because they represent two different ways of rising to this challenge. Cherry was happy to maintain Brecht's aesthetic devices, but he felt the need to put topical references into the text and was supported in this by John Willett who acted as a dramaturge for this production. The APG, directed by Lindzee Smith, did not modify the text of Brecht's play because they perceived it as relevant in its current form. Instead, they took a liberal approach to its aesthetic side. Overall, the APG's approach was reminiscent of that taken by Brian Davies at La Mama in 1969, with director and actors bringing out the social and political core of Brechtian drama in an up-to-date setting and performance style.

Lindzee Smith's production of *The Mother* (1975)

On a wider scale, perspectives on Brecht offered in this production fitted into the overall context of the reception of Brecht at the time; some Australian theatre practitioners were developing a dynamic relationship with Brecht's work and attempting to highlight its interest for contemporary audiences. At the same time, the APG's treatment of Brecht reflected the individual response to Brecht by Australian director Lindzee Smith, who had been particularly impressed by 'The Living Theatre', Richard Schechner's work and the environmental theatre movement as a whole during his stay in the United States in the early 1970s. To Smith, "Brecht and radical theatre seemed to be intertwined"[1] and this radicalism was bound up with the aesthetics of the work as well as its politics.

To all appearances. Brecht was an ideal ally for a politically engaged theatre cooperative like the APG and in this respect the APG's use of him was compatible to that of Wal Cherry in 1959. The crucial difference here was that Cherry wanted a catalyst for the revival of apolitical, traditional drama, while the APG was eager to break with traditional drama and present performances that were politically engaged.

Brecht's work seemed to represent a perfect combination of political and aesthetic

[1] Personal interview. 26.10.98.

challenges for the alternative theatres produced by the cultural climate of the late 1960s.[1] However, comparison of the APG's ideology and methodology and those of Brecht points to more differences than were acknowledged at the time.

At first sight, Brecht's play and his theories on theatre seemed congenial to a group like the APG whose agenda was set out in 1972 in a proposal entitled "Why are we here?":

> "Political reasons. The state of the nation is about as rotten as proverbial Denmark's... Theatrical reasons. Australian theatre in this century has been morally bankrupt, formally obsolete, politically irrelevant and not Australian in any recognisable way..."[2]

The APG was, in other words, a radical theatre group with strong commitments to a range of political activities such as community theatre, street theatre and protests like the May Day demonstrations[3]. Because of their tendency to work within a late 1960s idealist framework and in a theatre community which "kept the 60s alive during the 70s"[4], theatre was so much considered a way of life that the group failed to realise that Brecht's political engagement was far more theoretical than their own.[5]

Four years later, on the instigation of the Sydney Goethe-Institute, a reading of Günter Grass' play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*[6] at Nimrod began questioning the idealised image of Brecht as a politically engaged playwright, as participants came to terms with Grass's criticism of Brecht's lack of engagement on the occasion of the East German Workers' uprising on the 17th of June 1953.[7]

In retrospect, some researchers would also point to differences in working methods. In accordance with its political convictions, the APG operated as a collective. Brecht, too, was thought to have developed his productions with the help of a group of people. The

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[1] Fischer-Lichte describes similar cases and concludes: In many cases, interculturalism serves "as much primarily aesthetic and theatrical goals as predominantly socio-cultural ones.", in: Fischer-Lichte (1990), 15.

[2] *National Times*, 6.9.81.

[3] Smith reports that "the actors ran ahead of the [May Day] demonstration and performed little scenes; Romeril wrote specific plays for each event; it required quick rehearsals and dynamic images with music (...), all these things coming directly from the Brechtian tradition in my opinion". Personal interview, 26.10.98.

[4] Bill Garner, one of the founding members of the APG, *National Times*, 6.9.81.

[5] Cf. also Meyrick (1999 (June)), 19: "the protest politics of the anti-Vietnam War movement show a tendency towards self-dramatisation. (...) The personal became political and the political became theatrical".

[6] Martin Esslin directed the staged reading, which took place on 16 July 1979. Cf. my analysis of the rehearsed playreadings organised by Rainer Lübbren.

[7] Although the reading was not reviewed in daily papers like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, its detailed announcement by Martin Esslin in *Theatre Australia* created awareness in theatre circles, cf. Esslin (1979); for a general increase in critical awareness cf. also Thor Svensen's review of Horler's *Galileo* in: *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.

democratic structure of such workshops has however been widely called into question in the meantime.[1] It is noteworthy that Brecht's significance on this score was still intact in the theatrical community of the late APG. Even Garrie Hutchinson, the *National Times'* critic who detected a contradiction between the political idealism represented in *The Mother* and the political reality of leftist groups in Australia at the time, did not question Brecht's own integrity which he went so far as to describe in terms of "radical innocence".[2]

On the whole, Australian alternative theatre in general had an idealised picture of Brecht. Philip Thomson reported:

> Brecht was a huge figure for them [theatre practitioners in alternative theatres]. This was also due to their impression that Brecht was a 'disadvantaged' playwright, which, of course, did not correspond to the reality of his working conditions in the GDR at all.[3]

At the APG, Lindzee Smith was working under conditions which were the opposite of Brecht's and his 'Nightshift' subgroup extended to include "people who had come out of prisons, off the streets, who had a love for theatre"[4]. In spite of this, Brecht clearly served the APG's aesthetic and political purposes at the time.

The play *The Mother* suited the group well. Condemned after its premiere in 1932 by parts of the German press as "allerrotestes Parteitheater"[5] and received enthusiastically in 1970 by the leftist German avantgarde[6], its political content corresponded to the group's resolve "to provide the public with plays that not only entertain, but confront, rather than obscure the issues of the day". They also perceived many contemporary problems as part of "a crisis of capitalism".[7]

Both the APG and the reviewers[8] considered the play a *Lehrstück*[9].With the exception of

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[1] Cf. Fuegi (1994), Willett (1984a).
[2] *The Australian*, 20.8.75.
[3] Personal interview , 30.11.99; Like the APG, many theatre collectives and co-operatives saw themselves as alternatives to the hierarchical power structures of the 'mainstream' theatre".
[4] Personal interview, 26.10.98. While Australians involved in the alternative theatre movement of the time could not have been aware of differences between their own theatrical practices and Brecht's because the latter were only publicly debated in later years, it is likely that some members of the theatre community tried to maintain as untainted an image of Brecht as possible - a factor that would reflect the idealist climate of the 1970s, cf. McDonald (1999a), 135.
[5] "Redest party political theatre", Sternaux, *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, 17.1.1932, cf. Wyss (1977), 85.
[6] Cf. Schneider (1979), 27: "Diese radikaldemokratische bis sozialistische Intellektuellen-Bewegung, die sich als neue Avantgarde begriff (...) erkannte sich in den revolutionären Protagonisten der Brechtschen Stücke, in der 'Mutter', in 'Matti', in den Pariser Kommunarden usw. begeistert wieder; was seinen Ausdruck unter anderem in der emphatischen Aufnahme von Peter Steins Schaubühneninszenierung der *Mutter* (1970) mit Therese Giehse in der Titelrolle fand."
[7] Press release.
[8] *The Age*, 20.8.75, *The Australian*, 20.8.75, *National Times*, 1.9.75.
[9] For the categorisation of *The Mother* as *Lehrstück* cf. Knopf (1980), 125.

New Theatre, Australian theatre companies had avoided performing those of Brecht's plays which could be viewed as overtly didactic up until the early 1970s. It was only in the late 1960s with the production of Brian Davies' *The Exception and the Rule* for La Mama that the Australian theatre witnessed any sort of real politicisation of theatre and this was confined largely to alternative theatre. The APG, which had developed out of 'La Mama Actors' Workshop', followed in the footsteps of Davies' production and radicalised his approach. For the first and only time in the Australian Brecht reception, this created the conditions for regarding Brecht's plays as relevant without adapting them radically. So far, presenting politically orientated plays on most Australian stages would have caused such a strong clash with Australian norms and audience expectations that most directors opted for the so-called 'humanist' plays which could be adapted more easily to fit traditional approaches to performance and less politicised world views.

Times had changed so much, though, that the APG regarded *The Mother* as a *Lehrstück* not only for themselves but also for the audience: "We mount this production in the interest of self-education, ours as much as yours. We don't claim to have the answers but we're starting to ask the right questions".[1]

The choice of play together with the performance style produced sharply divided reactions. For the majority of critics it was the first time that they were confronted with a production which embraced the political dimension of Brecht's work as relevant for contemporary Australian audiences. Unlike Davies' production, which had taken place in an art gallery, and New Theatre's performances, which could be dismissed cursorily as 'leftist', the APG had become a force in Australian theatre which could no longer be easily marginalised and ignored.[2]

The critics' assessments of the political side of the performance ranged from round condemnation as "simplistic, two-dimensional agitation-propaganda work"[3] to admiring remarks about its willingness to address "the world's biggest political question"[4]. Julia

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[1] Press release; this corresponded to Brecht's following remark: "Das Stück *Die Mutter*, im Stil der Lehrstücke geschrieben, aber Schauspieler erfordernd, ist ein Stück antimetaphysicher, materialistischer, *nichtaristotelischer Dramatik*.", "Anmerkungen [1933], 115, in: Brecht (1991), 115-135.

[2] Eileen Chapman, who played one of the mothers noted: The APG's audience "was a committed audience broadly of the 'left'; so it can be said that it entered society to quite a considerable degree.". Personal interview, 28.12.98.

[3] Radic, *The Age*, 20.8.75, cf. also: Ian Marshall, *Sunday Press*, 24.8.75: "simplistic, black-and-white agitation propaganda".

[4] Hutchinson , *The Australian*, 20.8.75.

Adams, writing for the *Catholic Advocate* [1], went as far as to claim "Brecht's play, and this production, are animated by his ideal" which she perceived as "brotherhood". However, unlike in assessments of previous productions of Brecht's plays, she was the only critic to adapt Brecht to her own world view after having seen such an explicitly political production.

Some critics felt patronised by the didactic aspects of the staging and compared the play as a whole to "a kind of adult 'kindy'"[2]. The vocabulary used to dismiss Brecht's political concerns had shifted from the religious context of "preaching" to an educational one. Disagreements among critics extended to the question of wider social ramifications. While Leonard Radic believed the play had "lost most of its persuasive power"[3], John Smythe thought it "not without contemporary significance to the inquiring mind"[4] and Garrie Hutchinson concluded: "If you are at all interested in anything theatrical or political, you cannot afford to miss it."[5]

Certainly, the performers considered the play relevant, thus withstanding pressures within the APG to regard Australian plays as the only ones capable of topicality to Australians.[6] Smith stated:

> Whereas in a lot of the earlier productions [before La Mama and the APG existed], we were looking at theatre not about our society but about somebody else's society, we were trying to draw parallels between the politics of Brecht and our own society.

Smith, who also produced plays by Kroetz and Handke, added:

> It was contentious to put foreign plays on stage within that context, but I brought them in because I thought it was the only way that young Australian writers and directors would get any idea about a new direction (...) and I think the work [of those foreign playwrights] has been very influential on what is done now.[7]

In this respect, Smith's attitude towards foreign playwrights anticipated that of the next wave of Australian playwrights, the "internationalist" Louis Nowra and Stephen Sewell, who were convinced that "to survive, any culture needs a breath of fresh air from other

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[1] *Catholic Advocate*, 22.8.75.
[2] Robin Prentice, *Nation Review*, 22.8.75; cf. also *The Age*, 20.8.75: "the most enthusiastic members of the audience were little more than kindergarten age".
[3] *The Age*, 20.8.75, *The Australian*, 20.8.75.
[4] *The Melbourne Times*, 22.8.75.
[5] *The Australian*, 20.8.75.
[6] Concerning Brecht's status as foreign playwright in Australia cf. also my later analysis of Svensen's review of Horler's *Galileo*.
[7] Personal interview, 26.10.98; Brecht himself indicated that *The Mother* could be easily transferred to different circumstances, saying: "Die einzelnen Szenen wirkten wie Gleichnisse. Was vorgezeigt wurde, konnte in vielen Ländern vorgehen, überall, wo Zustände und Bewegungen wie die eben geschilderten vorkamen.", in: "Das Stück *Die Mutter*", 110, in: Brecht (1991), 10-114.

cultures"[1]. At the time, Brecht seemed to match the needs of the APG and was thus treated like an ally rather than as an unwanted foreign influence.

Although the APG tended to idealise Brecht politically, they took him off his aesthetic pedestal as an untouchable classic and were ready to modify his ideas. Lindzee Smith made the following comment:

> Some people, who were doing Brecht's work after Brecht's period of influence - like the Berliner Ensemble at a certain stage-, were paying some sort of lip-service to his ideas; I think once the ideas had been assimilated they then were useful for adaptation for a new generation of theatre artists to use.[2]

In overall terms, the APG's style was viewed as "raw, vital, strongly physical".[3] While an emphasis on physical elements matched Brecht's efforts on drawing on the resources of the human body, for instance in expressing *Gestus*, Brecht was far from tolerant towards rough acting.[4]

In Australia, Joachim Tenschert's production was the first to employ a large number of Brechtian devices according to Brecht's own model, at a time when a wider public was about to witness a new generation of theatre practitioners doing away with models and authorities altogether.

In accordance with the latter less traditionalist mode, the APG did not aim at faithful reproductions of texts, but used them as the basis for creative workshopping.[5] Productions often grew in the process of performance itself. Equally, Smith and his group regarded Brecht's plays as a source of inspiration for their own dynamic brand of theatre. This resulted in a bold approach which assumed ownership of Brecht's work and was presented to a larger audience. Although they left the text of *The Mother* untouched, they felt free to

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[1] Davidson (1980), 484; cf. also McCallum (1984).

[2] Personal interview, 26.10.98.

[3] Parsons and Chance (1997), 33, cf. Radic (1991), 91: "the APG's distinctive house style with its strong emphasis on agility, physicality and communicating with the body. (...) Their [the actors'] voices were rough; so were their movements and gestures."

[4] Robinson confirmed this in his critique of the actors caricaturing the unsympathetic characters. Robinson called this "coarse acting, which he [Brecht] would not tolerate. The actor's comment on the character he is playing should come out subtly in his attitude to the part, but does not imply complete over-acting and misrepresentation of the character's faults: accuracy is of essence." *National Times*, 1.9.75. When comparing the APG's and the Berliner Ensemble's acting styles differences in working conditions and founding would need to be taken into account. As remarked before, Brecht was not a 'poor' playwright and director.

[5] The APG did not use the traditional Brechtian set either. Instead, Melbourne architect and set designer Peter Corrigan designed a series of boxes which were flexible enough to be moved around and to be adapted to individual scenes. The collaboration between Corrigan and the APG was characteristic of the 1970s in so far as an higher number of artists worked across artistic boundaries than before, cf. also Martin Sharp's collaboration with Richard Wherrett's in his production of *Kaspar* in 1973.

introduce new staging arrangements and an innovative distribution of roles: "We were mainly inspired by the plays [of Brecht] and the work of his collaborators and the freedom they gave us to do what we wanted to do", as Smith put it.[1] Smith's attitude towards Brecht's plays corresponds to John McCallum's observations about New Wave playwrights. Like for playwrights, for directors and actors "overseas influences ceased to take the form of narrow models and became part of the theatrical kitbag of a new generation" of theatre practitioners. A local, or 'own' theatrical culture established itself as a consequence.[2]

Within this framework, Smith decided that four actresses should play the mother. Brecht had already changed the traditional actor-character relationship and multiple casting took his ideas even further. Apart from producing a kind of *Verfremdungseffekt*, this device aimed to show that "the play is about all mothers in general, so it does not really matter who is portraying the part; (...) this is not the story of one person but the story of mothers all over the world in every country".[3] According to Robinson, "this work[ed] surprisingly well, probably because of the absolute clarity of Brecht's exposition".[4]

Some critics' judgements were nevertheless still clouded by naturalistic expectation of 'fully rounded characters'. For instance, Radic lamented "the lack of characterisation" and that "Pelagea Vlassova is not, like Mother Courage, a warm, flesh-and-blood creation who involves us deeply in her plight"[5]. Similarly, Cherry's reaction towards the production illustrate the differences between his approach to theatre and the APG's one. In a personal interview, Eileen Chapman, who played one of the mothers and who was a former member of Cherry's Emerald Hill ensemble, reported that Cherry told her after seeing the performance: "This is not what I have taught you at Emerald Hill". Cherry added: "When someone is cooking the soup I want to smell the soup".[6]

The distribution of Vlassova's role among four actresses was also thought to add a

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[1] Personal interview, 26.10.98.
[2] McCallum (1984), 287.
[3] Personal interview, 26.10.98; cf. Brecht's letter to the Theatre Union in New York in 1935: "Immer noch Mutter./ Mehr noch Mutter jetzt, vieler Gefallenen Mutter./ Kämpfender Mutter, Ungeborener Mutter (...).". "Brief an das Arbeitertheater Theatre Union in New York, das Stück *Die Mutter* betreffend", 174, in: Brecht (1991), 173-177.
[4] *National Times*, 1.9.75. cf. also: *Catholic Advocate*, 22.8.75.
[5] *The Age*, 20.8.75.
[6] Personal interview, 28.12.98.

feminist aspect to the play.[1] This interpretation was important because many feminists accused Brecht of "a typical Marxian blindness toward gender relations" and of having created "too many saintly mothers".[2] The interpretation was in tune with the times; 1975 was International Women's Year, and the production also drew upon the recent development of a Women's Theatre Group at the APG.[3]

As far as the staging arrangements are concerned, the group decided to perform *The Mother* in an environmental style that made use of the possibilities of "bivouac theatre". The actors performed each scene of the play in a different part of the Pram Factory, making use of the entire space available in the building; the audience was equipped with folding chairs with which they followed the play around.

It would exceed the framework of this thesis to determine in retrospect whether the production could still be regarded as a version of Brecht's play or whether it had led to the creation of an entirely new work.[4]

Here, it is noteworthy that The APG's production developed the Brechtian notion of a frame-breaking theatre and of disruption of the conventional character-audience relationship.[5] The production made a point of breaking down the 'fourth wall' in a way which struck critics forcibly and set it apart from Tenschert's production, whose effects were not acknowledged by all of the critics.

Critics did not express an opinion on these aspects of production. However, they commented on the bivouac style. On the one hand, it is possible, that the choice of a *Lehrstück* together with the bivouac style gave the impression that the audience was

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[1] Cf. *The Australian*, 20.8.75: "She [Vlassova] is just about the only totally unmanipulated, intelligent woman in any of Brecht's plays"; cf. also *National Times*, 1.9.75: "Brecht says he addressed the play mainly to women".

[2] Elin Diamond has repeated this reproach in her latest publication, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*. She then has used it as a starting point for exploring "a theatre-specific feminist criticism" of Brecht, in: Diamond (1997), 44-45.

[3] Cf. Ian Robinson, *National Times*, 1.9.75.

[4] This analysis would imply a detailed discussion of the controversial concept of fidelity to a text and to an author's intentions as discussed in Fischer-Lichte (1985). In this context it could be discussed whether the APG's decision to abandon the proscenium arch and any fixed stage did allow it to produce *Verfremdungseffekte* in a traditional sense, such as created by a narrator commenting on the action by stepping out of the proscenium arch. More recent developments in dramaturgy and theatre would also need to be taken into account, such as Weiss' new ways of creating *Verfremdung* and of mixing different styles in *Marat / Sade*.

[5] A look at the development of Australian drama shows that the exploration of the boundaries between actors and audience had started to develop in the late 1960s, cf. Gordon Graham's assessment of Rodney Milgate's *A Refined Look at Existence* and Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis's *The Legend of King O'Malley*, in: *The Australian's Review of Books*, vol. 4, issue 5, June 1999, 21; cf. also Radic (1991), 46.

following around a political demonstration and led to a performance style close to agit-prop. Consequently, it was not certain how much the contemporary ideal of alternative theatres to merge life and art influenced the performance of *The Mother*.

On the other hand, the bivouac style might have resulted in preventing audiences from identifying completely and continuously with the characters because scenes were performed individually and the play moved from location to location thus underlining the epic character of the play. This led Robinson to remark that the production "out-Brechts Brecht"[1], but, again, there was no across-the-board agreement on the bivouac theatre's effectiveness as a tool for *Verfremdung*. While Prentice had the impression "that the actors are required to re-establish their relationship with their audience afresh every few minutes"[2], Marshall drew the opposite conclusion. According to him "this so-called bivouac theatre is effective in jolting us out of our them-and-us viewpoint and involving us more closely in the action".[3]

Relatedly, instead of using the term 'alienation' for *Verfremdung* critics spoke of "distancing"[4] or described that Brecht aimed at avoiding empathy[5]. The negative connotations and misreadings of 'alienation' were so well known that Smythe could consciously make use of them in comments such as "not that the event is dry and alienating".[6] Overall, assessments of the production varied. While Hutchinson considered it a success[7], Radic wrote a scathing review[8].

Within the broader history of reception of Brecht in Australian theatre, the APG's production of *The Mother* played a crucial role. Although the New Wave's merits have been challenged recently[9] it is to their credit that they helped to increase variety in Australian theatre. They furthered the reception of Brecht's work because they broke with the conventions of naturalistic theatre in an unparalleled radical way. Although the group idealised Brecht as a political thinker, it put new life into the 'dead classic' by developing an

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[1] *National Times*, 1.9.75.
[2] *Nation Review*, 22.8.75.
[3] *Sunday Press*, 24.8.75.
[4] *National Times*, 1.9.75, cf. also *Nation Review*, 22.8.75.
[5] Cf. *The Australian*, 20.8.75, *The Melbourne Times*, 22.8.75.
[6] *The Melbourne Times*, 22.8.75.
[7] *The Australian*, 20.8.75.
[8] *The Australian*, 20.8.75, *The Age*, 20.8.75.
[9] Julian Meyrick, for instance, accused them of "nationalism, sexism and crudity" and generationalism, in: Meyrick (1999 (June)), 19f. ; John McCallum listed the 'New Wave' under the sub-heading "Overrated people, organisations and events" and wrote: "The New Wave in the early 70s was a collection of new middle-class larrikins who rebelled against the stolid Britishness of Australian theatre like boys spraying graffiti on dunny walls.", in: *The Weekend Australian*, 3.7.99.

aesthetic which reinterpreted the play for contemporary audiences in such a way that they could own the production. The environmental approach to staging made novel use of the Brechtian idea of questioning traditional character-actor and character-audience relationships. Moreover, performing the play as a learning experience in a way which did not provide ready-made answers on a personal level, required a more active audience than in conventional productions.

Environmental staging techniques did not merely exceed the boundaries of the conventional stage; however, they represented an attempt to extend the boundaries of theatre in general. What was aimed at was some sort of ideal, a project that was a marriage of the arts and life[1], illustrated in many ways by alternative theatre cooperatives of the period. It follows that the political dimension of Brecht's work was no longer blunted but stressed. A conscious effort was made to present Brecht as pertinent to contemporary life, an approach which was in tune with the APG's young educated audiences[2].

Overall, Brecht's work and his theories helped to free up dramatic and theatrical conventions. Its role in the dynamics of the theatre of the time was not unlike the one Wal Cherry was trying to ascribe to it, although not everyone thought of Brecht as a means for reinvigorating conventional drama like Cherry in 1959. In effect, Brecht's work enlarged the Australian approach towards drama and contributed to diversification in this area of Australian culture. Engagement with Brecht played a part in producing an Australian theatre which was more in tune with contemporary society because it reflected a general tendency to replace a dominant model by multiple approaches thus leading to a multi-faceted society.

Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* (1975)

In 1959, Wal Cherry had introduced Melbourne audiences to Brecht through staging *The Threepenny Opera* with a professional cast.[3] In 1975, he decided to direct the play again, this time for New Opera South Australia.[4] The production differed substantially from

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[1] This had been illustrated in a radical way by The Living Theatre, which was one of the influences on Smith in the United States.

[2] Radic describes how the APG was "embroiled (...) in the major public issues of the day (...); it was initially in tune with its young educated audiences. But in the post-Whitlam years that radicalism became harder and harder to sustain. The group lost contact with its audience.", Radic (1991), 166.

[3] The introduction to Willett's article records the year of Cherry's first production wrongly as 1956, in: Willett (1977), 101.

[4] It is not clear whether Cherry had produced *The Threepenny Opera* in the meantime; Willett mentioned Cherry's intention to do so in 1974, but the plan fell through, cf.: Willett (1977), 101. No other records could be located.

Cherry's first one because he intended to adapt it to contemporary Australian audiences. His concern reflected the new priority given to relevance in Australian productions.[1]

Relevance as a criterion for judging the quality of a performance had developed slowly over time. In 1959, *The Age* Theatre Critic's remark that *The Threepenny Opera* was missing relevance, represented an exception.[2] At a time when the English repertoire - and thus non-Australian drama - dominated the Australian theatre scene, both Cherry and the majority of critics were content to receive Brecht as a classic. As far as directors are concerned, Jeana Bradley was one of the first to choose a topical play when staging *Mother Courage* with the University Drama Society of Western Australia during the debate about the Vietnam War.[3] It was especially so in non-mainstream theatre companies that selecting meaningful plays was important. This was the case with New Theatre and La Mama.[4] In mainstream theatre, it took until 1973 for a director to aim for relevance through adaptation. In contrast to John Sumner, who had still turned *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into a fairytale removed from everyday Australian life in 1971[5], Sharman decided to adapt *The Threepenny Opera* to Depression Sydney for the Old Tote in 1973.

One of the reasons for the growing emphasis on a production's relevance, especially in alternative theatres, was the general politicisation of theatre through the youth movement and Vietnam War protests. Brecht's plays fitted easily into a climate of reception which welcomed social and political comments and thus appeared pertinent. As pointed out previously, this resulted in the only period in the Australian Brecht reception when Brecht's plays were perceived as relevant without changes to the original texts.

The strong emphasis on relevance is also closely linked to New Wave's effort to liberate Australian theatre from British and American influences. Especially the British influence was perceived as having dominated Australian theatre for so long through plays, accents and even British actors in leading roles, that it was categorically rejected as non-relevant by many at the time. The vehemence with which anything non-Australian was refused is illustrated by the fact that Australian playwrights like Louis Nowra, whose plays were

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[1] As indicated earlier, Cherry was reluctant to put his theoretical considerations about theatre down on paper, believing that "one's work is one's comment on the theatre", in: Morphett (1966). Therefore, his development as a director of Brecht's plays needs to be deduced from his productions.

[2] *The Age* Theatre Critic (no name given), *The Age*, 10.1.59; cf. the analysis of Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959.

[3] Cf. the programme notes and Brisbane's review in: *The West Australian*, 1.2.65.

[4] Cf. Brian Davies' s production of *The Exception and the Rule* in 1969.

[5] Sumner produced the play for the MTC.

initially non-Australian in their setting and their subject matter, were considered remote and not relevant to Australian audiences.[1] One of the results was a generally increased awareness amongst directors, actors and critics of the question relating to whether a play and a performance were meaningful for the contemporary Australian public.[2]

In this respect, Cherry's 1975 production of *The Threepenny Opera* was characteristic of the times because it was his "concern to find a way of making it relevant to the Australian audience"[3]. In many other respects, the project was remarkable, not at least because John Willett collaborated as a dramaturge. Not only was it unusual for an Australian theatre at the time to employ a dramaturge[4], but also John Willett stood out because of his expertise on Brecht. Apart from this production, Willett exerted an influence on the Australian reception of Brecht in the 1970s through his involvement in a number of cultural activities. These efforts increased Australian knowledge of Brecht.[5] He also wrote an Australian adaptation of *Puntila*, which he called *Jack Punt Esquire and His Mate Matt.*[6]

Willett has documented his contribution on how to approach *The Threepenny Opera* for this performance in *Theatre Quarterly.*[7] His article represents a valuable resource for this study because it allows to focus on the challenges theatre practitioners faced when producing Brecht rather than on the critics' reactions.[8]

Willett's knowledge led to a - probably unprecedented - credit to Elisabeth Hauptmann in

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[1] Cf. Radic (1991), 138, McCallum (1984), 286. Stephen Sewell was accused in similar ways.

[2] My analysis of the reception of Handke will show that, one year later, the first attempts to re-define relevance as corresponding to the taste of the masses were made. This was closely connected to pending funding cuts to the performing arts perceived by the commissioners of the "Industries Assistance Commission on the performing arts" as a "coterie culture"; cf. also Brian Hoad's article "The vain quest for relevance", *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77.

[3] Willett (1977), 102.

[4] Willett himself made this ironic remark about his role: "I would be that ugly sounding creature, a dramaturg". Willett (1977), 101. Other remarks confirm the fact that dramaturges were rarely employed in Australian theatre of the time, cf. Nowra (1982 (May)); In an interview, Hector Mclean, who acted as a dramaturge for Jenny Kemp's production of *Big and Little* with the State Theatre Company in 1985, noted: "The dramaturg was just beginning to emerge at that time [around 1985]. Dramaturgs are even not used regularly nowadays.", Personal interview, 25.1.97.

[5] Moreover, in 1979, as a visiting professor at the University of New South Wales, Willett also directed Kaiser's *From Morning Till Midnight* as part of a series of staged readings at the Goethe-Institute in Sydney and participated in the conference "Beyond the Backyard". I have previously pointed out the influence of his translations and publications.

[6] The play was never produced, though, partly because Barry Humphries was not available to play the part as intended, partly because the Punt figure might have been seen "as an embodiment of the Australian ruling class", Personal letter, 10.7.00, cf. also Willett (1979 (June)).

[7] Willett (1977).

[8] Willett came to Australia again in 1977 to direct *The Threepenny Opera* together with Cherry for the State Opera Company (SA). For this study, the 1975 production is of greater interest because of Willett's detailed notes.

the programme notes[1], which put the production in sharp contrast with the APG's naive approach towards Brecht's role and integrity while workshopping Brecht's texts. A comparison between the two productions points to other fundamental differences. As analysed, the APG regarded the political dimension of Brecht's work as pertinent to Australian audiences the way it was. However, the group saw the need to modify Brecht's aesthetics and used environmental staging techniques for this purpose. Cherry and Willett, however, tried to maintain Brecht's original devices for staging and acting. Instead they felt that they needed to modify and update the text.

Cherry's production took place within an established theatre, which included the participation of professional opera singers. So far, the study has shown a strong tendency to tone down the political potential of Brecht's work in mainstream theatres. Yet, Willett had regarded the political aspects as an integral part of Brecht's work since the start of his critical studies on the playwright and it seems as though, this time, Cherry too was eager to incorporate the political elements in Brecht's work. Therefore they decided to update the social and political references of *The Threepenny Opera* in order to make it topical for Australian spectators in 1975. *The Threepenny Opera* represented an additional challenge because it has been overloaded with nostalgic connotations of the "Blue Angel-style" during its reception history.[2] In order to avoid this, Willett and Cherry worked hard on the acting style and updated the design.

On the textual level, Cherry and Willett created a framework for the original text, which used the Australian Anzac myth. In this framework, a group of returning soldiers, who had been put into a shed for quarantine, introduced the play they were going to perform while waiting. In the prologue, the soldiers explained that they were interested in the play because they had "come back from Europe with new ideas (...) these are nineteenth century but very fashionable." The prologue, spoken by an RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) announcer, contained a number of references to Australian concerns of the period also. They were brought up when the announcer defined the role of the port authorities. He described their task as follows:

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[1] Willett (1977), 108.

[2] Cf. Willett's note to Peter Watson, who was planning to direct *The Threepenny Opera* at York Theatre Royal in 1975: No "allusions to the Weimar Republic and Blue Angel-style nostalgia.", in: Willett (1977), 102; In Adelaide, Willett had to fight publicity experts, who intended to announce *The Threepenny Opera* as "A decadent twenties romp", in: Willett (1977), 108.

> Their task being to maintain your country's defences / Against all undesirable influences / That might sneak in and spoil Australia's looks: / Vermin, for instance, bacteria, dirty books / Fruit flies, hashish, the smallpox - and the bigger / Marxists and criminals, the Chinese and the nigger: You know the kind of thing; so please show patience / Or else you'll have us overrun by Asians.[1]

This introduction alluded to some deeply rooted Australian fears of real and imagined foreign influences and threats. Brecht was included in these in a humorous way through the reference to Marxists, thus taking into account an element that shaped the early reception history world wide. The prologue also mentioned the Australian cult figure Ned Kelly. Apart from these particular allusions to Australian life, the announcer was also quick to point to the overall relevance of the play. He stressed that, although set in the past, *The Threepenny Opera* was interesting to modern audiences because it "brings you up to date on modern crime." This was expressed in an even stronger way in the preliminary notes Willett had taken before writing the prologue. There he noted:

> The audience must ask itself if it shares this ethos [which dominates the play], or even if it believes that its fellow-Australians practice it, thereby helping them to do so. (...)The play to be performed is set in the past, but it may be a story of the future.

Both quotations illustrate the function Brecht ascribed to *Historisieren* as a *Verfremdungseffekt*; the events are set in the past so that they allow for assessment from a critical distance, yet, their similarity to the present situation makes a comparison to contemporary conditions compelling.

Willett reinterpreted the play's ethical models for modern audiences by attributing a greater significance to Polly's role in the performance. He restored a passage of Brecht's variations on the text, which he had found during his studies in the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. It half-implicated "Polly in the plan to get Macheath hanged, thus establishing her ambitions sooner than usual". As a result, Polly's morality, which Willett described as "crime turned into business by the successful woman", was presented as an alternative to Peachum's way, which Willett characterised as "hypocrisy".[1]

Willett and Cherry decided on other minor changes to the text in order to stress the play's significance for the audience. Still, the most important contribution to the play's topicality came from real events in Australian politics at the time, that is the prime minister's dismissal by the Governor General in 1975. About a fortnight before rehearsals began, the Liberal and Country Parties decided to block the budget of Whitlam's government. Willett described in his casebook how Malcolm Fraser, the leader of the opposition, tried to blackmail Whitlam

[1] Prologue, in: Willett (1977), 104.

into holding a general election, which Fraser would win according to the polls. Willett commented:

> But by the time the budget had been referred back to the Senate for the third time (...) public opinion had swang against him [Fraser] and the polls started to favour Labor. Who let Fraser off this hook? Who else but the Governor General (...).[2]

He and Cherry drew parallels between the Governor-General's intervention, which put the opposition into power and thus saved it, and Macheath's salvation through a *deus ex machina* in *The Threepenny Opera's* "mock-operatic finale". Like in his description of Australia's political scandal, Willett used the expression 'let off the hook' to modify Brecht's text as follows:

> And so to save our unsuccessful crook / The Crown itself will let him off the hook.
>
> Chorus: Hark, who comes? / The Crown itself to the rescue comes, rescue comes (etc.). (...)
>
> (Then Mrs. Peachum, *allegro moderato*)
>
> So it all turned out nicely in the end. How nice and peaceful everything would be if the Governor General would always see things our way...[3]

Reactions towards this updated finale were positive. Kenneth Hince called them "a little cosmetic surgery" when reviewing the production in *The Australian.*[4] He noted:

> We now have a coloring of troops and Australian uniforms, and odd spots of the text have taken a new twist, notably in the happy ending with its bland reference to the Kerr-Whitlam confrontation.

Willett himself concluded that it was "the only production of this work I've ever seen which seemed to make sense". Yet, despite the successful adaptation, he remarked that the production's effect was not exactly what he had hoped for. According to Willett, *The Threepenny Opera* played to full houses, but it failed to "*hit* the modern public".[5]

Willett gave two reasons for this. Firstly, he considered it problematic that the text was performed by opera singers who had been trained, as Willett described it, to "speak with a higher level of poshness on stage, and sing posher still".[6] If the result of this was that a distinguished British accent prevailed in the performance, Brecht's intentional use of social and regional variations of language must have lost its effect, indeed. Yet, the Australian accent would have been very suitable for rendering subtle meanings because it is

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[1] Willett (1977), 103.
[2] Willett (1977), 108.
[3] Cf. the original: [Peachum] "Und darum wird, weil wir's gut mit euch meinen / Jetzt der reitende Bote des Königs erscheinen." (...) [Chor] "Horch, wer kommt! / Des Königs reitender Bote kommt!" (...) [Frau Peachum] "So wendet alles sich am End zum Glück. So leicht und fröhlich wäre unser Leben, wenn die reitenden Boten des Königs immer kämen.", in: Brecht (1988a), 307-308.
[4] *The Australian*, 11.12.75.
[5] Willett (1977), 110; italics by Willett.
[6] Willett (1977), 104.

characterised by "a colourful sense of language and a splendid accent which can be used either to point up class barriers or to cross them" as Cherry noted later on.[1]

Looking back at the history of the reception of Brecht, Willett was the first theatre practitioner working in Australia, who paid considerable attention to the accent and language used on stage. Previously, some critics had made brief remarks about the quality of translations of Brecht's plays[2], but these aspects had not been discussed in depth so far. A great majority of programme notes did not even mention the translator's name. Willett, however, put a lot of thought into the question of how to translate Brecht's text properly.[3] One example was his effort to find a good English expression for Macheath's catch-phrase "Da könnt Ihr was lernen". After much reflection, he rejected his and Mannheim's earlier translation as "Let that be a lesson to you", which he considered as feeble, and accepted the suggestion of an Australian who was assisting with rehearsals. The latter had proposed "Think abart it".[4] This indicates how much care Willett and Cherry put into the process of making the production accessible and contemporary for Australians.

It is surprising that the concern to hear the Australian vernacular and accent on stage had not been applied to the production of Brecht's plays previously because the question of language had been a concern central to the New Wave. The only other director who had strongly encouraged actors to speak and sing with an Australian accent had been Tenschert.[5]

Discussion about the quality of singing in Australian productions of *The Threepenny Opera* had been equally limited.[6] Most critics simply remarked that the songs by Weill and Brecht represented a challenge to performers.

Willett, however, realised how important the songs are for commenting critically on what

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[1] Cherry (1979).

[2] Cf. the remark by *The Age's* theatre critic on Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959: "As I am told, its original verbal beauty is largely missing in translation.", *The Age*, 10.1.59; The programme notes do not state the name of the translator, but it is likely that the most readily available translation by Eric Bentley was used. Cf. also my analysis of translations of Brecht's texts used in the 1990s.

[3] Cf. also: "Some factors in translating Brecht, 1967", in: Willett (1984a), 242-245.

[4] Willett (1977), 108; translation by Ben Sommer, one of Cherry's direction students at the time.

[5] Willett reported about Tenschert's reaction to the tapes of his Australian production of *Mother Courage* that they "bore him out, but for one thing. As soon as the dialogue gave way to a song the splendid Australian accents switched off, to be replaced by posh singers' English.", in: Willett (1977), 101.

[6] One exception was the early discussion concerning Wal Cherry's *The Threepenny Opera* in 1959. H.A. Standish criticised the voices in the Melbourne *Herald*. This led to a reply by the public relations officer of the UTCR stating that "this is not an opera for singers, but a play for actors", in: *The Melbourne Sun*, 13.1.59. Regarding the current situation, cf. Archer (1995).

has been said and done on stage and that they play an important role for the production's relevance. For this reason he became frustrated with the singers' old-fashioned high-English pronunciation and concluded: "It is no good bringing the acting and design more in line with the modern theatre if the singing voice is to remain stuck in the past."[1]

Still, even if all of the other efforts to update *The Threepenny Opera* worked well, it did not have the impact Cherry and Willett had hoped for as the second reason for the production's reduced impact lay in the very nature of *The Threepenny Opera* itself. Apart from having been overloaded with nostalgic connotations during its reception history,

> *The Threepenny Opera* remains an almost impossibly difficult work to put over. You can vulgarize it, you can appeal to nostalgia, you can make a *Cabaret* of it, you can make it seem topical by changing its message and its meaning. But you cannot ever recapture the shock effect of its original production in 1928 which came less from any real political relevance than from the form adopted, the language used, and the unexpectedness of the level at which this new mixture of words, music and theatre was pitched.[2]

It seems ironic that despite Cherry's and Willett's efforts to reinvigorate the social and political relevance of the play and to use Brecht's aesthetic devices in an updated context, the play still appeared like a classic.[3] This assessment signifies a death sentence for Brecht's work unless a way can be found in which "some unusual dynamism in the performance" succeeds in restoring the original impact of his plays and, in particular, *The Threepenny Opera*.

It is possible that Willett's and Cherry's approach itself might contain the answer. The two had modernised Brecht's original aesthetic techniques - for example by replacing the half-curtain by tarpaulins - they did not change the way in which these devices worked, though. But could Brecht's original aesthetic devices still work in 1975 in the same way they had functioned when Brecht first put them into practice?

Hince, in his review, denied this possibility and assessed the accomplishment of Cherry's (and Willett's) production as a paradoxical one: "Because it is so true to Brecht's own notions of the theatre, Wal Cherry's new production is an ambiguous thing. The more it succeeds, the greater its failure" because "Brecht's gambits in theatre have been well played out in 50 years".[4] Willett himself summed up the situation as "the shock had gone. Today it

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[1] Willett (1977), 110.
[2] Willett (1977), 110.
[3] Völker made a similar observation for (West) German productions which are "dialectically and politically Brechtian"; he concluded: "everything is as it should be, yet it doesn't work.", in: Völker (1990), 72.
[4] *The Australian*, 11.12.75.

[*The Threepenny Opera*] is almost a classic".[1]

In Germany, where Max Frisch had already remarked in 1964 that Brecht's work was characterised by "the penetrating ineffectiveness of a classic"[2], Michael Schneider examined this issue in an article entitled "Bertolt Brecht - Ein abgebrochener Riese", published in 1979:

> Von daher ist zu fragen, ob in der gegenwärtigen Brecht-Müdigkeit nicht auch *die Keime eines neuen ästhetischen Bewußtseins, die Anzeichen einer ästhetischen Emanzipation von Brecht und seiner Dramaturgie* stecken.[3]

Schneider demonstrated how the changed social and political conditions as well as the *Zeitgeist* not only demanded new political approaches but also new aesthetic solutions.[4]

In Australia in 1965, Jeana Bradley had already realised that some aspects of the Brechtian theory for theatre, such as the boxing ring type of lighting, had lost their original function. She noted: "They are now so well known as to appear merely tricks which irritate rather than surprise"[5] and decided to bypass them. In 1966 and 1967, John Ellis and Elijah Moshinsky reinvigorated *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* emphasising theatricality and visual elements in their productions. In 1975, the APG did not decide to abolish particular devices but to radically develop Brecht's theatre through an environmental staging technique which fulfilled the theatre practitioners' and spectators' expectations.[6]

Overall, it seems that, in Australian theatre in the mid-1970s, a creative, dynamic reception of Brecht's work not only required reinterpreting his plays but also reinvigorating his techniques and production style. This was particularly urgent for *The Threepenny Opera*. At this stage of the Australian production and reception history, approaches towards staging *The Threepenny Opera* had become so set in their ways that this tradition had led in most cases to what Kosky called "museum theatre" in his speech for the Shakespeare Youth

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[1] Willett (1977), 110.

[2] "Heute ist er [Brecht] das Genie, wir wissen es, und hat die durchschlagende Wirkungslosigkeit eines Klassikers", in: Frisch (1964), 73.

[3] Schneider (1979), 31, italics by the author; "One needs to ask whether the current Brecht fatigue does not contain, amongst other things, the seeds of a new aesthetic awareness and the signs of an aesthetic emancipation from Brecht and his dramaturgy."

[4] Cf. also Völker (1990), 64.

[5] Programme notes for *Mother Courage* with the University Drama Society of Western Australia for the Festival of Perth, cf. also my earlier analysis of this production.

[6] In the late 1970s, other alternative theatre companies tried out new ways of staging Brecht's plays. For instance, the [Sydney] Rock Players staged *Arturo Ui* in 1979 with "the acting area in the middle of the hall and the audience divided into two equal packs at either end, facing each other", in: *National Times*, 11.8.79 (Michael Le Moignan).

Festival. It appears that it was time for a bold approach in all areas of production to reinvigorate the play and its music in order to make it resonate with audiences again.[1]

Finally, it needs to be added that Willett, in his assessment of the production's effect, had very high standards. Therefore his regret that the audience was not "hit" by *The Threepenny Opera* did not signify the end of all Brecht in Australia. On the contrary, it was followed by a peak in the Australian reception of Brecht's plays and theories, before the Brecht-fatigue reached Australia.

6. REACHING A PEAK - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE LATE 1970S

In 1979, Katharine Brisbane started her review of Ken Horler's production of *Galileo* for Nimrod with the words "This is certainly Brecht's year in Australia".[2] And it certainly was. The years 1977, 1978 and 1979 saw an increase in productions, the peak being 11 plays in 1978. During this time, there were also performances of Brecht's text, such as *Concerning Poor B.B.* by Beverley Blankenship[3]; the most famous one of the performances was the series of Brecht-evenings at Nimrod by Ekkehard Schall from the Berliner Ensemble in 1979.[4] Also in 1979, Australian actor and singer Jan Friedl performed *The Hypothetical End of Bert Brecht*[5], a play about Brecht written by her and Martin Friedl.

Most importantly, this interest in Brecht was not restricted to performances. Visits by John Willett and Martin Esslin and a section of articles related to Brecht, published in *Theatre Australia*[6], nourished a climate of discussion about his work. The special section on Brecht in *Theatre Australia* also "listed as many Brecht productions in Australia as the editors could discover from various sources and with a lot of help from friends". It is the only Australian database on a German playwright which exists and the way it was put together is indicative of the research situation in Australia which cannot rely on systematic records of performances.

This interest was supported by an ongoing interest on an educational level; universities continued to teach Brecht's work; at NIDA, Brecht had found a firm place in the curriculum. The result was a range of productions by final year students and regular 2nd year

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[1] Cf. my remarks in the introduction regarding Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).
[2] *The Australian*, 29.6.79.
[3] March 1979 at the Back Theatre of the Pram Factory.
[4] *From Laughing About the World to Living With the World*, Nimrod Downstairs, July 79.
[5] Russell Street Theatre, MTC Tributary Productions: "The Hypothetical End of Bert Brecht", March 1979.
[6] Page and Wagner (1979 (June)).

student productions which were combined with research projects by the participants.[1] The final year student productions raised public interest and were reviewed by major newspapers. When Aubrey Mellor directed *Mother Courage*, this production even helped to spread knowledge on Brecht across the boundaries of NIDA to High School students, for whom *Mother Courage* was a prescribed reading text.[2] This indicates that, by now, Brecht's ideas were regarded as an important contribution to Australian education.[3] It means also that Brecht was becoming a 'class-ic' in the sense that the impact of his work could be relegated to the classroom. The Goethe-Institute in Sydney enhanced the interest at NIDA by supporting a visit by Prof. Wolfgang von Stas, the director of the Institute of Performing Arts in Saarland. He taught and directed *The Exception and the Rule* in 1978. Thus Brecht was the only German-speaking playwright who had not only built a continuous history of production and reception but whose plays and theories also managed to create a boom in interest that was strong enough to show different aspects of his work in a number of areas related to Australian theatre.[4]

When trying to explain this upsurge in Brecht's popularity, Frank Harris offered two explanations in an article for the *Sydney Telegraph*. According to Harris, the upsurge firstly "matches a similar wave of revival overseas", secondly, "Brecht's plays have slowly but steadily infiltrated Australia".[1] While the first reason seems questionable, for, at least in West Germany, the Brecht-boom had turned into Brecht-fatigue, the second explanation comes closer to the truth. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that, what took place in Australia was not so much a revival of Brecht, but rather the peak of a growing interest and study of his work. As analysed earlier, the new approach toward Brecht since the emergence of alternative theatre companies and the politicisation of theatre through the student movement helped to build up interest in Brecht. This was supported by a generally greater awareness of foreign theatre than in previous phases of the reception which is illustrated by two articles on recent developments in German theatre published in *Theatre*

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[1] Cf.: Final year students: *The Threepenny Opera* (D: G. Whaley, 1978), *Mother Courage* (D: Aubrey Mellor, 1978). 2nd year students: *The Good Person of Szechwan* (D: G. Whaley, 1978), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (D: G. Whaley, 1980). No information regarding performances at the Victorian College of the Arts could be obtained.

[2] Advertisement, NIDA, 1978.

[3] When Aubrey Mellor directed *Mother Courage* in June 1978 it was part of a season of "Three Plays for young People", a series of performances of plays prescribed for H.S.C. or recommended reading texts for years 9 and 10.

[4] For instance, the fashion-like interest in Handke's plays was not strong enough to bring about an interest in so many areas.

Australia[2] and by a strong interest in Peter Handke's plays at the time. For the reception of Brecht, the late 1970s were the climax of a long development. The strongest interest in Brecht was shown by non-mainstream theatres, universities and drama schools.

But did this notable interest in Brecht also correspond to "an increasing awareness" of directors and critics like Amanda Davies attested it for Sydney audiences when reviewing one of these productions for *Theatre Australia*?[3] Or did the Australian Brecht *hausse* merely confirm Brecht's following comment to Jhering: "Ich bin nämlich davon überzeugt, daß die Brechthausse ebenso auf einem Mißverständnis beruht wie die Brechtbaisse, die ihr folgen wird"?[4]

The following analysis will focus on these statements and examine whether a new awareness and a new stage in the Australian reception of Brecht had been reached in the late 1970s. So far, the Australian theatre scene had seen two approaches towards Brecht's work. On the one hand, there had been a strong tendency amongst directors and critics to naturalise Brecht's plays, that is to adapt them to conventional, in many cases naturalistic, standards together with numerous attempts to blunt his political message. On the other hand, directors had used more or less bold approaches towards the formal or political side of Brecht's plays in order to adapt it to modern Australian audiences.

As it is difficult to verify audiences' reactions in retrospect, I shall instead briefly examine the approach of two Australian directors towards Brecht and compare it with Ekkehard Schall's guest performance in the same year. I shall then concentrate on the critics' state of information on Brecht. My analysis will be completed by an exploration of the general intellectual climate in the theatre world, including Willett's visit to NIDA and a special section on Brecht in the magazine *Theatre Australia*.

6.1.1 Choice of plays, production styles and critics' reactions

It has been stated that the majority of productions at the time took place in non-mainstream theatres and in an educational environment, which tended to have a more dynamic approach to Brecht than the established theatres. Yet, the choice of plays presented at the height of productions was mainly conservative. The 'humanist' plays of Brecht's

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[1] *ST*, 8.7.79.
[2] Cf. Morley (1978), Rorrison (1977).
[3] Page and Wagner (1979 (June)), 20;
[4] Letter to Jhering, in: Brecht (1998).

middle period like *Galileo*, *Mother Courage*, *The Good Person of Szechwan* and the slightly later *Caucasian Chalk Circle*[1] prevailed. The two Australian directors who chose less common plays (with or without music) were James McCaughey and Wal Cherry. McCaughey staged *Baal* in 1977 in the Back Theatre of the Pram Factory, a production that stood out because it was the only Australian performance of Brecht's first play so far. McCaughey's choice of play corresponded to preferences in West Germany where the focus had moved to Brecht's 'open' plays like *Baal*, *In the Jungle of the Cities* and *Mahagonny*.[2] Similarly, Cherry sought to present less familiar works on the Australian stage. In 1978, he directed *Private Life of the Master Race*, a version of *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* which Brecht had reworked in a wartime framework in the United States.[3] Innovative impulses also came from the APG. In 1978, the group arranged readings of *The Days of the Commune* and in the same year they presented texts and songs from *Man is Man* - thus displaying interest in Brecht's early work - and songs from *The Threepenny Opera*.[4] Apart from a production of *The Exception and the Rule* at NIDA[5], the *Lehrstücke* were not popular during these years. This might be partly due to their translation as 'didactic plays', which Brecht himself changed to 'learning plays'. As these terms are easily associated with dry and boring theatre they probably deterred directors and theatre companies from staging these plays.[6]

At an academic level, John Willett was one of the scholars aiming at broadening the knowledge about Brecht. When Willett visited NIDA in October 1979, his intention was to "convey some of Brecht's less understood ideas about the theatre by means of a one-hour performance"[7]. The aspects he planned to stress were partly *Leitmotivs* of the Australian

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[1] Cf. Brooker (1988), 182 and Maro Germanou, "Brecht and the English Theatre", 213, in: Bartram and Waine (1982), 208-224.

[2] Cf. Völker: Despite of the Brecht-fatigue, Brecht "was still respected as an author in those plays where he remained open, that is, where his attitudes were not based on a simplistically materialist concept of nature. Accordingly, his early plays - *Baal*, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, *Mahagonny* - were more frequently performed, since they expressed feelings that contemporary generation could relate to.", in: Völker (1990), 66.

[3] In 1974, he had already directed *The Seven Deadly Sins* for New Opera in South Australia.

[4] Individual members of the group also arranged cultural events outside the Pram Factory. For instance, Lindzee Smith organised a private screening of the Berliner Ensemble's film of *Mother Courage*, which was attended by Willett.

[5] Directed by Prof. Wolfgang von Stas under the auspices of the Goethe-Institute.

[6] Personal interview with Australian scholar Hector Maclean, 18.12.99. Maclean also n[illegible] that the inherent possibility of the *Lehrstücke* to explore issues through asking questions without providing definite answers has not been explored as yet in Australia.

[7] Programme notes. With Griffin Theatre Company, in association with NIDA and the Scholl of Drama, University of New South Wales.

debate on Brecht, such as "Brecht's views on naturalism, Stanislavsky, empathy and the Fourth Wall" as well as Marxism; others subjoined new aspects like Brecht's ideas "about Shakespeare (...), his concept of visual beauty based on work and use, (...) and his insistence on freshness and lightness of touch, or what he termed 'ease'"[1]. Willett drew the material for the performance from *Der Messingkauf*, which in itself, added a new perspective to Brecht's work as the dialogues had been neglected, at least by critics[2] and in programme notes, so far. Although profound studies on Brecht, including by Australian scholars, were available in writing at the time, Willett probably made an important contribution to spreading sound knowledge on Brecht because, rather than lecturing, he illustrated Brecht's ideas by means of a performance of "twelve poems, two scenes and an argument". Willett's prime objective was to eliminate some of the prejudices and misconceptions about Brecht which Cherry enumerated in an article published in *Theatre Australia* - analysed underneath - and to contribute new aspects to the debate. Ultimately, this information might have also increased the familiarity with Brecht's theories in the larger theatre community with the help of outgoing NIDA students. What Willett did not include, at least not in the programme notes, was the evolving criticism of Brecht at the time.

However, the first signs of criticism were present in one of the performances connected to what Rodger called the "Brecht fest"[3]. At the same time when Willett visited Australia, Martin Esslin was in Sydney to direct a staged reading of Günter Grass's *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, a play about Brecht's lack of engagement in the suppression of the workers' uprising in East Germany in 1953. It is noteworthy, though, that this reading had been organised by the Goethe-Institute in Sydney. Thus, it corresponded to the state of reception in both countries that, apart from Svensen's progressive review, which will be analysed below, the first doubt on Brecht's integrity was cast by Germans. Although the reading was not reviewed in daily papers like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Esslin's detailed preview in *Theatre Australia*[4] must have spread the information on Brecht in the Australian theatre world. The Goethe-Institute also organised a lecture by Esslin and a discussion between him and Willett.[1]

In Australian theatre, the production style of many performances matched the rather

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[1] Programme notes.
[2] So far, no reference to *Der Messingkauf* had been made in the reviews used for this study.
[3] Rodger (1979 (August)).
[4] Esslin (1979).

conservative choice of plays. Some directors seemed to continue to produce Brecht's plays without applying Brechtian staging techniques. This is how Mick Rodger assessed in *Theatre Australia* John Clark's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* with NIDA students and Ken Horler's production of *Galileo* at Nimrod. Rodger reported how, like in previous productions in Australia and worldwide, Clark turned *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into a fairy tale with costumes resembling "refugees from the Arabian Nights" and how he stressed the moving side of the storyline. As a result, "the production was pitched exactly at the level of its audience. They loved it and sighed with wonderment every time the Governor's baby made an entrance".[2] This description sounds as if Clark's treatment of the play did not differ much from Richard Campion's and John Sumner's approach which I have analysed analysed earlier.[3] According to Rodger, Horler rendered *Galileo* "into a period tale". Rodger drew the conclusion that both performances "tried to make us forget that we were in a theatre" and that they are therefore "to be criticised for making out of Brecht's plays what he disliked most, 'culinary theatre'." Thus, even at the height of the reception of Brecht in Australia, some directors continued to naturalise Brecht's plays; the pattern of adapting Brecht's plays to conservative norms had survived while genuine attempts were made to find new approaches to his work.

A performance which differed considerably from Horler's and Clark's approach was Ekkehard Schall's *From Laughing About the World To Living With the World.* Schall had been invited to perform at Nimrod theatre in Sydney. During his stay, he also spoke about Brecht's method at a meeting with actors from Nimrod, who, as he recalled in a personal interview, showed a vivid interest in seeing a 'Brecht actor' at work.[4] In his series of performances, Schall attempted to "present dialectical theatre to his audiences, that is to say to lay bare contradictions and to encourage the audience to make up their own mind [about this method]".[5] In his article, Rodger compared Ekkehard Schall's performance *From Laughing About the World To Living With the World* with the two other productions and concluded that the latter stood out favourably. Rodger attested Schall "a detachment which

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[1] No further details on this could be found.
[2] Rodger (1979 (August)).
[3] Cf. Richard Campion's production for the Old Tote in 1964 and John Sumner's production for the MTC in 1971.
[4] Personal interview, 18.9.99. "Es fand ein Gespräch mit Schauspielern vom Nimrod statt, bei dem Brechts Methode diskutiert wurde."
[5] Personal interview, 18.9.99. "Ich habe mich bemüht, dem Publikum dialektisches Theater zu zeigen, das heißt Widersprüche aufzuzeigen und es zur Beurteilung [dieser Methode] anzuregen."

created Brecht's much talked of intellectual response in the audience rather than just an emotional response to a story well told".[1] Rodger's assessment indicates that he put a stronger emphasis on respecting Brecht's principles than Horler and Clark. It also shows that *Verfremdung* and *Verfremdungseffekte* were still at the centre of critics' interest at the time. Like earlier in this study, these terms can be used as a yardstick for measuring the general state of information on Brecht amongst critics. Using Horler's production of *Galileo* as an example[2], it becomes apparent that, overall, critics seemed to avoid the term 'alienation' although they could not agree on whether this principle was applied in Horler's production.

For instance, Michael Le Moignan, who wrote for the *National Times*[3], used the original German word *Verfremdungseffekt* first, before adding the English translation "alienation effect". Earlier in his article, he described *Verfremdung* as "the very antithesis of naturalistic theatre" illustrated by a performance which "constantly breaks the theatrical illusion to remind us that we are an audience watching a play".[4] Le Moignan's review is also of interest because he appreciated that "the ideas are presented clearly, logically and in such a way as to stimulate debate". This remark indicates that, at the same time when 'culinary theatre' continued to be popular, an intellectual kind of theatre, which did not primarily aim at escapism and entertainment, was becoming more readily acceptable. Consequently, the developments in the Australian theatre scene of the 1970s had resulted in greater variety.

As to the term 'alienation', Thor Svensen equally preferred a definition of *Verfremdung* in his review for the *Manly Daily*.[5] Svensen described Brecht's aesthetics as "'disillusionment of the stage' whereby the audience is made aware at all times of the stage's mechanism". He also confirmed Rodger's assessment in *Theatre Australia* that Horler's production did not realise *Verfremdung* on stage.

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[1] Rodger (1979 (August)). Of course, there were also less favourable reviews, such Romola Constantino's comment: "He intends to shock and alarm and his performance lashes like a whip. He is the antithesis of the player who wishes to please." In: *The Herald Sun*, 10.7.79.

[2] Horler's production is characteristic of most other plays staged at the time because it took place at Nimrod, one of the theatres closely associated to the New Wave. As stated earlier, the majority of Brecht's plays staged during the late 1970s were performed by non-mainstream theatres. The choice of a 'classic' play is equally representative of the time.

[3] *National Times*, 4.7.79.

[4] Ken Healey's review of Aubrey Mellor's production of *Mother Courage* for NIDA contained an equally careful rendering of the concept of *Verfremdung*, which ensured that it was not misunderstood as excluding emotions. He wrote about "the essential Brechtian brew of message, emotion and reason.", *Canberra Times*, 28.7.78.

[5] *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.

While these critics were aware of this shortcoming, other reviewers were not because they continued to judge Brecht through the lens of a traditional concept of theatre and of world view. For instance, in Kippax's ideal of theatre, a production should present the 'fully rounded characters' of a traditional play.[1] When Kippax called Horler's production of *Galileo* "drama, character (and thought) in action", it sounded like a variation on the critical stance which John McCallum described as characteristic of Kippax's approach to theatre, that is "'Credible humanity in action'"[2]. Kippax considered Brecht as a great classic and a "storyteller".[3] As Horler had apparently fulfilled his expectations, Kippax praised the production and failed to mention Brecht's concept of *Verfremdung* altogether.[4]

While Kippax expected a good performance to show the characters' development, Harry Robinson's emphasis was on the entertainment value of an evening at the theatre. This becomes obvious in his remark about a performance's beginning when reviewing *Galileo* for the *Sun-Herald*: "Early scenes in plays are usually difficult as players and audiences work themselves out of the real world and into a shared illusion".[5] His ideal form of theatre was escapism; consequently, he criticised the "prop shifting in full view of the audience" and did not recognise this as a *Verfremdungseffekt* and consequently as a purpose-orientated device. Other reviews of the time exposed an even stronger effect of traditional prejudices toward Brecht.[6]

A similar division in reactions can be detected on the political and social level; many critics acknowledged what they called the "debate on social values"[7] or "the social comment"[8]; Katharine Brisbane continued to include the social and political dimension of

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[1] McCallum charaterises Kippax as devoted to the classic text and the creation of Australian theatre of international standing. According to McCallum, Kippax's preferred drama consists of "the dynamic conflict of individual characters in action.", in: McCallum (1981), 174.

[2] "'Credible humanity in action' is a notion central to Kippax's critical stance" McCallum (1981), 153. This applies also to Kippax's criticism of George Whaley's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for NIDA: "There is not much subtlety. The exposure or the hypocrisies of all concerned would have more force if (...) the humanity was more recognisable", in: *SMH*, 21.10.78. Cf. also my introduction to naturalism in this study.

[3] *SMH*, 1.8.1964.

[4] Unless Kippax considered *Verfremdung* part of "neo-Brechtian perversities", which he did not explain any further.

[5] *Sun Herald*, 1.7.79.

[6] Cf. David Rowbotham's review of Fred Wessely's production of *The Good Person* for La Boite: "Show? It is a long , confounding, pretentious argument about money, property (....). The 'action' is set in pre-war China (...). From that point, Brecht goes on his ideological drive; but there is really no drive of characterisation.", *Brisbane Courier Mail*, 24.6.78.

[7] Frank Harris, *ST*, 8.7.79.

[8] *Sun Herald*, 8.7.79, no name given.

Brecht's plays when reviewing *Galileo*.[1] Nevertheless, those critics who had tended to tone down the political dimension of Brecht's work continued to do so. The most striking example was Harry Kippax. My analysis of Willett's anthology *Brecht on Theatre* has shown that Kippax ignored the political aspects of Brecht's plays.[2] In the case of *Galileo*, Kippax called the play "the third of the great plays", Brecht's view "emphatically humanist" and applauded some actors' performance as "a fresco of warm, richly appreciated humanity".[3] In summary, Kippax continued to turn Brecht into a tamed classic despite his knowledge on Brecht.

In short, the analysis of the critics' reactions shows that at the height of the Australian reception of Brecht, critical standards and preferences varied as much as before.[4] Some critics kept on adjusting Brecht's work to their own theatrical and political standards. However, especially since the late 1960s, 'new' critics voiced their opinion showing a greater familiarity with Brecht's work and the scholarly discussions about it. Amongst the reviewers of *Galileo*, Thor Svensen displayed a progressive and informed attitude when writing for the *Manly Daily*.[5]

Svensen's article is of great interest because it shows that, when Australian theatre rejected British and American influences in an effort to build a local New Wave of theatre, Brecht was generally considered a soulmate rather than another unwanted influence from outside. Svensen wrote:

> They [the people at Nimrod] have not been slaves to New York, or to London, but they have shown considerable courage and daring and originality without compromising themselves, their actors or their audiences. For this reason, as well as the fact that Bertolt Brecht embodies these same qualities, the upstairs production, *The Life of Galileo*, seemed to promise a great deal.

This confirms my earlier analysis that the APG took Brecht as an ally, especially when interpreting the political dimension of his work.[6] Similarly Cherry had described the effects of the cultural cringe in the late 1950s without considering that Brecht as a foreign author could be included in the list of influences to be rejected.[7]

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[1] *The Australian*, 29.6.79; In my analysis of Bradley's *Mother Courage*, I have pointed out Brisbane's early acknowledgment of the political relevance of Brecht's work.
[2] *SMH*, 1.8.64.
[3] *SMH*, 29.6.79.
[4] In his article on "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", Richard Fotheringham noted that "Serious criticism of theatre by journalists and academics (...) did not exist in any sustained manner until the 1990s.", in: Rubin (1998), 75.
[5] *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.
[6] Cf. my analysis of *The Mother* (1975).
[7] Cf. my analysis of Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* (1959) and of his article "Snobs and Middle-Class Misfits in the Theatre" (*The Age*, 17.1.59).

Apart from this observation, Svensen commented in a competent way on the play's political[1] and aesthetic aspects, too. On the aesthetic level, his summary of the play surprises because it emphasised Brecht's attitude rather than telling the play's storyline like many Australian critics did at the time. Because of the focus on attitude, his definition came close to a definition of *Gestus*: "The basic biography is still there (...) but it is what he says and how he does it that is Brechtian."

Svenson seems to be one of few critics who was up-to-date with evolving criticism in Germany concerning contradictions between Brecht's lifestyle and the message in his works. He already mentioned what would become a major point of criticism in the international reception of Brecht and pointed out what he called the "hypocrisy or paradox" of Brecht's life:

> Brecht's Galileo loves reason and truth, but he also loves good wine and fleshpots. In real life Brecht paid homage to communism but he had an Austrian passport, exquisite silk shirts and kept a bank account in Switzerland.[2]

In the past, Brecht had been discredited because of his association with Communism. Svensen was the first reviewer to base his criticism on contradictions between Brecht's lifestyle and the world view he promoted in his plays.

Despite the range of criticism, most reviewers agreed on relevance being a crucial criterion in judging a production and, indirectly, the play it was based on. This tendency, which has already been detected as important in the analysis of Cherry's and Willett's production in 1975, was also strong in the reviews of Horler's production, although Horler had not adapted *Galileo* to contemporary Australian audiences. Even Robinson, who concentrated on the entertainment value, agreed that the performance translated "into the dilemmas of our time".[3] Svensen judged that "the ethics are distinctly contemporary"[4] and Harris remarked that it was "a stirring debate on social values."[1]

6.1.2 Theatre Australia's special section on Brecht

Cherry's article "Bertolt Brecht. Production in Australia"

As relevance was an important critical criterion at the time it was no coincidence that

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[1] Svensen wrote about "the social responsibility of the scientist".
[2] *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.
[3] Robinson indirectly acknowledged the contradiction between a theatre that mainly fulfils the function of escapism and one that leads to relevant issues when he wrote: "All that from one play? Well, maybe I am carried away, but isn't that what good theatre is supposed to do?".
[4] *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.

Cherry, in his article "Bertolt Brecht. Production in Australia" asked how much Brecht's ideas and Australian life had in common; he examined how favourable the conditions for the reception of Brecht's work were in Australia and whether the characteristics of Australian theatre and of the Australian character in general allowed for a positive reception of Brecht's work. In other words, he examined the Australian horizon of expectations without using the term as such. Although some of Cherry's answers are generalised and thus of limited use for this study and some conditions have changed since[2], three should be mentioned. Firstly, Cherry maintained that Australians are characterised by "a sense of injustice".[3] Despite its tendency to generalisation, this remark is interesting for this study because it reminds of Cherry's production in 1959 when he called *The Threepenny Opera* "a bitter stabbing work, a true play of the underdog, an opera for the poor"[4] and thus 'Australianised' the play. Only in 1979, Cherry no longer referred to the underdog, an individual fighting against the odds as described in the Australianist legend, but he used the neutral term 'injustice'. Yet, even this expression can be interpreted on a rather personal level instead of implying a change of society like Brecht did.

The second characteristic Cherry attributed to Australians was "a sense of humour coupled with sardonic incredulity". As this is a generalised observation it should only be noted at this stage that Cherry confirmed the significance of humour in Australian productions.[5]

The third important quality Cherry ascribed to Australians is that they have "a colourful sense of language and a splendid accent which can be used either to point up class barriers or to cross them".[6] This quality indicates a whole area of opportunities to explore Brecht's work in an Australian context, which, so far, only Willett had used in collaboration with Cherry in 1975. The lack of exploring the Australian accent and vernacular in productions of Brecht's work is closely connected to Cherry's criticism that "[Australian] theatre people are seldom over concerned with the quality of the translation of a foreign dramatist into

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[1] *ST*, 8.7.79.
[2] Like the high level of subsidisation, cf. Cherry (1979).
[3] Cherry (1979).
[4] Programme notes.
[5] Cherry's observation will be important for the analysis of Des Davis's production of *Mother Courage* in Woolongong in 1989. For the importance of humour in Australian life and theatre, cf. Brisbane (1977 (Summer)), 59.
[6] Cherry (1979).

English".[1] My study of the early translation of Brecht's theories and of the term *Verfremdung* have shown how strongly translation can affect the reception. I have also pointed out that the majority of programme notes and reviews so far failed to indicate who had translated the text. This was a problematic practice because a drama's translation represents the basis for the entire production in a foreign country.[2] My analysis of Australian translations of plays by Kleist, Lessing and Wedekind in the early 1980s will show that Cherry's remark reflected a general development towards greater appreciation of the quality of translation.

However, the poor quality of many translations of Brecht's plays was only one factor causing problems for an appropriate reception of Brecht's work. Cherry also condemned that Brecht, and his work, had become a "walking generalisation". This observation confirms that the reception of Brecht's theories had moved from the stage of learning about Brecht's ideas and coming to terms with them - when many still considered them as 'jargon' - to the stage where Brecht's theories and a number of technical terms had become 'common knowledge' amongst theatre practitioners. However, in some cases this knowledge consisted of over-generalisations or isolated aspects of Brecht's theories which could be used in various ways to attract attention to productions or to justify them. Similarly, Sheridan Morley had assessed the use of the term 'Brechtian' in the 'Sacred Cows' series of *The Sunday Times Magazine*:

> Brechtian has become one of those critical hold-alls, now bursting at the seams but still used to describe everything from a stage on which the designer has failed to place enough chairs to an acting company loosely dedicated to a political ideal somewhere faintly to the left of Mrs Thatcher.[3]

Morley's remark indicated at the same time, that, in Britain, the interest in Brecht had shifted from performing his plays tc applying his directing and staging technique to other plays, preceding the Australian development in the 1980s.

Looking back at the Australian history of staging Brecht's plays, Cherry complained that Brecht's plays had been repeatedly performed only for entertainment value. In addition, he reproved that the political elements in Brecht's theories had been either used "by the alternative theatre to beat the bourgeoisie about the head or to be adapted by the established

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[1] Cherry (1979).
[2] Cf. also my analysis of early translations of Brecht's theories and the attention the translations received in the Australian reception of Brecht's work in the 1990s.
[3] *The Sunday Times Magazine*, 28. 8. 1977, 70.

theatre to demonstrate amongst other things that Brecht was not a Marxist after all."[1] In a polemical way, Cherry thus confirmed some of the tendencies pointed out in this study.

Overall, Cherry's judgment of the Australian reception of Brecht was negative. He noted: "Brecht was never in Australia in body and seldom in spirit." In one respect, this remark might have been influenced by Cherry's biography; he left Australian for the United States in 1979. In another respect it anticipated the end of an era of reception; the current Brecht-boom was going to be replaced by a Brecht-fatigue.

Roger Pulvers, "What is Brechtian in 1979?"

Moreover, the section on Brecht contained an article by Australian playwright and director Roger Pulvers entitled "What is Brechtian in 1979?", which referred to Pulvers' latest play *Bertolt Brecht Leaves Los Angeles*.[2] It would exceed this study to analyse Brecht's influence on Pulvers' play; however, it should be stated that Brecht did have an impact, to varying degrees, on Australian playwrights, such as Mona Brand, Jack Davis, Nick Enright, Dorothy Hewett, Jack Hibberd, Alison Lyssa, Louis Nowra, John Romeril and Stephen Sewell.[3] It was one of the ways in which Brecht's legacy lasted even when the interest in his own work had decreased.

Pulvers' article deserves closer attention for another reason, though. He developed further the idea of a bold approach towards Brecht's work which the APG had introduced in their production of *The Mother* directed by Smith in 1975. In the same year, Wal Cherry and John Willett's production of *The Threepenny Opera* had proved that it was no longer sufficient to adapt Brechtian aesthetic devices to modern audiences without modifying the devices themselves. Willett had concluded that "some unusual dynamism in the performance" was necessary to "hit the modern public".[4] Pulvers elaborated on these ideas:

> The set 'Brechtian' ways may not work any more. (...) In a particular device [sic] which Brecht himself used has been so successfully integrated into what is now considered the conventionally dramatic, it may have lost its effectiveness.

Pulvers drew the following conclusion:

> "The worst thing we can do - the most essentially un-Brechtian - is to treat him as any orthodoxy. 'Brechtian', for me at least, is above all *irreverence*."[5]

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[1] Cherry (1979).
[2] Pulvers (1979).
[3] Tony Mitchell "Bertolt Brecht", in: Parsons and Chance (1995). It would exceed the framework of this thesis to study this aspect in detail.
[4] Willett (1977), 110.
[5] Pulvers (1979).

Thus, Pulvers anticipated a new approach to Brecht which was similar to Kosky's proposals in so far as they both suggested to replace traditional approaches to texts and their productions by innovative ones. For Pulvers, like for Kosky, this attitude was strongly connected to the notion of owning the resulting production; therefore Pulvers' article was subtitled "My Brecht".

Pulvers' questioning attitude was characteristic of contemporary developments in Australian theatre. Approaches towards his work opened up and dynamic attempts to stage his plays were made. Some directors and critics started to question both Brecht's idealised image and the orthodox way of performing Brecht's plays, testing ways of assuming ownership of his work. However, even at the height of the reception of Brecht, a lot of his plays waited to be performed on the Australian stage and many directors and critics continued to mould Brecht's plays according to familiar local norms. In the last years of the decade, the number of Australian performances of his plays peaked, accompanied by discussions about his theories and about the naturalistic traditions in Australian theatre.

In September 1979, the Goethe-Institute in Sydney organised a seminar entitled "Beyond the Backyard"[1], which attempted a retrospective assessment of Australian theatre's achievements and a stocktaking of its current situation with an emphasis on naturalism. Interestingly, the introductory notes for the seminar included some points which have been crucial in the reception of Brecht's plays:

> The Australian playwright has levelled the (...) accusations at the theatre in which he exists: that the limitations of 'backyard realism' have been arbitrarily imposed upon his work by actors and directors brought up in this genre, regardless of his intentions. Worse, that the choice of play and the degree of its success have depended upon the ability of its interpreters to appreciate it in realistic terms.[1]

If these accusations proved to be true, those Australian playwrights, who did not conform to naturalistic norms, faced similar problems of reception as Brecht's plays on some occasions. Admittedly, it is difficult to ascertain if any of Brecht's plays have been rejected because of the way they were written. It has been demonstrated, though, how his dramatic work has been adapted to naturalistic norms by both directors and critics.

The conference's aim was to talk about these issues with respect to the Australian playwright. Playwrights, actors and scholars were invited to discuss whether the influence of naturalism could and should change. Amongst the participants were Alexander Buzo,

[1] The seminar took place on September 15 and 16 at the Goethe-Institute in Woollahra, Sydney.

Dorothy Hewett, Louis Nowra, David Williamson and John Willett paralleling the discussion of Australian writing with that of German Expressionist drama.[2]

My study shows that questioning the status of a naturalistic playwriting and production style at the conference was part of a larger phenomenon, which replaced the predominance of Australian naturalism by a wider range of approaches. Thus, discussions at the conference coincided with the theatre community's greater interest in stylistically different plays, such as Handke's.[3] My analysis of productions at alternative theatres such as La Mama and the APG has demonstrated that some Australian theatre practitioners were receptive to new production styles. Thus, acceptance of well-established naturalistic norms was replaced by an attitude of questioning.

It is not clear whether any of the conference participants went as far as Kosky, who suggested to break with limiting traditions and to ignore any demands to be faithful to a text. Pulvers' article, however, went in that direction by inviting its readers to focus on "theatrical invention" in the sense of style rather than on "thematic content".[4]

This shift in horizon was in stark contrast to previous expectations. So far, the ideal had been an imperceptible transition between a mimetic play and a production in "invisible style", which, as a result, could be mistaken for a glimpse of 'real life'. The result of greater variety in playwriting and production style was that an increasing number of theatre practitioners, critics and spectators accepted that a theatre production did not necessarily have to create the illusion any longer that "the theatre disappeared" [5], as one critic noted after a production of *The Doll*. Brecht's plays and especially his theories contributed to an awareness of theatre as an art form rather than a mirror of 'real' life with Brecht having stressed the theatricality of theatre.[6]

In summary, the height of the Brecht production offered a mixed picture both of the state of Australian theatre and the stage of the reception of Brecht's work. While some Australian theatre practitioners and critics came to the conclusion that Brecht's work

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[1] Programme notes. I have analysed the conference in more detail in my study of Rainer Lübbren's cultural work.
[2] Willett's decision to present German Expressionist drama is of particular interest as this area of German playwriting has been neglected in the Australian reception of German drama.
[3] Cf. my analysis of the reception of Handke's plays.
[4] Pulvers (1979).
[5] *SMH*, 14.1.56.
[6] It will be seen that the Australian reception of Handke's plays in the 1970s also contributed, to a certain degree, to this.

needed to be treated like a "quarry"[1] rather than a monument[2] others continued to treat Brecht like a classic. The latter emphasised the storyline and the characters' development and ignored or rejected the social challenges of his work and thus preserved an approach to Brecht which had been present in the Australian reception of Brecht right from the start.

The only full-length play produced by an (East) German director, Joachim Tenschert's *Mother Courage*, had shown no long-lasting influence on this state of reception. New impulses had come only from entirely local productions, such as the APG's, or from collaborations like Willett's and Cherry's which had modified Brecht's work in tune with the times and the local people.

The study of the Brecht *hausse* started with the question as to whether an increase in productions was just a "Mißverständnis" or whether it meant also that the awareness and state of information concerning Brecht had grown amongst theatre practitioners and critics. The answer is not a simple 'yes' or 'no', but 'in some areas for some people'. In this respect, the greater variety in interpreting Brecht's work reflected the growing diversity in Australian theatre of the period.

7. DECLINE - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE 1980S

The previous chapter has shown that Brecht was well received in the second half of the 1970s. By the 1980s, however, Australians seemed to have had their fill of Brecht. The number of plays performed fell sharply to less than half of the performances staged in the 1970s.[3]

It is possible that this low record of performances is partly due to a lack of reliable written sources of information because no comprehensive theatre magazine or theatre record existed at the time.[4] To fill the gap, I have used archives and personal inquiries. Therefore the database largely reflects the extent to which the Australian interest in Brecht declined.

Although interest in Brecht faded, that interest declined no more than interest in plays by

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[1] Although Carl Weber used this expression in a recent article, it perfectly matches the approach described above, in: Weber (1997b), 60.

[2] At the same time, Michael Morley called the Berliner Ensemble's approach to "Saint Bertolt Brecht" "a case study of hagiography at its most uninspired", in: Morley, 18.

[3] Cf. Appendix I and II.

[4] *Theatre Australia* stopped publication in 1983. Although its performance listings were not comprehensive, they helped to locate plays.

German-speaking authors generally. As a result, Brecht was the only German-speaking playwright whose plays continued to hold a place in the repertoire.

In the following study, I shall look for socio-political and theatrical factors which affected the reception of Brecht's plays specifically. I shall take into account the selection of plays performed in the 1980s and the production style, with a special emphasis on novel approaches. Moreover, the production of Brecht's plays outside Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide including performances in the country and within community theatre will add a new aspect to the Australian reception of Brecht.

7.1 Characteristics of the 1980s, interest in Brecht

In the 1980s, conditions for the reception of Brecht's plays were unfavourable both on the socio-political and theatrical level. In cultural affairs, the Whitlam era was followed by "the cramping political atmosphere of the Fraser years"[1]. Even when the Labour Party candidate Bob Hawke became Prime Minister in 1983, the political atmosphere differed substantially from the Whitlam years. Unlike Whitlam, Hawke did not see himself as a patron of the arts, and the overall politics of his government resembled positions usually associated with conservative parties.[2] Economically, the 1980s were marked by financial deregulation, economic rationalism and the big borrowing entrepreneurs.

Australians, who had supported the political ideals of the 1960s student protests, were disillusioned after the envisioned changes failed to be put into practice. Barry Humphries characterised the prevailing attitude of the period in the following sentences: "It was the 'greed is good' decade and Australians couldn't get enough of it while it lasted", ethics in general "took a back seat", and "it was when square became hip".[3] Obviously, this climate was not auspicious for the reception of Brecht's political ideals.

However, through encouraging multiculturalism, the Hawke government carried on at least one constituent of Whitlam's policy. Overall, diversity in Australian society had increased, not only with regard to race but also to gender roles. This transformation was supported by legislation against discrimination based on sex, race and marital status.[4] These changes did not leave the theatre scene unmarked. In an article about the history of

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[1] Radic (1991), 172.
[2] McDonald (1999b), 158.
[3] McDonald (1999b), 150.
[4] The laws were passed in 1977 in New South Wales.

Australian 'fringe' theatre for *The Australian*, Julian Meyrick observed that "new styles of theatre claimed the mantle of social and aesthetic progressivism once held by the New Wave as a whole: women's theatre. cabaret, performance art, community theatre, youth theatre".[1] Thus, a pluralistic approach replaced what had been criticised in retrospective as the New Wave's concerns dealing predominantly with "the middle-class white male figures" on stage.[2]

Nimrod and the APG, the two major companies representing the New Wave, had lost momentum. Nimrod's radical period ended in about 1976[3] and the APG had to sell its building, the Pram Factory, in 1980. Instead, a great number of small theatre companies were funded in an attempt to represent the various issues relevant to the theatre community, as outlined above. Competition for funding led to hostility between theatre companies. As Brecht's plays are generally considered as requiring big casts and thus expensive to stage, this mood of financial constraint discouraged productions of his plays, especially by small alternative companies.

Although some of the new areas in theatre, such as community theatre, youth theatre and women's theatre seemed to incorporate Brechtian devices for theatre effectively, they had no longer any political or aesthetic motive to stage Brecht's plays.[4]

7.2 Selection of plays

The plays that were staged stemmed mainly from Brecht's middle period of writing, such as *Galileo*, *Mother Courage*, *The Good Person of Szechwan* and the slightly later *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.[5] Furthermore, *The Threepenny Opera* was a popular choice and scored the highest number of performances. Many performances took place at mainstream theatres like the MTC in Melbourne, the STC in Adelaide, the QTC in Brisbane and the Canberra Opera.

As a great number of Brecht's plays had not been discovered yet, despite recent strong interest in Brecht's plays, Australian premieres and unusual productions deserve a special mention. In 1988, Roger Hodgman, the new artistic director of the MTC, directed the

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[1] Meyrick (1999 (June)), 20.
[2] Fitzpatrick (1988). 527.
[3] Parsons and Chance (1997). 203.
[4] I shall explore this aspect further in the future.
[5] Cf. Brooker (1988), 182 and Maro Germanou, "Brecht and the English Theatre", 213, in: Bartram and Waine (1982), 208-224.

Australian premiere of the one-act play *A Respectable Wedding*. In 1983, James McCaughey mounted *The Exception and the Rule*, which had been so far performed by New Theatre and La Mama, with the Mill Theatre Company in Geelong, a company with strong links both to university and the community.[1] In 1981, Geoff Hooke directed a very successful production of *Mahagonny* with the alternative Zoo Theatre company at the Church (theatre).[2] A special presentation of texts by Brecht was Ekkehard Schall's *Brecht Program*, performed in Melbourne and Adelaide in 1982. Apart from these productions, the remainder of the plays were taken out of the conventional repertoire.

7.3 Reactions towards performances

Since critics' reactions toward Brecht's work did not differ substantially from the patterns established previously, only a few examples are needed to illustrate their responses. For instance, when reviewing John Milson's production of *The Threepenny Opera* with students of the West Australian Academy in the *West Australian*[3], Ron Banks continued the critics' tradition of turning Brecht into a humanist. Meanwhile, other critics kept condemning productions which did not bring out the social and political implications of Brecht's work as "tame and toothless".[4] Overall, Brecht was not dismissed in one way or another for having considered himself an exponent of Marxist ideas.

On the aesthetic level, naturalism continued to influence the Australian theatre scene although it was increasingly challenged by new styles, such as performance art. A naturalistic approach to acting, which concentrated on empathy and identification, remained an important part of acting training. Apart from the important role ascribed to Stanislavsky, the main reason for this emphasis in training was to increase actors' opportunities to gain livelihoods by allowing them to apply for film and television roles. Thus Kerry Walker, who played Mother Courage in Jim Sharman's production for the Adelaide Lighthouse Theatre

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[1] The company was renowned for its high standards of performance. At the same time, it tried to avoid getting out of touch with the wider community. For instance, the company performed *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* under the title *Chalk Circle* to make it approachable for Geelong audiences.
[2] Produced by John Ellis.
[3] "This production catches and convincingly maintains the tone of repressed humanity", in: *West Australian*, 9.5.89.
[4] Daryl Cloonan, reviewing Graeme Blundell's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for the MTC, in: *National Times*, 5.10.84.

Company, admitted in one of the few serious interviews with actors[1]: "Playing Brecht presents special problems to Australian actors (...), since their tradition of naturalism doesn't prepare them for roles which require a 'distancing'".[2] As yet, the challenges of a Brechtian acting style had not been acknowledged in the public debate concerning Brecht's work.

However, previous discussions had taken into account how demanding Brecht's music plays were. In the 1980s, critics continued to be aware of the musical challenges faced when producing Brecht's music plays, particularly in case of *The Threepenny Opera.*[3]

Another aspect that had been added to the reception of Brecht's work in the 1970s had been the quality of translation. In the 1980s, those newspapers which aimed at a higher level of criticism, started to acknowledge the translators at least.[1] This awareness of the question of translation was increased when the *Australia and New Zealand Theatre Record* (*ANZTR*) started to reproduce reviews with the source of translation when it was provided in the programme notes.

In summary, the discussion of Brecht's work was limited to topics which had been brought up previously. Some of the former points of interest had lost their significance, such as comments on the term and meaning of 'alienation', but there were no new topics, such as of the role of Brecht's collaborators.

7.4 Production styles

Following in the footsteps of Jim Sharman's production in 1973, the 1980s saw productions emphasising the entertainment components of *The Threepenny Opera*, as in productions by George Whaley for the STC of South Australia and by Graeme Blundell for the MTC. Their way of staging corresponded to an overall tendency in mainstream theatre to blunt the political implications of Brecht's plays as done by previous productions. *The*

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[1] Previously, actors had been predominantly treated as stars with interviews restricted to superficial questions such as costumes and personal habits. Cf. my analysis of Doris Fitton's role in *The Visist* regarding the influence of the star-system on Australian theatre. Even in 1987, at the Adelaide Festival International Theatre Critics' Symposium, Richard Glover (then Arts Editor of the *SMH*) admitted that his paper "discouraged serious analysis [of plays, productions and acting] in favour of personality interviews and 'PR gumph'", Eccles (1987).

[2] Peter Ward, *The Australian*, 16.7.82.

[3] Cf. for instance Peter Ward reviewing George Whaley's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for *The Australian*, 18.11.81: "Key members of the cast simply do not have voices strong enough or skilful enough to cope with what the musical director, Michael Morley, calls Weill's 'piquant dissonances'".

Threepenny Opera can easily be turned into a piece of mere entertainment as its Broadway history shows.[2] While Whaley's production can be related only with the help of Peter Ward's review for *The Australian*[3], a copy of Blundell's director's notes and the press release could be obtained.

Ward described Whaley's version of *The Threepenny Opera* as a "very stylish, mannered production"[4], set in the 1920s, presumably in Berlin. The emphasis on style and setting corresponded to a concurrent way of staging Brecht's work on the major national stages in Britain. As Margaret Eddershaw noted, many British productions at the time were overwhelmed by scenery.[5]

Apart from the emphasis on style, another result of Whaley's staging technique and adaptation was a nostalgic atmosphere; Ward had the impression that he was seeing it "through one of the pink filters they used in *Cabaret*". The question whether it was legitimate to stage *The Threepenny Opera* in a nostalgic style has been an issue discussed repeatedly by scholars and critics. While John Willett argued against "allusions to the Weimar Republic and Blue Angel-style nostalgia"[6] and Australian reviewers tended to criticise this type of production, some directors were comfortable using it. For instance, Jim Sharman had adapted *The Threepenny Opera* to Sydney in the 20s. As mentioned earlier, when reviewing this production for *The Australian*, Katharine Brisbane criticised amongst other things, "[D]ecadence we are simply not old enough to know about".[7] As a result, a production of this kind could easily appear exotic in the sense of a 'reversed' exotic view. Both director and audiences in the former colony Australia looked back at a European country turning what they saw into an exotic and nostalgic adventure. Critical elements such as poverty and corruption became removed from audiences' lives and thus lost their critical implications.

The style of Blundell's production differed from Whaley's substantially. In his review for *The Age*, Leonard Radic characterised the production as "not particularly subtle", but "high

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[1] Cf. for instance Martin Portus's review of John Rado's production of *Galileo* for New Theatre in *SMH*, 22.5.89.
[2] Weber (1993), 188.
[3] *The Australian*, 18.1181.
[4] *The Australian*, 18.1181.
[5] Eddershaw (1996), 117.
[6] Willett made this recommendation in a note to Peter Watson, who was planning to direct *The Threepenny Opera* at York Theatre Royal in 1975, in: Willett (1977), 102.
[7] *The Australian*, 8.10.73.

on energy as well as strongly physical".[1] He related this to Blundell's involvement with the APG.[2]

Both versions of *The Threepenny Opera* were similar, though, in that they were highly entertaining. However, they were entertaining in different ways. Ward related that Whaley gave the play "a thick, slick, showbiz varnish"[3] whereas Radic reported that Blundell brought out "the often coarse and raunchy humour of the script". Overall, Radic called Blundell's production "a piece of larrikin music theatre".[4] Similarly to Katharine Brisbane[5], Radic regarded a 'larrikin' kind of theatre as typically Australian. Although Radic admitted that MTC audiences were unsure "what to make of this" he personally approved of Blundell's rendering of *The Threepenny Opera* because Blundell had given it an Australian feel. Accordingly, Radic entitled his review "Brilliant Brecht with a larrikin edge".[6]

Blundell provided his interpretation of *The Threepenny Opera* in the director's notes. There, he declared its social impact as limited for modern audiences. He explained: "Today, though certainly poverty, slums, corrupt business practices and biased justice continue to exist in our most prosperous societies, we no longer feel that *The Threepenny Opera* has anything that acute to say about them." For Blundell, *The Threepenny Opera* remained "nailed to a particular moment in German history".[7] It is noteworthy that in the director's notes Blundell did not attribute missing relevance to the issues presented but the way they were presented. His remarks are reminiscent of Willett's observations that the Brechtian devices failed to make the impact he had intended them to make when working as dramaturge for Cherry's production in 1975. The press release demonstrates that Blundell seems to have taken the lost impact of the original form as an excuse for turning the play

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[1] *The Age*, 27.9.84.
[2] Blundell was a founding member of the La Mama Company which became later the APG. In his book, Radic had characterised the APG's style as follows: It puts "strong emphasis on agility, physicality and communicating with the body. (...) Their [the actors'] voices were rough; so were their movements and gestures.", in: Radic (1991), 91.
[3] *The Australian*, 18.11.81.
[4] *The Age*, 27.9.84.
[5] Brisbane has been called "a pioneering advocate of the new 'larrikin' Australian theatre", Parsons and Chance (1995), 175; cf. also: Brisbane (1977 (Summer)). Radic himself opposed the APG's "gutsy larrikin style of acting" to "the refined and carefully cultivated 'Pommy' acting style that a previous generations of Australian actors had sought to emulate", in: Radic (1994 (Spring)), 475.
[6] *The Age*, 27.9.84.
[7] Director's notes.

into a "pastiche of drama and comedy, song and dance"[1]. However, when writing *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht did not have a patchwork of the above elements in mind, but he rather wanted its constituents to interrelate. For instance, the songs should comment on the action and the characters and thus add new perspectives to what was happening on stage.

In the press release, Blundell also modified his remarks about the relevance of *The Threepenny Opera's* social and political pertinence. Here, he devaluated their role by stating that Brecht's "bawdy barbs (...) are nonetheless 'deeply unserious'".[2]

Consequently, both Whaley's and Blundell's productions emphasised *The Threepenny Opera's* entertainment value, but neglected its social and political criticism. This can be partly explained by the fact that the productions took place in mainstream theatres and partly by the general social and political climate of the period which favoured enjoyment over criticism.[3] Critics, however, recorded this as a shortcoming as they had done for Sharman's production in 1973. Ward explained his disappointment in detail:

> *The Threepenny Opera* should, at one level, take its audience by their shoulders and shake it awake. What Mr Whaley's production does is give it a nice night's entertainment, pat it on its bourgeois bottom and sen[d] it out into the night or to the bar.[4]

In terms of Brechtian theatre practice, Whaley had reduced *The Threepenny Opera* to its 'culinary' aspects. Daryl Cloonan, in her review for the *National Times*, summarised Blundell's interpretation as "tame and toothless".[5]

However, the 1980s saw also attempts to bring out the social and political core of Brechtian drama in a way that made it meaningful for contemporary Australian audiences. One way of doing so was to choose a play that could be considered as a direct comment on the times. This was the case with *Mahagonny* on which Geoff Hooke from Zoo Theatre and John Ellis from the Australian Contemporary Performance Center collaborated in 1981. Suzanne Spunner from *Theatre Australia* perceived the production as pivoting "on a series of propositions about civilisations, cities, money and justice in the dialectic mode".[6] Hooke and Ellis had chosen a play that reflected contemporary issues and had turned it into a relevant production. Ellis recalled that "as it picked up so many threads at the time it

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[1] Press release.
[2] Press release.
[3] Cf. McDonald (1999b), 152.
[4] *The Australian*, 18.11.81.
[5] *National Times*, 5.10.84.
[6] *Theatre Australia*, February 82.

generated controversy and was packed out".[1]

Overall, Brecht's plays were used more frequently as pertinent political comments in alternative theatres, "at the edges"[2] and my analysis has shown that mainstream theatres tended to avoid the political dimensions of Brecht's plays.[3] In 1981, however, contemporary audiences could relate to Bruce Myles' production of *The Good Person of Szechwan* at the MTC, including on the political level. This also surprised Suzanne Spunner, who reviewed the production for *Theatre Australia*, because "MTC are not known for their innovative Brecht productions".[4] Myles' production was an exception, for, as Spunner reported, he neither "aped the Berliner Ensemble nor traduced the politics". It appears that he succeeded in revitalising Brecht's work by turning it into "a lively and provocative comment on contemporary public relations exercises".[5] He achieved this through a set and props which contained topical references such as a huge Marlboro cigarette box serving as an elevated seat for the gods.[6] Moreover, Myles seems to have developed Brecht's acting style in a way that it became "almost Japanese gestural style".[7] This decision appears suitable in two ways. Firstly, extending Brecht's concept through elements of Japanese acting does not seem far-fetched as Brecht himself had been inspired by the Noh play *Taniko or the Valley-hurling* after Elisabeth Hauptmann had introduced Brecht to this important theatrical influence through her translations of Noh plays.[8] As the Noh plays are already characterised by a high degree of physical expressiveness and masks and both gestures and *Gestus* played a central role in Brecht's work, Myles had further developed an element which had been already part of Brechtian thinking. Secondly, the production's acting style was highly suitable in an Australian context for, in the 1980s, Australian actors had started to show an interest in Japanese acting and performance styles as part of a developing consciousness of Australia's Asian context. Myles' directorial decisions were successful because he revived Brechtian

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[1] Personal interview, 27.3.00.

[2] "The most interesting and innovative theatre [in 1981] occurred at the edges", Suzanne Spunner, *Theatre Australia*, February 82.

[3] My analysis of Sharman's productions at the Adelaide Lighthouse Theatre (formerly STC) will illustrate that this corresponded to a generally conservative attitude in mainstream theatres which also affected the choice of plays.

[4] *Theatre Australia*, Sept. 1981, 34.

[5] *Theatre Australia*, Sept. 1981, 34.

[6] It "worked well when the cigarette box flipped back to reveal the gods looking down on us, like football commentators", *Theatre Australia*, Sept. 1981, 34.

[7] *Theatre Australia*, Sept. 1981, 34.

[8] Hauptmann translated from Arthur Waley's *The Noh Plays of Japan*. The *Taniko* play served as a basis for *He who says yes*, cf. Willett (1984a), 27-28 and Knopf (1980), 89.

techniques in a way that met local interests at the time or, in Kosky's words, that allowed local audiences to assume ownership of the performance.

In 1989, David Bell's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for La Boite in Brisbane was equally successful. Since the late 60s, this company had been known for its steady but radical development presenting innovative work in an intimate in-the-round-auditorium. Bell's production of Brecht's work was perceived as relevant to Queensland audiences for various reasons, the most important ~~one~~ being a political one. At a time when major corruption, especially among the police force, was discovered, it suggested itself to interpret ~~and receive~~ *The Threepenny Opera* in this vein.[1] Even the critic Sue Gough, who had dismissed a year earlier the political message of *Happy End*, produced by Stephen Clark, as part of Brecht's "repetitive lecture to the proletariat to unite against economic oppressors"[2], considered Bell's choice of play as pertinent.[3] However, Willett's actualisation of the same play on the occasion of Whitlam's dismissal ~~has~~ proved that mere political topicality is not sufficient to guarantee a production ~~with considerable impact~~.[4] Bell's production, though, seems to have left a big enough impact for most reviewers to consider it relevant.[5] A closer look at Bell's way of staging *The Threepenny Opera* shows why this production succeeded.

Like Willett, Bell modified the text, but, according to Peta Koch, he did so by not only inserting topical lyrics, but by using various translations and incorporating scenes and songs from other works by Brecht also.[6] This indicates an awareness of the translation's important role for the performance as well as a liberal approach towards Brecht's text. Furthermore, Bell created a frame for the script which Gough described as follows:

> Dancers wearing farmyard animal masks (Orwell nods approval) rock and smooch in the innocuous music of the 1950s and 1960s. Is it possible that evil could spring from such wholesome roots? As the music goes up-beat and into 'Mac the Knife' thugs in bower boots burst in to terrorise the assembly. Brecht's bitter expose of venality begins.[7]

Possibly the use of this special type of boot was not only directed at evoking connotations with Nazi Germany but was also paralleling the behaviour of the Queensland

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[1] Cf. Peta Koch, *Courier Mail*, 10.3.89: "its focus on police corruption is particularly relevant in this State at this time".
[2] *The Australian*, 29.1.88.
[3] *The Australian*, 14.3.89. Stephen Clark produced the play at La Boite.
[4] Cf. Willett (1977), 110 and the analysis of Cherry's and Willett's production in this study.
[5] Cf. *Courier Mail*, 10.3.89.
[6] Cf. *The Australian*, 14.3.89, *Courier Mail*, 10.3.89, *Daily Sun*, 10.3.89, *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 10.3.89, *Time Off*, 16.3.89.
[7] *The Australian*, 14.3.89.

police force. While it is doubtful that such a comparison is appropriate, importantly, this framework differed from the one used by Willett and Cherry in so far as it did not only relate the play to contemporary audiences, but it also used a different theatrical style to Brecht's. The production's impact might have resulted from this free handling of Brechtian devices and from mixing them with other styles. Unfortunately, only Doug Kennedy's review for the *Gold Coast Bulletin* provided a vague description of the mixture of styles Bell might have used. He noted: "Bell uses some impressive modern props such as a video camera and clever bits of theatrical business to give *The Threepenny Opera* a 1980s twist and many of the effects work well".[1] Obviously props alone do not give a relevant edge to a production and Kennedy failed to explain what he meant by "clever bits of theatrical business"[2]. He might have been referring to aesthetic devices and styles other than the ones used by Brecht. If Bell continued the juxtaposition of styles displayed in the introduction throughout the performance this could have been an appropriate way of adding another perspective to the original play and could have contributed to the play's impact.

Bell's treatment of Brecht's script and staging technique seems to correspond to Kosky's suggestion on several levels. Regarding the play's content, Bell appears to have succeeded in finding parallels between life in Queensland and *The Threepenny Opera's* plot and characters so that contemporary audiences could relate to the production. Bell chose to reinforce the production's relevance through changes and additions to the text. His text handling resembled Kosky's suggestions and anticipated some contemporary performance practices in so far as he no longer considered the script to be untouchable. Nevertheless, it appears as though he kept the plot intact. Bell took liberties regarding *The Threepenny Opera's* traditional performance style thus illustrating that Kosky's suggestion to ignore a set way of staging a play can work effectively. Apart from its strong local flavour, Bell's production seems to have anticipated the spirit of Kosky's suggestions.

In addition to these productions, Brecht's plays started to spread beyond the major cities in the 1980s. The encouragement given to community theatres in the 1970s had resulted, amongst other things, in the foundation of amateur and professional companies in Australia's rural areas. Peter Fitzpatrick reports that community theatres represented the

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[1] *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 10.3.88.

[2] Peta Koch's review does not offer more precise information. She noted that Bell succeeded in "coaxing it [*The Threepenny Opera*] into the present with televisions, videos and modernised dress.", *Courier Mail*, 10.3.89.

new momentum in Australian theatre which was otherwise perceived as characterised by a "post-boom feeling".[1] Financially, community theatre was encouraged through the funding provided by the specially created Community Arts Board as part of the Australia Council.[2]

One of the theatres which had developed out of this movement was the Riverina Theatre Company, a professional company founded in 1976. Des James directed *The Threepenny Opera* for the company in Wagga Wagga, a town of about 50 000 people. Although this production took place in 1990, it will be analysed within the framework of the 1980s as it was part of a series of performances, which took place outside the major theatre venues in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

Angela Bennie noted in her review for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, that *The Threepenny Opera* at Wagga Wagga might have seemed "incongruous" because the "urban gutter smell and its lurid, raucous atmosphere seems a long way away from the khaki, brown-fresh world of the NSW countryside".[3] However, she continued to explain that James used this incongruity in a Brechtian way by "jolting the habitual theatrical response, forcing questions". Bennie's prejudice that "dialectics [such as Brecht's] in the midst of homespun philosophy just doesn't fit" appears somewhat superficial. She might be right to presume that the average countryperson's exposure to theatre is lower than a cityperson's. Yet Brecht was a playwright who aimed to break down social barriers which could hinder access to his theatre. For instance, performances for workers and the *Lehrstücke* were intended to be played by amateurs.

In contrast to Bennie, Des Davis did not regard *Mother Courage* as incompatible with a country setting when he directed the play in Wollongong in 1989. Admittedly, the performance differed from James' in so far as it took place in a bigger country town and was a co-production with the School of Creative Arts of the local university. Moreover, the play itself had a less urban feel about it. However, it was decisive that Davis perceived Brecht's sense of humour as similar to Australian humour, "based on scepticism with a dry wry, slightly gloomy but humorous approach to great events and 'tall poppies'".[4]

Davis' considerations are reminiscent of Cherry reflecting on similarities between Brechtian and Australian attitudes to life in the late 1950s and the late 1970s. Both directors

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[1] Fitzpatrick (1979), 157; cf. also Radic (1991), 170.
[2] Cf. Radic (1991), 180.
[3] *SMH*, 21.5.90.
[4] *The Advertiser*, 10.5.89, no name given.

searched for common features in the playwright's and the Australian audiences' way of thinking; in other words, they assessed the horizon of expectations. Davis' characterisation of Brecht combined two elements previously expressed by Cherry. In 1979, Cherry attributed Australians with "a sense of humour coupled with sardonic incredulity"[1], which he considered compatible with Brecht's sense of humour. Of even greater significance is that, in 1959, Cherry called *The Threepenny Opera* "a true play of the underdog"[2] thus appropriating the play in terms of the Australianist myth. In 1990, Davis used the Australian expression "tall poppy" to present Brecht as a playwright who is easily approachable for Australians. Both the concept of the underdog and the tall poppy, that is, a "wealthy or vulnerably prominent person" who, for this reason, will not be tolerated by Australians, are part of the myth of an Australian egalitarian society. Appropriating Brecht's plays this way could be considered as a way of 'Australianising' the foreign author. Although Davis did not go as far as Cherry in his appropriation pointing to similarities instead of equating Brecht's and the Australian sense of humour, the point of reference and the pattern of reception have remained the same.

Amongst the performances which took place outside the major theatre capitals Geoff Hooke directed *The Threepenny Opera* with the Darwin Theatre Company, that is, mostly with amateurs. The programme notes expressed clearly that Brecht's political message was considered as relevant in the Northern Territory.[3] Unlike in his production of *Mahagonny* at the Church in Melbourne[4], audiences did not seem to relate to the play and its performance. When June Kane reviewed the production for *NT News*[5] she expressed colloquially what Willett had noted about the 1975 production's lack of decisive impact. Only Kane phrased her comment with less precision, noting that "the satire seems tame (...). And the DTC production needed a little more oomph".[6]

In the same year, *The Threepenny Opera* was also performed at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, directed by John Milson. Enjoying a considerable number of productions in the 1980s, *The Threepenny Opera* proved to be an Australian favourite.

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[1] Cherry (1979).
[2] Programme notes for the production at the UTCR.
[3] Programme notes.
[4] Cf. my analysis of this collaboration between the Contemporary Performance Center and Zoo Theatre in 1981.
[5] *NT News*, 11.10.89.
[6] *NT News*, 11.10.89.

Throughout the changes both in Australian theatre and in the reception of Brecht's work, New Theatre companies in Melbourne and Sydney continued to perform plays by Brecht, staging them as "socially relevant and committed theatre".[1] In many ways, Martin Portus' review of New Theatre's *Galileo* for the *Sydney Morning Herald*[2] reflects the status of Brecht in Australian theatre at the end of the 1980s. Although some began to note a lessening impact of Brecht's plays, Portus concluded his review by declaring that "the play's hope in reason and humanity still burns fierce". Just before major political changes, like the fall of the Berlin Wall, and doubts concerning Brecht's personal integrity could cloud faith in Brecht's idealistic views, Portus expressed confidence in the enlightening function of Brecht's play. Consequently, Portus was one of the last critics to believe in the traditional image of Brecht. In the following decade, this image would be attacked on various levels, and the Australian reception of Brecht would change.

8. RECENT RECEPTION - RECEIVING BRECHT IN THE 1990S

8.1 Choice of plays and reasons for waning interest in Brecht's work

In the 1990s, after the low in productions, plays by German-speaking playwrights were staged more frequently again. An increased number of productions of plays by Brecht were part of this renewed interest in Austrian, German and Swiss plays. During the previous height in productions in the late 1970s, Brecht's plays represented up to two thirds of the productions. However, his share fell to less than half and lower in the 1990s, indicating an increasing indifference in Australia.[3]

This differed from the American reception, of which Carl Weber noted that the interest in Brecht "appears to have been revived" due to "the recession and a growing awareness of social crisis at the beginning of the 1990s".[4] Although these economic and social factors applied, in general, to the Australian society also, the Australian Brecht-fatigue, which began in the 1980s, lingered on.

The plays produced indicate that Australians still failed to take up opportunities to explore new aspects of Brecht's work through staging his early plays.[5] This has resulted in

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[1] Karen Lateo, *Sunday Telegraph*, 28.5.89.
[2] *SMH*, 22.5.89.
[3] Cf. Appendix II.
[4] Weber (1997a), 348.
[5] Cf. Wright's exploration of new aspects inherent in Brecht's early work in Wright (1989), 97-99.

merely one performance of *Baal*[1] and two performances of *In the Jungle of the Cities*[2] during the entire Australian reception of Brecht. In the 1990s, the only one-act-play presented was *A Respectable Wedding*, staged by Bogdan Koca in an alternative Sydney theatre.[3] Another exception to the conventional Australian Brecht repertoire was a Melbourne production of *He Who Said Yes* and *He Who Said No*, which involved school children, teachers, parents and theatre professionals.[4]

Besides these, Australian theatres continued to show well accepted plays such as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Threepenny Opera*, which were predominantly staged in mainstream theatres or academic institutions.

When seeking reasons for what seems a paralysis, almost, in the Australian reception of Brecht, two factors come to mind; on the one hand, it can be attributed to Brecht's image in Australia, an aspect analysed below. On the other hand, it can be explained by the overall state of Australian theatre, especially alternative theatre.

In Australian theatre, unfavourable conditions for staging Brecht's plays had resulted from funding cuts and an obsession with marketing and administration, which led to some declaring that "Australian theatre is over"[5]. Although, generally, the 1990s were a politically stable period without major upheaval, a recession was one reason why there was no return to the level of funding the arts had seen in the 1970s. In his article "Cutting the Fringe", Julian Meyrick explained that the fragile market in the theatre industry, with its high labor costs, had caused alternative and mainstream theatres alike to resist adventurous programming and had persuaded State theatres, who had become the main producers of Brecht's plays by now, to "cannibalise commercial program formulas".[6] Additionally, Brecht's plays had the reputation of involving high production costs.

Questioning Brecht's integrity

Moreover, Brecht's image in Australia had been tainted. His personal and political

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[1] James McCaughey staged *Baal* in 1977 in the Back Theatre of the Pram Factory.
[2] Productions: 1969 at La Mama, director: Brian Davies; 1981 at Melbourne University, director not known.
[3] Produced in December 1993 at Crossroads Theatre. *The Beggar and the Dead Dog* was part of a "Brecht evening", organised by Lindzee Smith, at the Melbourne Trades Hall in October 1998. It was performed as a staged reading along with an adaptation of the play by Phil Motherwell.
[4] Great Chorus Theatre Company at Collingwood Town Hall, June 1994.
[5] Meyrick (1999 (June)), 20; Meyrick also quotes John McCallum: "There is a new generation of theatre workers nurtured in our lively theatre culture who face the risk of artistic lobotomy. The danger is that we will end up with a superb arts infrastructure ... but no artists and no art."
[6] Meyrick (1999 (June)), 20.

integrity was questioned on an international level in a debate initiated by John Fuegi through publications such as *The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht.*[1] Fuegi accused Brecht of behaviour contradictory to his political convictions[2], and claimed that Brecht's working method was based on plagiarism and the exploitation of women[3], especially of Elisabeth Hauptmann, who, according to Fuegi "wrote a staggeringly large quantity of what was sold as though Brecht were the primary author"[4].

Internationally, Fuegi's book caused considerable stir and was criticised from its initial publication.[5] Fuegi's accusations had a certain influence on the Australian perception of Brecht, partly due to his books being accessible easily because they were in English and, to a smaller degree, through Fuegi's visit to Australia as participant of the 1996 Australian Drama Studies Association [ADSA] Conference in Canberra.

The importance of this debate for many Australian reviewers is illustrated by a comparison of Australian critics' reactions in the late 1970s and the 1990s. While in the late 1970s only one critic cast doubt on Brecht's political and personal integrity[6] this situation had changed by the 1990s, when accusations towards Brecht were so well known that it was possible for critics to refer to them merely in parenthesis, such as "Brecht (whoever he, she or they were)...".[7]

In his review of *The Threepenny Opera* at the QTC in 1995 for the *Brisbane News*, Paul Galloway expressed his opinion on Fuegi's accusations in more detail. He supported Fuegi's point of view, especially where Elisabeth Hauptmann's position was concerned, and summarised the debate as follows:

> There has been uproar among theatre scholars since John Fuegi stood up in class and dobbed in Bertolt Brecht. Brecht, he declared, was alway cribbing from his girlfriends. For instance, while backs were turned, little Lizzie Hauptmann passed Bertie the entire script of *The Threepenny Opera* under the desk. Since Fuegi's accusatien, the spitballs have been flying thick in Bertie's defence (...).[8]

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[1] Cf. Fuegi (1994).
[2] "The person who had declared himself on the side of workers cheated those who worked closely to him, lying to them and regularly stealing their work and money." Fuegi (1994), XVII.
[3] Cf. for example the introduction to Fuegi (1994).
[4] Fuegi (1994), 146.
[5] Cf. Michael Meyer's article and John Willett's letter to the editor in the *New York Review of Books*, 1.12.94 and 12.1.95. Willett, in particular, criticised the book as "wormeaten with at least 450 rather more telling mistakes and repetitions [than the grammatical and spelling errors which Meyer had pointed out]" and called its allegations "wobbly". There was no review in the *Australian Review of Books*.
[6] Thor Svensen, *Manly Daily*, 29.6.79.
[7] *The Australian*, 2.6.95. Veronica Kelly reviewed *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Chris Johnson for the QTC in 1995.
[8] Directed by Chris Johnson. *Brisbane News*, 7.7.95.

Galloway's comic report can be read in several ways. At first sight, the mockery serves as a simple device for informing his readers in an entertaining way. At a deeper level, his style is an indicator of how much attitudes towards Brecht had changed since the New Wave, especially the APG, which had regarded Brecht as a political ally and since Brecht had been perceived, generally, as in vogue. Bertolt Brecht, the political idol, had been replaced by "Bertie". It might be the case, also, that Galloway mocked the debate in order to distance himself from the academic discussion, which was in danger of getting out of hand. While Fuegi was right to attract attention to Elisabeth Hauptmann's merits, the polemical style of his books[1] caused scholarly debates world-wide to lose sight of important literary questions by concentrating on Brecht's personal morals.

This was also Peter Robinson's and Helen Musa's perception, who both reported on Fuegi's participation at the ADSA conference in the *Canberra Times*. Robinson's comment that Brecht had been "attacked most invidiously by the hunger of the ever-present chameleon of scholarship"[2] and Musa referring to the debate as "Brecht-bashing"[3] indicate that they considered the accusations and the debate to be out of proportion and lacking objectivity. At the conference itself, Geoffry Borny chaired "a very lively panel discussion" on the topic "Joint Authorship: Brecht and Others"[4] in which Fuegi participated.

The general debate on Brecht's integrity had caused so much attention at the time that Cracka Theatre Troupe, associated with the University of Queensland[5], turned it into a play about Brecht, which was shown at the ADSA conference and later at schools in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. As indicated by the production's title, *Boneless Chicken Brecht*[6], the group presented a critical and ironic look at Brecht through his poems, excerpts from other texts and Brecht's radio interviews.[7] However, although questioning Brecht's authorship and the construction of history, they did so by using Brechtian techniques, as

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[1] For instance, Fuegi compared Hauptmann's situation to that in Soviet concentration camps in the 1920s. After reporting how the prisoners of one of the earliest camps held their newspapers upside down "as a kind of international distress signal" during a visit by Maxim Gorky, Fuegi concludes: "She [Elisabeth Hauptmann] was one of the ones who had held a newspaper upside down, and her silence had taken a terrible toll on her." Fuegi (1994), XVI-XVII.

[2] *Canberra Times*, 3.12.96.

[3] *Canberra Times*, 7.12.96.

[4] Personal email, 23.2.00.

[5] Since 1993, Cracka was part of the community service of the Arts Faculty and the Department of English at the University of Queensland. They performed short play extract programs at schools throughout Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

[6] Coordinated by Richard Fotheringham.

[7] Cf. Louise Hollingworth, *lowdown*, vol. 19, no.2, April 1997, 56.

Louise Hollingworth noted in her review for *lowdown*: "Classic Brechtian devices were used - the audience was detached and the creation of any illusion was deliberately avoided. (...) Scenes were broken up, making each one complete within itself." They also used "hanging signs".[1] Thus, Cracka translated into performance what many international scholars and Australian scholars and directors believed: That Brecht's reputation contained conflicting images, such as "Brecht is a genius; Brecht is a bastard; Brecht is a trademark".[2] Their performance reflected also their belief that challenging Brecht's personal integrity ultimately did not affect the value of his aesthetic devices, even if turned against their original creator.

In the same vein, British scholar Elizabeth Wright pointed out that although contradictions between Brecht's ideology and his lifestyle "may make him in some respects an unadmirable figure, they are surely not factors to be held indiscriminately against him when a critical survey of his achievements as a writer is being conducted".[3] Similarly, Australian director Simon Phillips, after having provided an overview of the scholarly debate in the programme notes for his 1994 production of *The Threepenny Opera*, suggested that we concentrate on the relevance of Brecht's texts rather than on his personal life.[4]

Australian academic and director Denise Varney was more radical in her reaction. Apart from dismissing the quality of Fuegi's biography *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics and the Making of Modern Drama*[5], Varney argued that the debate surrounding it ignored the state of current performance practice. She stressed the distinction between "the dramatic and the performance text"[6] and, referring to Patrice Pavis[7], she noted:

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[1] *lowdown*, vol. 19, no.2, April 1997, 56.
[2] *lowdown*, vol. 19, no.2, April 1997, 56. Actors whispered these lines as they trekked through the seating banks at the beginning of the production.
[3] Wright (1989), 9. Regarding the German debate, cf. for example Greiner (1997). Gudrun Tabbert-Jones was convinced that critics ignored "the real issues: What is Brecht's contribution to modern drama and what does authorship mean in Brecht's case?", Tabbert-Jones (1995), 249.
[4] "It is all too easy to criticise the personal hypocrisy of any leader with a moral vision," says Phillips. "We seem to be obsessed with deconstructing the character or moral fibre of our leaders rather than examining their ideas." *The Australian*, 26.8.94.
[5] Published in England under the title *The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht*. Varney criticised "Fuegi's salacious accounts of Brecht and his lovers, together with the use of selective quotation", Varney (1998), 140.
[6] Varney (1998), 149.
[7] Pavis (1992), 24.

> Criticism of Brecht - the man - places undue emphasis on the dramatist, which is at odds with contemporary approaches to performance which emphasise the artistic team and *mise en scène* over both the dramatist and the director.[1]

Consequently, she supported the view that the author constitutes but one of multiple voices in a production process which no longer aims at faithfully reproducing the script and its intentions.[2] Like Kosky, Varney favoured a bold approach over a text-based production. This approach to authorship and the fidelity of productions allowed Varney to stop treating Brecht's plays as "fixed historical artefacts". Varney followed Elin Diamond's suggestions when she included the possibility "to engage productively with the possibilities of the play in performance, of the subversive potential of turning Brecht's techniques against himself".[3]

Varney applied this approach to *The Good Person of Szechwan* when staging the play in 1993 with theatre students from the University of Melbourne.[4] She recorded its underlying theoretical considerations in her thesis *Feminism and Performance: Theorising New Performance Modes for Feminist Theatre.*[5] In the actual production, Varney proposed to deconstruct the classical text from a feminist postmodern point of view, focusing on Brecht's presentation of the female characters in the written text.[6] Amongst the ways in which *The Good Person* can be re-read in a feminist context, she cited the *Verfremdungseffekt* which can be used to "defamiliarise the relations of sex and gender in the formation of social subjects and their inter-relations".[7] More importantly, Varney interpreted the feminine subject in the play as a subject in transit and focused on the centrality of the body in performance.[8]

In the context of this study, Varney's production is of great importance because it represents an attempt to revive Brecht, the untouchable classic, in an academic context. It took place during the same year in which Kosky used a bold approach in staging Goethe's *Faust.*[9] Although this fresh approach to Brecht's text could not reach as big an audience as Kantor's 1998 production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at Belvoir Street Theatre, it is crucial because it introduced drama students, and thus potential future theatre practitioners,

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[1] Varney (1998), 150.
[2] Varney (1998), 141.
[3] Varney (1998), 150, cf. Diamond (1997).
[4] Performed at the Open Stage Theatre, University of Melbourne. Varney's spelling was *Sichuan*.
[5] Varney (1998).
[6] She suggested to examine whether "the female characters are presented for critique of whether they are an ideological blindspot", Varney (1998), 147.
[7] Varney (1998), 139.
[8] Varney (1998), 182-199
[9] Cf. my analysis of Kosky's production.

to new ways of interpreting and staging Brecht's work.

Overall, this level of familiarity with and interest in a playwright's personal life was an exception in the Australian reception of German-speaking playwrights. Although other playwrights, such as Peter Handke, have repeatedly caused vehement debates in the German speaking press, it appears that only Brecht had become known enough to cause an Australian interest in a scandal concerning his personal life. This serves as an ironic confirmation of Brecht's classical status in Australia.

Additional reasons for waning interest in Brecht

More important reasons than Fuegi's personal accusations were crucial social and political changes in Europe, represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall. These changes affected directly, and in the long term, the political dimension of Brecht's work. It is difficult to assess how much the change in the world's political configuration and the resulting questioning of left-wing political thinking have influenced decisions not to stage plays by Brecht. My study of productions in the 1990s will show, though, that directors and critics were strongly aware of these changes affecting the political aspects of Brecht's work.

As far as style and form are concerned, Brecht's plays suffered from the ongoing problematic status of a classic in need of reinvigoration for the contemporary Australian stage. In this context, it becomes obvious how strong the impact of Brecht's theories on theatre has been in Australia. In her contribution to the *Brecht-Jahrbuch* in 1995, Australian director, writer and singer Robyn Archer acknowledged that "the legacy of Bertolt Brecht's stage theory and methodology pervades everything we see on the stage".[1]

As my study of the Australian reception of Brecht has shown, Brecht's influence exceeded the mere number of productions and was crucial in theatre aesthetics on a theoretical and practical level, albeit not without misunderstandings. It needs to be stressed that this places Brecht in sharp contrast with other German speaking playwrights, who did not provide such detailed information on the theoretical background of their dramas and whose influences were not so significant to create a performance tradition.

Yet, while a strong Australian familiarity with Brecht's aesthetics can be interpreted, on the one hand, as the result of a successful reception, it implies on the other hand that Brecht's aesthetic devices have lost their originally innovative character. This is confirmed

[1] Archer (1995), 144.

by Michael Kantor's observation that "a lot of Brechtian ideas are now the main stage of theatrical ideas."[1] Simon Phillips concluded for *The Threepenny Opera*, especially its aesthetic devices, that "One of the things it has lost over the years is any sense of being radical, dangerous, confrontational".[2] As a result, both directors saw the need to revive or change Brecht's original aesthetic devices. Meanwhile, other directors made gentler changes or none at all to the plays they chose to stage. In the following section, I shall analyse the various approaches and shall ask which approach enables contemporary and future Australian audiences to relate to the plays and productions and to perceive them as pertinent.

8.2 Approaches to staging Brecht's plays for contemporary audiences

The following analysis considers five productions, three of which saw the need to reinvigorate Brecht's plays to various degrees. I shall analyse them in order of growing alterations to the original text beginning with Chris Johnson's production, which seems to have been confined to bringing out the musical entertainment value of *The Threepenny Opera* in a traditional way. Richard Wherrett's production of *Galileo* and Jean-Pierre Mignon's production of *Mother Courage* sought to achieve a renewal of the plays' impact mainly through using an updated translation. The next step is represented by Phillips' production of *The Threepenny Opera* in which he attempted to find new ways of using Brecht's aesthetic devices. Finally, Michael Kantor's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* will illustrate how a bold approach can be successfully applied to one of Brecht's dramas.

Chris Johnson's production took place in 1995 at the QTC. Johnson expressed in her programme notes that her intentions in staging this play with music were to provide audiences with "a great night of music and theatre", to bring "together artists with a range of backgrounds and working skills" and to stage "a great classic with a strong contemporary relevance and feel to it".[3] Although it is difficult to assess this production's style - in fact, many reviews described it as stylistically incoherent[1] - these remarks show that Johnson did not feel the need to update the play in any way. It seems as though she put considerable emphasis on the music as she considered it important that the performance was

[1] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[2] *The Australian*, 26.8.94.
[3] Programme notes, 10f.

part of the Brisbane Biennale of Music.[2]

The production was received accordingly. Veronica Kelly, reviewing it for *The Australian*, enjoyed it as a "a top vintage musical" which "still has plenty of culinary nourishment to offer" and admitted that this was probably not Brecht's intention.[3] Ernest Ritter, writing for *BUG*, criticised the production openly: "Why someone did not tell director Chris Johnson that she was not doing *My Fair Lady* was beyond me".[4] As with many previous productions, *The Threepenny Opera* had lost its social relevance entirely[5] and had been reduced to 'culinary theatre' as summed up in Galloway's review for the *Brisbane News*: "The Kurt Weill music can provoke bittersweet memories of a decadent Weimar Berlin, particularly in those who were never there."[6] Once again, the Weimar Republic, as it appears in *The Threepenny Opera*, had been presented through an exotic and nostalgic lens.

Concerning the production's style, Galloway thought that "the problem of this production generally [is] its over-reverent attitude to Brecht and his technique"[1], implying that he no longer considered it as valid. With this assessment, Galloway indirectly suggested a less reverent attitude towards Brecht's work, thus approaching it in a similar way to Kosky. In summary, it is rather Galloway's review than Johnson's production which suggests future ways of staging Brecht's plays. His attitude of not regarding Brecht as an untouchable classic any longer sets free some creative potential because it ignores the constraints of having to imitate a prescribed style, an 'authentic' way of staging Brecht's plays.

The increased significance of the plays' translation

In the context of an intensified search for meaningful ways of producing Brecht's plays in the 1990s, both directors and critics paid increased attention to the quality of translations,

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[1] Cf. *The Australian*, 2.6.95, *The Financial Review*, 2.6.95, *Time Off*, 31.5.95.
[2] This would also explain the engagement of well known artists such as Lyndon Terracini and Sheila Bradley.
[3] *The Australian*, 2.6.95.
[4] *BUG*, 31.5.95.
[5] In fact, several reviewers relegated its original critical dimension to the past; Tim Mansfield stated in *Theatre Australasia* (July 95) that Brecht had "addressed the social problems of his time" and Alex Francis-Smith declared in the *Redland Times* (2.6.95) that Brecht wrote "about the living conditions and social injustices of the period".
[6] *Brisbane News*, 7.6.95.

aware that this was the basis for any successful text-based production. It bears repeating that, previously, the majority of programme notes and reviews had failed to indicate who had translated the text, an unambiguous sign that the translation was not regarded as an important factor in the production. The first director and academic to be an exception in this Australian lack of interest in the quality of translations was Wal Cherry in his 1979 article on the Australian reception of Brecht.[2] In the 1980s, those newspapers aiming at a higher level of criticism started to acknowledge the translators.[3] Awareness was increased when the *Australia and New Zealand Theatre Record* (*ANZTR*) started to reproduce reviews, including information on translation.

The fact that critics were not only more sensitive to the text, but also started to watch audience reactions more closely, reflects a growing awareness in Australian theatre of the theatrical communication process.

Both Richard Wherrett's production of *Galileo* in 1996 and Jean-Pierre Mignon's production of *Mother Courage* in 1993 relied at least partly on a new translation in order to achieve a fresh impact. Wherrett used a "new version" of the play by David Hare, who, according to the STC programme, "translated the text vividly and with an ear for contemporary parallels".[4] As it is a translation by a British playwright, it will not be analysed in detail here. What is important, though, is that Pamela Payne, reviewing *Galileo* for the *Sydney Sun-Herald*, approved of Hare's cutting of "the didactic introductions to each scene". Payne concluded: "This version progresses more fluidly".[5] It seems that Hare's translation shows at least some signs of naturalisation because it adapted Brecht's play to more conventional dramatic patterns. This might have been also the case for the music; instead of Hanns Eisler's original score Wherrett used new music by Jonathon Dore.[6]

In addition, the production seems to have emphasised Michael Scott-Mitchell's set,

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[1] *Brisbane News*, 7.6.95. This seems to coincide with musical director's Michael Morley's view as expressed in the programme notes: "Brecht would look at something with a terrifically cold eye and think 'this doesn't work', or 'this needs to be reworked for new circumstances or new social conditions', because it just might have something to say to a new audience. (...) I think it's a wonderfully pragmatic approach and entirely non-reverential."

[2] Cherry (1979).

[3] In the early 1980s, Australian playwrights also provided new translations of plays not performed in Australia so far. Cf. my analysis of Ray Lawler's translation of *Minna von Barnhelm* for the MTC and Louis Nowra's *Lulu* for the STC in Adelaide.

[4] STC programme announcing the season; the quote has been taken from *The Times* (London), but no date has been given.

[5] *Sydney Sun-Herald*, 9.6.96.

[6] It is difficult to assess the role of the music as the reviews failed to mention it.

which, according to John McCallum's description in *The Australian*, consisted of "a continually moving Renaissance model of the universe (...) on a double concentric revolving stage". In Galileo's study "there is a very modern laptop computer - its screen glaring out at us as a reminder of what has been made of his [Galileo's] new science".[1] While McCallum regarded the set as a meaningful part of the production, James Waites, who reviewed *Galileo* for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, criticised its "excessive dominance". According to him, the set was "taking up the bulk of center-stage, as if the set itself were the evening's diva".[2] It becomes clear that Waites was aware of the need to find new approaches to Brecht's work when he judged the production as follows: "There are elements of Brecht's theories which have not stood the test of time, but to glorify the setting, and to smother the themes in a gravy of sumptuous costuming is a big mistake". Critics generally had become mindful of the fact that Brecht's aesthetic devices might have become dated and ineffective, but were concerned about dubious attempts to 'freshen up' his plays.

Like Wherrett, Jean-Pierre Mignon used a new translation for his production of *Mother Courage* for Anthill theatre, the Australian Nouveau Theatre, in 1993. Playwright Humphrey Bower translated the play especially for this production and provided a thorough account of his attempt to come to terms with the challenges of translating Brecht's text in the article "The Mother's Tongue. Translating *Mother Courage*"[3], which was published in the company's magazine, *ANT News*.

A comparison of Bower's pragmatically orientated observations with a recent publication by Michael Morley gives an in-depth analysis of the theoretical and practical problems associated with translating Brecht's texts, including his dramatic work.[4] Morley points to three challenges facing translators of plays by Brecht that incorporate music. The translator should attempt not "to simplify the dialectic of instruction and entertainment" underlying the majority of Brecht's plays; he must take the musical setting into account[5] and, most importantly, he should attempt to render the various registers of language.[6] As indicated in

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[1] *The Australian*, 11.6.96.
[2] *SMH*, 10.6.96. Pamela Payne called it "a visual gloss" (*Sun-Herald*, 9.6.96). Julie Moffatt (*Manly Daily*, 14.6.96) wrote: "This is a mammoth work staged before a huge sombre set which just about swamps the actions".
[3] *ANT News*, no.33, June 1993, 1.
[4] Morley (1997).
[5] Morley (1997), 329-330.
[6] Morley (1997), 328.

the title of his article, Bower's point of departure is the latter aspect. He calls Brecht's language an "estranged language", a use of language and registers which serves primarily to create a critical distance instead of mirroring the dramatic action and the characters. Among the effects he analyses are the use of "slangy German", archaisms, influences of foreign languages, muteness, modifications of proverbs and phrases and the use of what he calls "'undressed' language", which involves "openly expressing motives, values and intentions that a naturalistic playwright would be more likely to convey via other characters or the subtext".[1] Like Morley, who recommends that the translator find some equivalent of the various registers of Brecht's language to avoid blandness[2], Bower made every effort in his translation to recreate the characteristics of Brecht's language in an expressive way. His account of his procedure is as follows:

> I chose a contemporary Australian idiom (more or less my own); sometimes allowing it to have its own estranging effects (rather than neutralizing it for fear of sounding 'too' Australian); sometimes translating German idioms or Brechtian peculiarities as literally as I could to let them 'sound strange' (resisting the impulse to naturalize).[3]

Bower essentially endeavoured to avoid 'naturalisation', which Morley describes as the crucial fault of some English versions of Brecht's dramas, especially those which are based on a newly prepared 'literal' translation. According to Morley, these translations adapt Brecht's texts in the following way:

> The 'unfamiliar' is made as 'familiar' as possible - lest the audience find it too difficult to come to terms not only with a foreign text but also with an 'un-English' manner of presenting character, milieu and dramatic action.[4]

The result is something Morley terms a "dual translation: first into another language and then, with suitable adjustments, into the 'new' culture and a more 'familiar' theatrical idiom".[1] This approach to translating a text could be considered of a piece with an overall mode of reception described earlier in this study, namely naturalisation through production style.

Bower resisted the impulse to naturalise because he acknowledged the important function of Brecht's language in the Brechtian theatre which aims at much more than a simple

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[1] *ANT News*, no.33, June 1993, 1. Morley points to the following specific challenges of translating *Mother Courage*: "its mixture of the vernacular, its parodistic echoes of the Bible and folk tales, its invention of a dialect which combines elements from the German translation of Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švjk* with traces of Bavarian dialect", Morley (1997), 331.
[2] Morley (1997), 328.
[3] *ANT News*, no.33, June 1993, 1.
[4] Morley (1997), 324.

communication of information about character or action. Indirectly, he appears to be acknowledging the didactic function of language which Morley has pointed at.

At the same time, Bower's commentary illustrates that the use of a special Australian translation rather than an English or American one does not necessarily lead to an artificial naturalisation as criticised by Morley. The question of 'English versus American versions' has been a controversial one from the outset. In his article "Some factors in translating Brecht, 1967", John Willett had argued against adapting Brecht's text within English-speaking contexts except in minor ways: "All that is needed [to adapt the text within the English speaking world] is for publisher or producer to change a word here and there, transmuting sidewalks to pavements and vice versa, wherever he thinks it would jar". [2] However, the present study has shown that Willett was in favour of modifying *The Threepenny Opera* to make it relevant for contemporary Australian audiences when working as a dramaturge for Wal Cherry's 1975 production. There seems to be a similar contradiction in Willett's remarks about adaptations to local conditions. The tensions resolve themselves, though, when those remarks are read not as categorical rejections of adapting Brecht's texts and production style but as reservations about certain types and degrees of adaptation.[3]

As far as music is concerned, Bower expresses similar opinions to Morley's because he sees the songs as presenting "their own particular challenge". After originally trying to transpose the spoken rhythms of Brecht's words, Bower took into account the musical setting and reworked the lines "note by note" in order to convey how Paul Dessau's music often "deliberately counterpoints" the rhythm of Brecht's lyrics.[4]

It is clear that Bower was ready to make adjustments to preliminary versions of his translations. He was also willing to adapt his translations to Anthill's specific production of *Mother Courage* as he did in letting himself be consciously influenced by the speech-styles of the actors involved in the production. He thus acknowledged that a good translation involves more than a purely linguistic task.[5] It appears that Bower's method of translating

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[1] Morley (1997), 323. It is important for this study that Morley adds that "the case is not restricted to Brecht's dramas: something similar holds for those English versions of German dramatists like J.M.R. Lenz, Gerhart Hauptmann, or even Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.", Morley (1997), 324.
[2] Willett (1984b), 244.
[3] Concerning anglicization cf. Willett (1990), 88, Willett (1990), 87-88.
[4] *ANT News*, no.33, June 1993, 1.
[5] Cf. Kruger (1985 (April)), Pavis' considerations regarding the "Théorie du verbo-corps", in: Pavis (1987), 422 and my analysis of Nowra's translation of the *Lulu* plays.

Mother Courage resembled Brecht's approach to his own texts in some respects. Brecht was not only prepared to adapt a text while rehearsing it, he must have considered close collaboration between the translator/actor and the playwright a fruitful one, as can be seen in his work with Charles Laughton on *Galileo*. Due to financial reasons, few theatres nowadays can provide such a workshop situation.[1] Bower's efforts resulted in a translation which rendered the spirit of Brecht's original with an Australian flavour and was well received. In her review for *In Press*, Ellen Fidavila even expressed the notion of ownership of the text when she noted: "Bower's Brecht sings of Fitzroy Street corners".[2]

Despite the fresh translation, the production style was surprisingly conventional. There are three possible reasons for this, all of which are related to anticipated audience reactions. The first explanation is contained in a somewhat contradictory article by Renato Brandão entitled "Post-modernism and Brecht".[3] At the start, the article gives the impression that it was meant to promote a radical updating of Brecht's play. Brandão justified in a number of ways why he thought it necessary to stage Brecht's plays in a new manner. His main arguments are the political changes which have resulted in the discrediting of Marxism and, on an aesthetic level, changed notions of performance due to the growing influence of the media. He cited Heiner Müller and Pina Bausch as artists who have successfully combined the challenges of Brechtian theatre, "the political and the artistic".[4] Yet, in the end, Brandão discarded all of these ideas in favour of what seems to be a conventional approach and concluded:

> Our real challenge is therefore to question performance itself, subverting the accepted norm of theatre practice, but in a way general audiences can relate to. Only then can we be sure that theatre has really survived as a medium.[5]

This conclusion comes as a surprise and it is not clear whether Brandão drew it because, identifying with postmodern positions, he wanted to close the gap between 'high' and 'popular' culture.

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[1] Cf. Morley (1997), 324. At Anthill, especially during the early years of the company's existence, the members of the company made up for lack of finances repeatedly through offering unpaid work, cf. *National Times*, 12.9.82.

[2] *In Press*, 16.6.93; cf. also the following comments: Helen Thomson: "Humphrey Bower's new translation is excellent, idiomatic without anachronistic slang, its rhythms and emphasis are just right.", *The Australian*, 7.6.93; Kate Herbert: "the very good colloquial translation", *Melbourne Times*, 9.6.93.

[3] *ANT News*, no. 33, June 1993, 2. A footnote explains that "Born in Brazil, Renato read German and Drama at the universities of São Paulo, London and Melbourne. He works as actor and director."

[4] *ANT News*, no. 33, June 1993, 2. At a later stage, I would like to complement this area of my study through examining the influence of Pina Bausch in Australia.

[5] *ANT News*, no. 33, June 1993, 2.

Another possible explanation was given by Katherine Sturak, responsible for Anthill's public relations work. Asked for differences between staging a play in Europe and in Australia (Melbourne), she responded: "Here, to a great degree, one is at the level of 'introducing' classics to the public whereas in Europe one is interpreting them."[1] Although this remark might sound condescending it is not without relevance for *Mother Courage* as the only major production in Melbourne so far had been Joachim Tenschert's for the MTC in 1973.[2]

Apart from these theoretical considerations, financial concerns also seem to have played a role in the decision to avoid adventurous ways of staging the play. A look at Anthill's history supports this impression. For most of its existence, Anthill was an alternative company well known for courageous stagings of contemporary European plays. Amongst other productions, this spirit had led to the Australian premiere of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* in 1982. However, Anthill's emphasis on contemporary European work was controversial from the start. Wendy Harmer summarised Anthill's precarious status in her article "The Anthill experiment" for *The National Times*:

> The emphasis [on contemporary European works] (...) has earned the Anthill Theatre praise for being courageous and for being a very real alternative. But Anthill's critics - and there are many - say it is the home of irrelevant and obscure work; that in times when Australian theatre is in danger of being wiped out, presenting European plays is a luxury we cannot afford.[3]

This report illustrates the hostilities between theatre companies and artists that grew out of the competition for funding in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s.

In the interview for Harmer's article, Mignon responded to the accusations in two ways. Firstly, he reported that he and his company tried to find "a new or experimental approach to plays" amongst Australian playwrights, but most plays "were naturalistically written". He thus detected a persisting influence of naturalism on Australian playwriting. Secondly, he justified his choice of plays with the benefits of an intercultural reception such as an increased awareness in Australia of developments in European theatre.

The controversy shows that the company had a difficult life from the start. It started to

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[1] Personal letter, November 94. Cf. also my analysis of the reception of the *Lulu* plays in the 1980s.

[2] The strong impact of the lack of performance tradition will become even more obvious in my study of the plays by German speaking playwrights other than Brecht such as *Lulu* and *Faust*.

[3] *National Times*, 12.9.82. Cf. Australian playwright Jack Hibberd's comment in the same article: "A concern for Australian theatre is totally lacking at Anthill. (...) Our major efforts should be directed towards building a tradition and re-interpreting classic Australian plays and an Australian avant-garde should react to and against that. I have drawn on European tradition myself, but in this current stringent climate, that exercise has a low priority - I am not opposed to it, but it's down the list."; cf. also Leonard Radic in *The Age*, 8.9.82.

struggle when subsidies became even harder to obtain in the 1990s and the company folded one year after the performance of *Mother Courage*[1], thus illustrating the pressures on non-mainstream theatres at the time. Therefore it is likely that the production style of *Mother Courage* was not free from financial considerations. An adventurous production style might have deterred potential spectators from coming to see the production.

Consequently, Mignon's approach resulted in a production which appeared traditional rather than challenging conventional ways of staging the play. This was also how Chris Boyd saw it, who reviewed it for the *Financial Review*. He wrote: "*Mother Courage* has been approached as a rather benign literary text. Instead of striving to recreate the socio-political impact the playwright intended, Mignon and translator Humphrey Bower have opted to restore the dramatic canvas".[2] John Larkin, reviewing the production for *The Age*, confirmed that it did not touch Brecht's status as a classic as "Mignon and his players give the work a fine balance of crudity and classicism, while following the author's theme of the timelessness of the lessons of war".[3]

One review was at odds with the others. Leonard Radic's in *The Age* demanded an even more conventional, an "authentic" approach towards *Mother Courage* . Using Joachim Tenschert's production for the MTC as a yardstick he wrote:

> The result [of employing a retired director form the Berliner Ensemble] was an authentic Berlin-style production which used a taped score, as well as signs, slides and a stage revolve. Jean-Pierre Mignon's production has none of these. The absence of the stage revolve is excusable; the rest less so.[4]

Radic did not explain why he criticised the performance for lacking those devices of Tenschert's production. His criticism could be interpreted as a concern fearing the loss of *Verfremdungseffekte*. However, as he did not clarify the reasons for his unfavourable comparison between Tenschert's and Mignon's production his criticism was interpreted as promoting an 'authentic' performance model[5] from overseas. Radic's remark could be easily read in the context of cultural cringe, which has marked especially the early reception of Brecht's work, and therefore it must have struck its readers all the more.

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[1] Julian Meyrick attributes Anthill's demise partly to a founding policy following the principle of "channelling more money into the larger theatres and letting the smaller companies trade out of business", in: Meyrick (1999 (June)), 20.

[2] *Financial Review*, 11.6.93.

[3] *The Age*, 20.6.93; cf. also Kate Herbert: "the production fails to connect with - or respond to - contemporary social reality.", *Melbourne Times*, 9.6.93.

[4] *The Age*, 10.6.93.

[5] When comparing Radic's remark to the original, less favourable reactions towards Tenschert's performance, Radic's retrospective assessment also reveals how much critical standards had changed.

This interpretation might have caused Australian director Neil Armfield to respond vehemently. Armfield reacted to Radic's review as follows:

> I am astonished (...) and disturbed ...(by) the underlying assumption that there is some 'correct' way to perform Brecht ... to suggest in Australia, in 1993, that a Melbourne company should be reproducing a production evolved in Berlin 50 years ago... Wake up, Len - the Berlin Wall came down years ago".[1]

The indignation of Armfield's reaction shows how much Radic's judgment was out of tune with a theatre scene in which many practitioners were making every effort to find contemporary and local ways, including bold ways, of staging Brecht's work.[2] For most theatre practitioners and critics, the reception of Brecht's work had clearly shifted from the search for an authentic production style to considering Brecht and his work from a contemporary Australian point of view. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Armfield accorded such a strong symbolic value to the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his remark, it does not only represent radical political changes but also the crumbling of world views, including theatrical norms.

Simon Phillips' production of *The Threepenny Opera*

Simon Phillips' production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1994 can be interpreted as an attempt to come to terms with the challenges of staging a play by Brecht at a time when both the world views and theatrical norms associated with Brecht were questioned.

As far as formal aspects of *The Threepenny Opera* are concerned, Phillips, like Willett and Pulvers before him, was well aware of the fact that Brecht's aesthetic devices had lost their original effect.[3] He attributed this to an appropriation process during which many Brechtian aesthetic devices had been integrated into everyday theatre practice all over the world. As a result, audiences had become accustomed to the techniques used in Brecht's plays and they had lost their initial impact.

In her review for the *Sydney Review*, Suzanne Kiernan agreed with Phillips' observation.[4] Her review reflects a high standard of criticism because she analysed the production in a

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[1] *ANT News*, no. 34, April 94.

[2] Through his work at Nimrod, at Sharman's Lighthouse Company and at Belvoir Street Theatre, Armfield was truly qualified to respond on behalf of an Australian avant-garde which had grown out of the New Wave movement. Armfield's approach is characterised by a non-radical but decisive treatment of classics, as the following remark by Richard Roxburgh reveals: "Even when he is doing classics (...) he will always try to find a way of threading it with Australian meaning - which isn't to say he sets it in an obvious Australian context.", *The Australian Magazine*, 20.2.99.

[3] Cf. *The Australian*, 26.8.94: "One of the things it [*The Threepenny Opera*] has lost over the years is any sense of being radical, dangerous, confrontational. It's a long time since it's had any kind of danger".

[4] *Sydney Review*, October 94.

wider context by comparing the speed at which it became dated with other novel dramas like Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search for an Author*. She concluded that "The ironic fate of truly novel works is that they qualify quickest to pass into the museum culture."

In order to counteract this fact, Phillips intended to "rekindle the aspects which made Brechtian theatre so revolutionary in its day, many of which have now been so absorbed into our theatrical culture as to be taken for granted".[1] For this purpose, he created a frame for the play which set the production "in an opulent North Shore apartment with harbour views".[2] Through its doors "bursts a ruffian crew. They upheave the furniture, bind and gag the elegantly evening clad occupants - wife and husband. 'You are about to hear an opera for beggars'".[3] By the second act, the pair has been violently removed and Phillips has turned the Sydney Theatre Company's privileged spectators into accessory observers.[4] Through this device, Phillips hoped to provoke a kind of surprise and shock which would have effects similar to the original impact of *The Threepenny Opera*. Accordingly, he considered the frame as a "concept which is designed to re-invent what Brecht invented. Everything we are doing is an attempt to try to re-introduce people to the effect Brecht would have had on his audiences at the time".[5] In her review, Kiernan reflected on Phillips' technique of re-inventing Brechtian effects. She expressed amazement at the fact that "Phillips seeks the equivalent of an alienation effect through an identification effect".[6] However, this observation is only partly correct as she did not take into account that, in the first act, the audience was only meant to identify with the couple who were part of the frame. As a result, the spectators were still observers of the actual play instead of becoming immersed in it.

In order to create suspense, Phillips announced the production in a media release as "every STC subscriber's worst domestic nightmare".[1] This announcement also indicates a second effect which Phillips had in mind when devising the frame. It is linked to the particular irony inherent in most productions of *The Threepenny Opera* where a 'bourgeois' audience enjoys a play which criticises its own society on stage. As John McCallum observed in his review for *The Australian*, "It is an irony Brecht anticipated: why do the

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[1] Director's note, Programme notes.
[2] Bob Evans, *SMH*, 5.9.94.
[3] Pamela Payne, *Sun-Herald*, , 4.9.94.
[4] Cf. John McCallum, *The Australian*, 9.9.94.
[5] *The Australian*, 26.8.94.
[6] *Sydney Review*, October 94.

rich and powerful love to observe and to weep, briefly, over the misery of their victims?".[2] Phillips succeeded in expressing this irony which shows itself in a particularly obvious way in a sumptuous venue like the Sydney Opera House.[3]

Aside from repercussions for the interpretation of the play, Phillips' idea of incorporating the audience in the frame of the play reflected an increased general awareness of the recipients of the theatrical communication. Similarly, I have shown that critics paid greater attention to audience reactions in their reviews, so that, overall, spectators were increasingly regarded as an important factor in the theatrical communication process instead of as mere numbers.

The audience's formal inclusion in the play encouraged the spectators to see the play's content as relevant. Unlike Johnson's production of the same play in 1995, which critics interpreted as dealing with "the living conditions and social injustices of the period"[4], Phillips directed interpretation clearly towards contemporary application. In her review for the *Sun-Herald*, Pamela Payne confirmed this, noting: "It is Sydney's bourgeois society that allows an underworld that is clearly targeted and not Brecht's society of late 1920s Germany".[5]

Although Phillips was aware that the collapse of communism had affected Brecht's image as a politically engaged playwright, he still considered *The Threepenny Opera* as pertinent, albeit with modifications, because of parallels in social issues and corruption.[6] For this reason, he recommended a "reassessment of the polemical playwright"[7] against the background of the collapse of left-wing utopias. For Phillips, the resulting vacuum led to the

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[1] According to Bob Evans, *SMH*, 5.9.94.

[2] *The Australian*, 9.9.94; cf. also: "Phillips (...) acknowledges the irony of presenting the work by the Marxist playwright to that most bourgeois of audiences (the STC's) in the most plush of venues." *The Australian*, 26.8.94.

[3] This irony had been detected earlier by a critic who reviewed Sharman's production of the same play in the same venue in 1973: "We should have been squirming ill-at-ease in the Opera House plushy surrounds", *The Sunday Telegraph*, 14.10.73; no name given.

[4] Alex Francis-Smith, *Redland Times* (2.6.95), cf. also Tim Mansfield, *Theatre Australasia* (July 95).

[5] *Sun-Herald*, , 4.9.94.

[6] Cf. "Of course, our society is still riddled with the corruption and suffering which Brecht identified in Berlin in 1928. We have an almost universal widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, (...) and we now know that we have been unable to maintain any social system in which the powerful manage to remain so without oppressing, exploiting or simply ignoring the many less fortunate than themselves. *The Threepenny Opera*, while it offers no solution to these problems, at least challenges us not to accept them.", Programme notes.

[7] Cf. "A reassessment of the polemical playwright is overdue, says Phillips, as Brecht seems to have fallen into disrepute of late.", Interview with Joyce Morgan, *The Australian*, 26.8.94.

question: "Mankind is corrupt - is goodness even a possibility and how?".[1] In the following, Phillips put a stronger emphasis on goodness than on corruption and he developed the concept of goodness into "a plea for compassion".[2] He justified this shift in meaning through the fact that *The Threepenny Opera* is an early work, and by referring to the final hymn:

> Be careful how you punish wrong, for surely
> cold-hearted deeds will freeze and die away.
> Remember that our life on earth is purely
> a cold dark place where sorrow cries all day.[3]

When Phillips took this hymn to be an appeal to the spectators' conscience, he overlooked the ironic undertone of the hymn which is illustrated by its genesis. In the version of the *Ludenoper* of 1928, Brecht openly noted that the play's happy end was also a highly ironic manipulation of audience expectations and theatrical norms. In this early version, the actors protested openly against the way the playwright intended to finish the play.[4] When the playwright argued, tongue in cheek, that he merely wanted to represent reality on stage, the actor playing Peachum defended what he interpreted as the spectator's right to become immersed in a theatre of illusion after having paid for a ticket.[5] This provocative and ironic discussion shows that, even at an early stage of his development as a playwright, Brecht was against easy compassion, melodramatic elements and escapism and therefore only used them in an ironic way.

In the later version, *The Threepenny Opera*, the final hymn is introduced by Peachum, the character who knows how to organise poverty and how to turn it into a business, which is another indication of its ironic twist. The quasi-biblical language and the accompaniment

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[1] Director's note. Programme notes.
[2] Director's note. Programme notes.
[3] Translation by Michael Feingold. Phillips introduced the hymn as follows: "In many ways, it [*The Threepenny Opera*] is simply a young man's response to the mind-bending poverty which confronted him when he arrived in the big smoke of Berlin for the first time. As such, its message tends to be more personalised: a plea for compassion, as expressed in the final hymn: (...)". Director's note, Programme notes.
[4] Cf.: Darsteller des Peachum: "Also, ich habe dem Dichter gestern schon gesagt, daß das ein Quatsch ist, eine pfundschwere Tragödie ist das und kein anständiges Melodrama."
Darstellerin der Frau Peachum: "Ich finde diese Hängerei am Schluß auch zum Kotzen.", *Die Ludenoper*, 430, in: Brecht (1988a), "Text/Fassungen", 429-437.
[5] "Meinen Sie, daß die Leute hier acht Mark zahlen, damit sie die Wahrheit sehen? Sie zahlen ihr Geld dafür, daß sie nicht die Wahrheit sehen.", *Die Ludenoper*, 430, in: Brecht (1988a), "Text/Fassungen", 429-437.

of the organ add to its irony.[1] It is possible that Phillips ignored Brecht's drama's multiple layers because he operated within an image of Brecht which does not admit the entertaining and ironic dimensions of Brecht's work.

Consequently, Phillips' interpretation of the final hymn is a misinterpretation, when considering Brecht's stated intentions which risks, as in previous interpretations, turning Brecht into a humanist, the main difference being that Phillips did not discredit Brecht for his left-wing convictions but rather that communism itself had fallen into disrepute. This adds a new aspect to the question of how Brecht's message can still be conveyed nowadays. It seems that the only way out of this dilemma might be for directors to content themselves with using a production to ask questions without displaying an attitude which suggests any answers. In Phillips' case this would have meant a neutral presentation of the social ills Brecht presents.

Interestingly, John McCallum was the only critic who noticed this misleading shift in emphasis in Phillips' production. He criticised the fact that "this production aestheticises its underclass" and that Phillips turned "the play into a bourgeois lament for the individual failure of compassion". Moreover, McCallum criticised the fact that some changes to the script prevented the production from revealing "the criminal base of bourgeois capitalism".[2] His criticism shows that Phillips not only re-invented Brecht's aesthetic devices but that he also modified the play's content as generally perceived.

Other critics concentrated on formal aspects when assessing the play's success, particularly the beginning of the performance. Pamela Payne lamented that the opening was not able to sustain the entire performance[3] and McCallum condemned the general style of the production.[4] While critics did not agree on the production's overall achievements they all engaged with the question of how a play by Brecht could be staged for contemporary Australian audiences. Ultimately, this means that Phillips' approach was at least partly a success because it stimulated an intense debate about this crucial issue and thus reanimated

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[1] My interpretation of the final hymn as ironic is shared by Willett in his notes on his work as a dramaturge for Cherry's production in 1975. Willett translates Peachums's solo about "the poorest of the poor" as "that injustice should be spared from prosecution", and comments "- this, whatever some translations may say, being the deeply ironic moral of Brecht's final chorus "Verfolgt mir das Unrecht nicht zu sehr..." , in: Willett (1977), 110.

[2] *The Australian*, 9.9.94.

[3] "It's device rather than dramatic sinew.", *Sun-Herald*, 4.9.94.

[4] "Simon Phillips, apparently a director who believes that 'Brechtian' means aggressive and brashly theatrical", *The Australian*, 9.9.94.

and enlarged the critical discussion of Brecht's work. As a consequence, many reviews were longer than usual and some even included theoretical considerations in their discussion of the production and the play.

8.3 The Brecht centenary and new approaches to Brecht's work

Although my study is generally restricted to performances until 1996, it would be incomplete without taking into consideration the two Australian actor-singers and writers Jan Friedl and Robyn Archer as well as looking at the centenary of Brecht's birth in 1998 and Australian reactions towards it.

In the same month that Anthill staged *Mother Courage*, it also presented Jan Friedl's *Sweet and Bitter Conversations*[1], "a compilation of Brecht's poetry and lyrics to songs written between 1927-1945 by collaborators Kurt Weill, Paul Dessau and Hanns Eisler"[2]. The subtitle of the production already indicates Friedl's specific interest in Brecht: "Theater-Musik and Brecht". Friedl had a long-standing involvement in this area with her own approach developing from compilations of original texts to productions about Brecht's life and, finally, to a free use of Brecht's work and life as an inspiration for writing a work about Brecht from an Australian perspective.[3] The consistent element throughout her development has been the music of Weill, Eisler and Dessau, which Friedl used in all of her productions. Her individual development in the relationship to Brecht's work has been influenced by the international reception history and represents, at the same time, the general tendency in the Australian reception to assume ownership of Brecht's work and to use him as an inspiration for other theatrical work.

Another Australian artist who has been involved in presenting Brecht's work over an extended period has been Robyn Archer. Archer has played an important role in Australian theatre both on the organisational[4] and the performance level. As writer, actor and singer,

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[1] Directed by David Myles, performed at the Victorian Arts Centre and Anthill.
[2] Ellen Fidavila, *In Press*, 16.6.93.
[3] In a personal interview (11.1.99), Friedl explained how her work evolved in relation to Brecht, starting with *Sweet and Bitter Conversations*, followed by *The Tears of Friday Evening*, seen "through the eyes of an accompanist who helped Brecht but who resented him, like Fuegi describes it in his book. However, I still had the feeling that it was a museum piece, a document on Brecht's life." She continued: "Finally, I came up with *The Love Market*. In this play, a woman is a writer by day and a night-club performer at night. (...)The play deals with this woman's need to write and to perform and shows her as a double personality, not unlike Brecht. I feel this play is valid for our time."
[4] Archer has been director of the National Festival of Australian Theatre in Canberra (1993) and of the Adelaide Arts Festival (1998, 2000).

she has used music-theatre in cabaret style to develop performances commenting on social and feminist issues.[1] At the same time she has interpreted and recorded a range of Weill's songs, written in collaboration with Brecht, and other songs of the period. In 1974, she appeared in the only Australian production of *The Seven Deadly Sins* under the direction of Wal Cherry.[2] She also performed in Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera*, in which Willett collaborated as dramaturge, in 1975. Her extensive experience in the musical aspect of performances of Brecht's texts in Australia served as a basis for an article she contributed to the *Brecht-Jahrbuch* in 1995, thus adding an Australian perspective to the world-wide discussion of Brecht.[3] Concerning productions of Brecht's own plays, she attributed the greatest influence to those texts "which have been set to music, and largely to music by Kurt Weill".[4] This could be explained by the fact that Weill's music has become more popular than that of Brecht's other collaborators, not least because of *The Threepenny Opera's* success on Broadway and Louis Armstrong's version of "Mac the Knife". Archer's judgement is not completely correct, though, because she looked at the performance history predominantly from a musical point of view. However, this study has shown that the majority of productions of plays with music as well as their reviews concentrated on the text. As the Australian reception history has shown a strong tendency to adapt Brecht's texts to local norms, which have been influenced by conventional concepts of theatre, especially naturalism, and expectations of entertainment, it was a play with a score by Dessau - *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* - which was most successful.[5]

In 1998, the centenary of Brecht's birth, Archer performed a collection of songs, mainly by Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler, which had been originally devised to accompany an exhibition of George Grosz's drawings from between the wars (Weimar Republic 1919-1932).[6] In *Kabarett*, Archer was accompanied by Michael Morley who also wrote the programme notes. Here, Morley assessed the role of the cabaret from a contemporary point of view. He noted:

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[1] For instance, she was inspired by the Viennese Cabaret when she wrote *Café Fledermaus* in 1990.
[2] Cherry's production was performed for the opening of the Space at the Festival Theatre in Adelaide. The only other production in Australia was with Marianne Faithful. It was conducted by Jason Osborn and performed at the concert hall of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in 1991.
[3] Archer (1995).
[4] Archer (1995), 144.
[5] Cf. Appendix II.
[6] Programme notes. The lyrics were predominantly by Brecht, but *Kabarett* also included some texts by Felix Gasbarra, Friedrich Hollaender, Erich Kästner, Joachim Ringelnatz and Kurt Tucholsky.

> Above all, the cabaret offers an opportunity, for what perhaps might now be termed, post-modernist performance possibilities. Philosophy can rub shoulders with vulgar jokes, lowbrow art can clash with highbrow musical craft; the naïve can jolt the sharply intellectual; jazz and blues can jostle for attention with the folk-song and parodies of the classical *Lied*. It is this variety that the songs selected aim to present.[1]

The last sentence indicates that the performers chose to build on the cabaret's ability to work as an umbrella for a great variety of performance material. Due to this flexibility, its form needed neither to be adapted nor reinvigorated. Therefore the relevance of the lyrics remained the only concern. Once again, the cabaret's adaptable form assisted in putting the texts into a contemporary frame, by introductions and comments; for instance, the "Song of Sexual Obsession" was dedicated to Bill Clinton. This process of updating was completed by slightly modifying some texts.[2] As a result, audiences and critics perceived the performance as relevant.[3] Archer and Morley had made effective use of a form of presentation with similarities to Kosky's bold approach, in so far as it was not bound to a clearly laid out text sequence which was expected to be reproduced on stage faithfully. Also, this form of presentation offered the possibility of adding extra comments and mixing different styles.

In her talk for the International Brecht Society, Archer acknowledged forms such as the cabaret as a "testament to Brecht's enduring legacy of the freeing up of forms".[4] This points also to an area in the production of Brecht's dramas which has room for further exploration.

Thus, Australian scholar Hector Maclean suggested experimenting with the incorporation of popular entertainment forms in productions of Brecht's dramas, for instance, by taking into account Australia's strong tradition of circus-related performances.[5] He elaborated:

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[1] Programme notes.

[2] A good example of effective modification, although of a song not with lyrics by Brecht but by Erich Kästner with Bizet's music, was "The Jews". It was "given some local and topical resonance by the later replacement of Jews with 'wogs' and 'boongs' by Archer" (Helen Thomson, *The Age*, 23.11.98); in this way, it applied the text to prejudices against minorities in Australian society.

[3] Cf. Deborah Stone, *The Age*, 20.11.98; Helen Thomson, *The Age*, 23.11.98. The performance's relevance is of even greater importance when compared to those cabaret evenings which still have a strong tendency to "romanticize" the repertoire for audiences who prefer to focus on the music with the lyrics being sung in German, cf. Archer (1995), 147.

[4] Archer (1995), 146. It is not clear, though, to what extent Archer would like to see the freeing up of forms applied to Brecht's plays. Concerning the songs, she expressed her belief that "it is possible to remain faithful to the original intentions of both author and composer". She does not define in more detail the concept of faithfulness, which can be problematic, cf. Fischer-Lichte (1985), Gay (1997 (June)).

[5] Kosky made a similar suggestion regarding Shakespeare when he asked: "Why hasn't anybody asked Circus Oz, who are far more revealing about Australian identity than any of the mainstream theatre companies (...) to do a big, full-scale production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?", in: Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

> Such an approach would follow early 20th century practice of German playwrights such as Wedekind. Brecht himself, for example, used interludes such as the 'Clownnummer' in *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*, which illustrates the fact that he frequently tried to link the serious 'message' with humour and light-hearted romping.[1]

In his suggestions, Maclean proposed an approach towards producing Brecht's dramatic work in Australia which has hardly been explored so far. One exception was Kim Durban's production of *Happy End* at the National Theatre in Melbourne. It represents a recent attempt to combine different styles when staging a play by Brecht. Durban expressed that she found the play "theatrically and politically [exciting], especially as pastiche."[2] In her production, she acknowledged the influence of entertainment forms at the time of Brecht's writing and let them influence her own production. She commented:

> Some people were shocked [when seeing *Happy End*] that Brecht could be entertaining. Where does it say he wanted people to think and nothing else? His influences, at this time of his life, included cowboys, the stock market, Charlie Chaplin and the fairgrounds.[3]

Productions like this appear to have finally overcome the long standing perception that, when staging Brecht's work, a director needs to make an exclusive decision for or against staging entertaining theatre.[4]

In general, it was particularly in the area of non-professional and non-mainstream theatre that new aspects of Brecht's work were explored and that the centenary of his birth was acknowledged.[5] It seems as though neither the Australian theatre scene nor the general Australian public took much notice of the centenary.[6] Once again, a parallel to British reactions can be drawn.[7] Of course, financial considerations also played a role. It bears repeating that performances of Brecht's plays are believed to require, generally, large casts . Since the majority of Australian directors have continued to produce Brecht's plays in a more or less traditional way, they do not obtain direct subsidies from the Australia Council of the Arts easily, which, apart from funding "key organisations", seems to favour productions with a postmodern flavour or "hybrid arts".[8] The Goethe-Institutes in

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[1] Personal interview, 18.12.99.
[2] Personal letter, 30.3.98.
[3] Personal interview, 30.3.98.
[4] My study has shown that *The Threepenny Opera* especially has been turned into light entertainment. However, particularly after Tenschert's guest performance, many Australians had the impression that, if staged properly, most of Brecht's work was restricted to a didactic and serious presentation.
[5] Amongst the amateur productions were two productions of *Mother Courage*, one in the original language, performed by the Germanic Players of Melbourne University and the other by New Theatre in Sydney.
[6] This also applies to the centenaries of other German-speaking playwrights. Productions on these occasions have been initiated by individuals or the Goethe-Institutes.
[7] Cf. Michael Billington, *The Guardian Weekly*, 1.3.98, vol.158, no9.
[8] Both Simon Phillips and Michael Kantor's productions took place in theatres which receive funding as part of the "key organisations", cf. Nugent (1999), Appendix.

Melbourne and Sydney have given financial support to some extent, but the recent closure of the Institute in Canberra indicates the financial constraints they are working under.

Amongst the productions supported by the Goethe-Institute was *Die Maßnahme*[1], which not only marked Brecht's centenary but also Hanns Eisler's. It is important that this performance was part of the Adelaide Festival of Arts because it attracted wide attention to a play with music, one which had been mainly staged by alternative companies and by New Theatre in Melbourne previously.[2]

In Melbourne, Brecht was also commemorated by a *Brecht Evening*, directed by Lindzee Smith, presenting "Songs, poems and drama for people living in the cities". It paid tribute to Brecht through a mixture of poetry, drama, prose and theory, delivered in a cabaret style. The performance had a contemporary edge to it and emphasised the political relevance of Brecht's work for Australians.[3] It also looked back at Brecht's influences on Australian playwrights such as John Romeril and Phil Motherwell and attempted to "revive the spirit of the APG and the early La Mama".[4] A slide show of the APG's production of *The Mother* in 1975 invoked the spirit of the early alternative theatre companies in Melbourne, which had displayed a radically changed perception of Brecht and his work. As mentioned before, the APG had considered Brecht as a kind of political ally while approaching the formal aspects of this work with an attitude which could, in retrospect, be described as bold.

Subsequently, however, most productions of Brecht's plays returned to conventional interpretations and production styles. My study has shown that only recently did Australian directors slowly start to take liberties again, as demonstrated by some directors reinterpreting the content, applying it to present situations and making it topical for contemporary audiences. Many also employed aesthetic devices which they hoped would reproduce similar effects to the ones caused by the original *Verfremdungseffekte*. Others used cabaret as a form which lends itself to new interpretations of individual texts and excerpts. However, none of these productions represented a radically new approach to Brecht and his work that could be applied to the majority of plays and which would allow

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[1] Conducted by Robert Ziegler, March 1998 with the Adelaide Chamber Orchestra. Only the title was in German. The Goethe-Institute in Melbourne also helped to finance Robyn Archer's *Kabarett*, Lindzee Smith's *Brecht Evening* and James Adler's and Tim Mehigan's *Mother Courage* at the department of German Studies at Melbourne University.

[2] Tony Watts' production for the MTC in 1982 was an exception.

[3] Cf. the flyer advertising the performance: "Whatever you portray you should always portray it as if it were happening now"; it also mentioned current concerns like the "wasteland of Brunswick street".

[4] Flyer.

contemporary Australian audiences to assume ownership of the plays and their productions. Therefore it is of great importance that the centenary also saw Michael Kantor's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, which used a bold approach towards Brecht's work outside the academic context.

Michael Kantor's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Applying a bold approach to Brecht's work represents particular challenges, because the production style of his work has been firmly established by a number of factors. As my history of the Australian reception has shown, some Australian directors strove to reproduce what was perceived as the correct didactic style. Additionally, the *Modellbücher* were mistaken as a prescription for the only possible performance style. Alternatively, Australian directors naturalised Brecht's plays, thus creating productions which confirmed theatrical norms rather than exploring new areas.

Nowadays, this attitude has changed both on an international and local level. Brecht's work is seen by many as offering an opportunity to explore new areas of content and style in a critical way. In addition, scholars and theatre practitioners stress that a dynamic approach towards Brecht's texts corresponds to Brecht's own method, as described by Morley:

> Brecht would look at something with a terrifically cold eye and think 'this doesn't work', or 'this needs to be reworked for new circumstances or new social conditions', because it just might have something to say to a new audience. (...) I think it's a wonderfully pragmatic approach and entirely non-reverential.[1]

Some scholars support their argument by quoting Heiner Müller, who expressed in more radical terms: "Brecht gebrauchen, ohne ihn zu kritisieren, ist Verrat."[2] However, they generally ignore the context of Müller's words, and that he was referring to the betrayal of history rather than of Brecht.[3] Therefore, it might be more appropriate to refer to other sources in which Müller, similarly to Morley, described Brecht's working method, such as: "Wenn der Brecht probiert hat, hat er auch den Text vergessen, hat er das Stück vergessen,

[1] Programme notes for Chris Johnson's 1995 production of *The Threepenny Opera* at the QTC.
[2] Müller (1981), 21. Translated by Eddershaw as "producing Brecht without criticising him is treason", in: Eddershaw (1996), 153.
[3] Cf. for example Wright (1989), 74-76. As a consequence of this misunderstanding, Müller has come to represent for many an attractive way of approaching texts in a bold way.

ihn interessierten dann die Schauspieler mehr als der Text."[1] Brecht was not only flexible when adapting his texts to the actors and the specific circumstances of a production, he even wrote numerous revised versions of his plays and adopted an aggressive attitude towards classic texts.[2] In summary, his own conduct seems to invite a creative handling of his texts, including a bold approach as suggested by Kosky. Accordingly, many directors and scholars perceive the 'art of asking questions' and its application to Brecht's own work as in line with Brecht's own convictions and practice. This has been suggested already by Manfred Wekwerth in 1976:

> Diese Kunst des Fragens, die zur Veränderung führt, ist meines Wissens kaum besser zu lernen als bei Brecht selbst, auch wenn wir (...) nun diese Fragen an Brecht selbst richten und ihn nach seiner heutigen Wirksamkeit befragen.[3]

Despite this general recognition, applying a bold approach to Brecht's work is problematic because of copyright laws. In Varney's words, these seek "to preserve the 'integrity' of the author's work rendering it unavailable for fragmentation, rewriting or revision."[4] Worldwide, the strict control of Brecht heirs has interfered with creative translations and innovative productions.[5]

In his production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, it seems Kantor found a way of developing a production which Australian audiences in 1998 could relate to very well.

Kantor, a University of Melbourne drama contemporary of Barrie Kosky, studied in Paris under Phillipe Gaulier and Monica Pagneux before returning to Melbourne and joining Kosky's Gilgul Theatre.[6] As my study will point out, he had already used a bold approach towards an Austrian play successfully, in his production of *Excavation. The Last Days of Mankind*, for the 1996 Adelaide Festival.

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[1] Müller (1985), 88. "When Brecht rehearsed [a play] he forgot about the text, he forgot about the play, he was then rather interested in the actors than in the text." I would like to analyse the influence of the Australian reception of Brecht on the recent Australian reception of Heiner Müller, especially at universities, at a later stage.

[2] Brecht (1993c).

[3] Wekwerth (1976), 9. "To my knowledge, there is hardly a better way of learning the art of questioning, leading to change, than through Brecht himself, even if we (...) now direct the questions at Brecht himself, asking him for his effectiveness today."

[4] Varney (1998), 116.

[5] In Germany, Peter von Becker complained, in 1981, about this situation in his report about Hansgünter Heyme's failed attempt to obtain permission to stage his version of *The Good Person* in Stuttgart, cf. Becker (1981). Wright reported about the vicissitudes of a new Brecht translation for a recent production of *The Threepenny Opera*: "Every line of MacDonald's translation of Brecht's opera needs to be sent to Berlin for vetting by the Brecht estate. When you look at the NT's script you can see which bits have passed the *echt* Brecht test." [Wright, 22 referring to the *Guardian*, 8.3.86].

[6] Amongst the productions were *The Dybbuk*, *Es Brent* and *The Wilderness Room*.

Kantor's production[1] of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* differed from the majority of productions of Brecht's plays outlined so far. He did not attempt to stage a faithful production in the sense of imitating model productions of Brecht's plays, and he did not try to revive isolated elements of Brecht's work. He and his company Mene Mene neither denied that their production would be steeped in the Brechtian tradition nor treated the Brechtian text and method as preceptory. Instead, he and his company felt free to use the original features of Brecht's work as a basis from which to build a production of their own. In a personal interview, Kantor described the mixture of Brechtian elements and their own contribution as follows: "We developed a text that was contemporary for us, but still strongly Brecht."[2] Accordingly, a bold approach meant to make Brecht's text, method and ideology stand the test of time and validity. As a result, the company personalised the play's ideology and used only those Brechtian devices they considered appropriate for their reading of the text.

Choosing *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* meant taking a fresh look at the most frequently staged play by Brecht in Australia. As a result, Kantor not only had to deal with fossilised traditions, but could also use them to his advantage because he could rely to a greater extent on audiences' knowledge of the storyline. My analysis of bold approaches towards plays by other German-speaking playwrights will show that this was the exception rather than the rule.[3]

Working on the script, Kantor consulted a range of translations, especially a recent one by Frank McGuiness. Additionally, the original script was changed in several ways: Kantor and his company based their production on the "core narrative", moved the story to a "modern Eastern European environment" and "established references to contemporary Georgian political history".[4] They reconstructed the original story to take place over a 24 hour period.

At first, these modifications appear to resemble earlier Australian interpretations of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the stage, such as those by Richard Campion in 1964 and John Sumner in 1971, which ignored the play's political dimension, reduced it to its storyline and

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[1] For simplicity, I shall refer to the production as 'Kantor's production' while keeping in mind that it emphasised a collaborative process; cf. also: Ruby Boukabou's description of this collaborative process. *Revolver*, 21.9.98.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[3] Cf. my analysis of Kosky's production of *Faust*.
[4] Personal interview, 26.10.99.

turned it into a fairy tale. Kantor, however, did relate the central themes to contemporary socio-political conditions. He intended to "bring to life a whole lot of (...) pertinent issues"[1] such as "what it is to be a parent [and] what it is to be in charge of another person" nowadays. He put the storyline in a wider context, showing "a clash between political activity and personal politics and how you as a person relate to politics and the machinations of power".[2] Earlier directors drew upon the story's fairytale features to turn *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* into escapist theatre, removed from everyday life. When Kantor applied them to the realities of contemporary life, they became nightmarish. This became most obvious in Grusha's escape and in the trial placing the child with its 'true' mother. While earlier Australian productions had perceived the trial and its outcome as a happy end, Kantor interpreted it as follows:

> [In our version] the trial takes place in the heat of the day, in a shimmering kind of stillness. (...) The hypocritical, but fascinating figure of the judge creates in this moment of stillness the slightest remanence of justice - and then it is gone.[3]

Apart from illustrating the differences between Kantor's version and earlier Australian productions of the play, the interpretation of the trial and Azdak's role is an indication of ideological differences between Kantor and Brecht.

As I have shown, most scholars and theatre practitioners acknowledge that the world-wide dismissal of communism has affected the reception of Brecht's work, and Australian directors' reactions towards the changes in left-wing political thinking have varied.[4] Kantor proposed in an interview with Stephen Dunne to re-critique Brecht's ideological positions, but maintain a "broadly socialistic, humane type of personal politics".[5] Kantor's attitude implies the rejection of any world view with a claim to universal validity such as represented by radical left-wing ideologies. This rejection comes clearly to light in his decision to set the play's incidents of political oppression and violence in contemporary Georgia. The ideological as well as the historical differences between Kantor and Brecht are symbolised by Stalin as an historical person and as a figure of Kantor's production. While Brecht indirectly expressed his consent with Stalin's politics through accepting the Stalin-Peace-Prize in 1955, which helped him to break down reservations towards his epic theatre in

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[1] Stephen Dunne, *SMH*, 11.9.99.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[3] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[4] Cf. Simon Phillips, for instance, who replaced Brecht's ideology with a call for compassion for the beggars in *The Threepenny Opera*.
[5] Stephen Dunne, *SMH*, 11.9.99.

Eastern Europe, Kantor clearly rejected Stalin's politics.[1] He indirectly referred to Georgia's occupation by the Red Army, at Stalin's instigation in 1921, by treating "the dictator in the play as a puppet-version of a Stalinistic figure".[2]

Like Phillips, in his production of *The Threepenny Opera*, Kantor replaced the ideological system underlying Brecht's play by personal politics. The major difference to Phillips' approach, however, is that Kantor maintained the Brechtian element of questioning reality as it appears and of displaying an attitude of doubt. The analysis of Phillips' production has shown that it is difficult to update Brechtian ideology by providing contemporary answers to the socio-political problems exposed by Brecht's plays. Kantor, however, did not provide the answers to the questions he raised in his production and thus adopted Brecht's sceptical attitude towards the world.

This attitude of questioning became apparent in several ways in Kantor's interpretation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. As explained above, he emphasised chance in his interpretation of the trial's outcome; he also stressed that the outcome is threatened not only by Azdak's seemingly erratic behaviour but also by a number of incidents which nearly prevent him from passing judgement.[3] Brecht counterbalanced the accidental nature of the trial's outcome by asking for a changed concept of ownership in the play's frame, thus proposing a utopian solution to the conditions he describes in the play. Kantor's world view, however, has lost the hope which fuelled Brecht's belief in utopia. For Kantor, the promise at the end of the play to allocate everything to "those who are good for it"[4] is not so much a promise as a challenge; in singer Paul Capsis' interpretation it even appeared slightly threatening.

This had repercussions for the presentation of Grusha's escape, too. The challenge of being responsible for a child in difficult political circumstances added to the nightmarishness of Grusha's escape. Kantor and actress Julie Forsyth structured a chaotic

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[1] Kantor himself saw a "tension between what Brecht might have hoped from Communism and what he feared from its practice", Programme notes.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[3] In comparison to *The Threepenny Opera*, Knopf similarly interprets the fact that Azdac is saved and that he is allowed to run this final trial as follows: "Die Rettung Azdaks [ist] nicht Ausdruck der Ordnung, sondern ein (beinahe unwahrscheinlicher) Zufall, wie auch die Möglichkeit, noch einmal Recht sprechen zu dürfen, keine bleibende, sondern eine einmalige ist.", in: Knopf (1980), 264.
[4] Translated by James and Tania Stern with W.H. Auden, in: Brecht (1970 cont.). Vol.7, 237.

escape according to the leitmotif of her accepting and rejecting this responsibility[1], which they summed up in the sentence "He is (not) mine". Once again, Kantor's version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* centred around personal responsibility and personal encounters with political forces.

Therefore it is important that Grusha and Azdak were presented in a way Australian audiences could relate to easily. Both used a language which bore stronger traces of Australian colloquialisms than that of the other characters. In particular Azdak, although presented by actor Jacek Koman as a general "outcast, a misfit, a drunkard and a fool"[2], had much in common with the Australian figure of the underdog who defies authorities and supports others in trouble.[3] Yet, whatever he did in order to help others and himself was limited to isolated incidents rather than being directed at changing the political and social system as Brecht would have liked in his work. Overall, Azdak's behaviour in Kantor's production tended towards anarchy.

Finally, the effects of personalising Brecht's ideology were clearly illustrated by the singer's role in Kantor's production. Kantor chose to 'double up' the child representing the infant by a rectangular light box for most of the performance as well as having a real child accompany the singer and witness his own story. This allowed actor-singer Paul Capsis to alternate from creating *Verfremdung* when commenting for the audience to delivering a personal comment directed at the child who was at his side. This interpretation was characteristic of Kantor's approach to Brecht's ideology in so far as it shows that he considered some of Brecht's ideas as valid but only if modified and adapted to contemporary conditions.

Kantor applied the same approach to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle's* formal aspects and production style. The presentation of Stalin as a grotesque figure has already pointed to Kantor's use of the grotesque as a formal element which he added to Brecht's play. Apart from this, the production introduced excessive repetitions by which a simple action, such as arriving in a room and sitting down on a chair, became distorted to the degree of becoming grotesque. A similar effect was achieved by an unnatural increase in the speed of certain actions.

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[1] My later study will show that Kantor's use of leitmotifs was even more important in *Excavation. The Last Days of Mankind* where they helped to structure the production of a play without a conventional plot.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[3] In this case, unknowingly sheltering the Grand Duke.

The world view underlying the grotesque is concentrated in Kantor's use of the revolve. Kantor explains his interpretation of the revolve as a record player: "We had the Brechtian notion of the revolve, but we used it as a symbol of time and history (...), to have a sense of a weight of history playing itself over and over again."

A comparison with Brecht's use of the revolve in *Mother Courage* confirms that Brecht's and Kantor's perception of history and the resulting scope for change differ greatly. When Brecht used the revolve in *Mother Courage*, the protagonist herself did not learn from her experiences. However, Brecht thought it was still possible to change the course of history in accordance with a linear concept of it in a Marxist world view. In Kantor's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, however, history was perceived as circular and repetitive. While Kantor did not deny the possibility of change, he saw it reduced to a small chance, as in the trial.[1]

As is frequent in literary history, the grotesque in Kantor's production can be read accordingly as an indication of an outlook on the world, which has lost any secure system of beliefs and relies only on a glimmer of hope. This outlook is conveyed also by nightmarish images. For this purpose, Kantor and designer Dorotka Sapinska stylised the set, creating "a series of spaces which were architectural rather than realistic, that continually evolved. These were made from steel, wood and paper".[2] The atmosphere created by this set was reinforced by a loud sound design, based on the sounds of a record player jumping as well as the sound of the rumbling of tanks and of a child's heartbeat. "They were all fused together to create an evocative space"[3] creating a dream-like atmosphere which did not correspond to Brecht's analytical presentation of socio-political processes.

At the same time, as John McCallum observed, Kantor managed to contrast the nightmarish atmosphere with "emotionally moving and hugely entertaining" moments so as to do away with "any lingering suspicion that Brecht is somehow earnest, austere and polemical."[4]

In summary, Kantor's production introduced Australians to new avenues in the

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[1] The director's note seems to express a more optimistic view: "In the march of time, in history, in the swirls of our collective memory, morality and justice do lurk: this formidable play is an attempt to drag them (kicking and screaming) into the spotlight.", Programme notes.
[2] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[3] Personal interview, 26.10.99.
[4] *The Australian*, 18.9.98. In this respect, Kantor's production was similar to Kim Durban's.

production of Brecht's plays and was well received by critics.[1] Concerning financial considerations, Kantor proved that a production of a play by Brecht does not necessitate a large budget and a big cast when actors are versatile enough to play several roles and the set is simple but inventive.[2] More importantly, Kantor successfully applied a bold approach to one of Brecht's plays that exemplifies what Kosky has called "museum theatre" and the "institutionalisation of style"[3]. Kantor, well informed about Brechtian ideas and their influence, questioned the fossilised traditions connected to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and selected only those traditional elements which he perceived as valid and meaningful in the present day. He applied this selection both to the text and to the aesthetics, either modifying or discarding what was no longer effective. Thus, he reinvigorated the play's content and technique for himself, his company and contemporary audiences. By asking himself "What does the play say now for Australian audiences?"[4], he took into account "the cultural, social and historical world of the audience".[5]

The result was two-fold. Kantor's production illustrated how one of Brecht's classic plays could be reinvigorated through an approach which critics recognised as a successful "bold" production.[6] Both John McCallum, in *The Australian*, and Diana Simmonds, in the *Bulletin*, praised the production for having "remade" and "reconfigured"[7] *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* "for a new generation".[8]

Concerning the history of the Australian reception, it was critical that contemporary Australian audiences could relate to the production. Kantor achieved a production which not only dismantled its textual base but also constructed a performance that constituted a new creative unity. In addition, Kantor showed that looking at Brecht through Australian

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[1] Cf. *The Australian*, 18.9.98, *Bulletin*, 29.9.98, *Daily Telegraph*, 18.9.98, *Revolver*, 21.9.98, *Sunday Telegraph*, 20.9.98.

[2] In Kantor's production, eight actors played fifty eight roles. Weber quotes a similar approach advocated by Schechner. The latter notes: "Brecht is a storyteller, his plays can be done in a storytelling technique with six actors and some musicians... The plays don't need lavish production, we did *Mother Courage* with a few ropes." in: Weber (1997a), 352)

[3] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)), cf. "The Deadly Theatre", in: Brook (1968), 11-46.

[4] Personal interview, 26.10.99.

[5] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[6] John McCallum, *The Australian*, 18.9.98.

[7] *The Australian*, 18.9.98.

[8] *Bulletin*, 29.9.98.

eyes no longer implied, necessarily, an Australian setting.[1] By then, references to Australia could be made in a more subtle way, as illustrated by Azdak's use of language. Rather than superficial links, Kantor created such a connection to his audiences that they could assume ownership of the production. In his review for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Bryce Hallett summarised Kantor's achievement, explaining that whilst Kantor and his company used a vocabulary in accord with Brecht, it was "free-spirited and committed enough to make the parable decisively their own".[2]

[1] Cf. "It is not the Australian setting which makes a play work [for Australian audiences], it is a good theatrical idea; ideas, image and sound have to resonate and mean something for an audience". Personal interview, 26.10.99. A similar approach has been used in university productions such as Rachel Fensham's and Louise Taube's *Pretty Bourgeois*, based on *The Seven Deadly Sins*. This production with students from Monash University's Department of Drama and Theatre Studies presented "a journey from 1933 (...) to the present (...), travelling to seven Meccas of the twentieth century - Paris, New York, Melbourne, London, San Francisco, Tokyo, Berlin.", Course outline, semester II, 2000.
[2] *SMH*, 18.9.98.

Part II - Plays by other German-speaking playwrights and the Australian - German intercultural relationship

9. SPECIFIC METHODOLOGY USED IN PART II

Brecht was the only German-speaking playwright whose plays were produced consistently during the entire reception period under consideration. Plays by other German-speaking playwrights were staged only sporadically and led, at best, to a playwright becoming 'fashionable' for a brief time.

This had repercussions for the quality of the reviews of productions of plays by other German-speaking playwrights. Even more than in the Australian reception of Brecht, these reviews were restricted to a plot summary and a basic introduction to the playwright. In many cases, the sporadic nature of the history of these productions prevented any meaningful discussion of the underlying theoretical concepts and aesthetics. These two factors were aggravated by the very limited space allocated to theatre reviews.[1] Moreover, in the majority of cases, programme notes were not available. Therefore it was also difficult to judge whether a review corresponded with the actual performance and its director's intentions.

These circumstances make it more difficult than in the case of Brecht to understand a dense response to a new play and to contextualise it. Here, my previous case studies of the Australian reception of Brecht are helpful because they have introduced a number of critics who wrote on performances of plays by other German-speaking playwrights. The cultural and historical settings of these first case studies serve as a background for the studies in this chapter.

The following analysis will serve two purposes. Firstly, I shall present, in chronological order, important Australian productions, often premieres, of plays by Austrian, German or Swiss playwrights. Within this historical overview, I shall focus on those plays whose Australian production and reception reflect developments in Australian theatre and the general cultural climate of the time. In many cases, the mere choice of playwright and play already indicate such developments. Wherever possible, I shall analyse whether the production style and reception in the press confirm or contradict the paradigms set by the reception of Brecht's plays in Australia, especially the tendencies to naturalise a play or to

use an innovative approach. This will show whether the choice of play and the production style represented aesthetic and political challenges to the cultural and political climate at the time, and which function the production fulfilled or intended to fulfil. The chronological analysis will allow the process of assuming ownership of the plays under consideration to be traced. This analysis will begin with productions considered to be removed from the realities of Australian life, then leading to theatre which was meaningful for contemporary Australian audiences.

Even more than in the reception of Brecht, it will become clear that individual scholars, directors and the Goethe-Institute played important roles in bringing about a great number of productions, especially by playwrights who had been previously unknown in Australian theatre. Additionally, the strong British and American influence apparent in the reception of Brecht can be detected here as well.

Apart from throwing a particular light on the developments of the Australian theatre scene, the history of productions of plays by Austrian, German and Swiss playwrights illustrates historical factors which have influenced the intercultural relationships between Australia and Germany profoundly. This is most obvious in my analysis of Frank Heibert's and Michael Merschmeier's report on Australian theatre in *Theater Heute* and of the production and reception of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* in Australia and Germany. The latter will show how historical influences have developed and will point to factors which need to be taken into account in any future theatrical exchange between the two countries.

10. EARLY PRODUCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN

10.1 Productions at universities, at the Kleines Wiener Theater *and at the Independent Theatre*

The early productions under consideration are the German classical plays staged at the German departments of Australian universities, at the *Kleines Wiener Theater* and at the Independent Theatre in Sydney. They predate the development of a professional non-commercial Australian theatre; they also precede the first professional production of a play by Brecht, - Cherry's 1959 production of Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera.*

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[1] Cf. Phillip Adams' complaint in *The Bulletin* (5.3.66): "To attempt to review this play [*The Representative*] in a few hundred words is like undertaking to engrave "The Lord's Prayer" on the head of a pin".

The productions are of interest in two respects. Firstly, the choice of plays is significant as these were the first stagings of German drama after World War II. Secondly, their significance for the evolving professional Australian theatre scene will be analysed.

The analysis of early Australian productions of Brecht's plays has already pointed out the crucial role played by Australian universities in the development of Australian theatre. While currently the influence of universities on the Australian theatre scene is an indirect, albeit an important one[1], the close connection between universities and the first professional Australian theatre companies was very visible, including on an administrative level. In Sydney, the University of Technology, which became the University of NSW, accepted responsibility for the National Institute of Dramatic Art, NIDA, in 1958, provided a building for the Old Tote in 1963 and helped to establish the Jane Street Theatre in 1966. Similar links existed at many other Australian universities, for instance in Adelaide and Perth. In Melbourne, the UTCR (Union Theatre Repertory Company), the predecessor of the MTC, originated from the University of Melbourne. Writing about the development of the Melbourne theatre scene in the 20th century, Peter Fitzpatrick stated that "the most significant force in the city's theatrical life emerged from the University of Melbourne."[2] Although the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney only taught drama as literature, not as performance, they nurtured the performance of drama in official and unofficial ways.

Amongst the productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights at universities were those staged in the original language at the departments of Germanic Languages or German Studies. In the following, the productions in German at the University of Melbourne will serve as an example.

Part of the early productions in the department were Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, probably in 1950, and Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* in 1951. The department's first production was Goethe's *Urfaust*, which Heinz Wiemann directed in 1949. This production was so successful, that it was also performed at the University in Sydney and began an ongoing exchange between the two German departments. Although the Melbourne department also

[1] Barrie Kosky illustrates the universities' continuing influence on theatre practitioners. Like many others, he experimented with his first productions at university, e.g. through the production of *Lulu* at Melbourne University, before becoming a professional director. The close connections between universities in Melbourne and alternative theatre companies like La Mama and the APG have been pointed out previously.
[2] Parsons and Chance (1995), 354.

staged Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug* under the direction of Hector Maclean[1], the overall choice of plays at this German department as well as at German departments at other Australian universities indicates a strong tendency to stage German classics, as in Goethe's and Schiller's dramas.[2]

This selection indicates that the people involved in the productions wanted to emphasise Germany's cultural achievements, as it was a nation in the process of redressing its reputation after the barbarity of the Holocaust. As the German departments were amongst the first after World War II to stage plays by German-speaking playwrights they would have been well aware of possible antagonisms towards German cultural undertakings. Moreover, these first academic productions played such an important role that they were acknowledged by a wider public than today. For instance, Heinz Wiemann's 1958 production of *Mother Courage* was reviewed even by the mainstream press.[3]

This cultural decision to stage predominantly works of Goethe and Schiller corresponded consciously or unconsciously to the popularity of the German classics in the divided Germany after World War II. Thus, the later GDR claimed the classics as part of its cultural heritage. In the later West Germany, the productions of classics underlined the 'universally human' and 'eternally valid' values of art rather than emphasising direct references to ideology, politics and history.[4]

In Australia, the departments' choices of plays and their underlying reasons were not discussed anywhere in writing. However, it is clear that these productions also fulfilled the function of contributing to a feeling of continuity in the performers' and their audiences' sense of cultural identity. Parts of the audience were students from the department, whom Wiemann remembers as very skilled and motivated, especially as some of them had to wait

[1] This was one of the few productions of a play by Kleist in Australia. The reception of Louis Nowra's production and translation of *The Prince of Homburg* (at the Playhouse in Adelaide in 1982) will be considered later.

[2] Other productions between 1949 and 1974 at the department were Grillparzer's *Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen*, Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*, Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug* and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* as well as Zuckmayer's *Des Teufels General* und *Katharina Knie*. Amongst the productions at the German Department at the University of Adelaide was Derek van Abbe's production of Schiller's *Maria Stuart* in 1957. Van Abbe had also translated the play, cf. *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 16.3.57.

[3] Cf. Bruce Grant's review in *The Age*, 11.7.58.

[4] Cf. Fischer-Lichte (1993), 396. Fischer-Lichte gives as an example Gründgens' production of Schiller's *Don Carlos* at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in 1962.

for the end of World War II to take up their studies.[1] Overall, Wiemann describes the audiences as follows:

> Our audiences were fellow-students, quite a few refugees from Nazi Germany and Europe generally. I can remember particularly students and older people from the Baltic States. So we had a *Stammpublikum* (regular audience). And they were grateful to see a German play. Occasionally, we heard comments after a performance such as: 'The last time I saw *Urfaust*, I saw Gustav Gründgens as Mephisto.'

It can be presumed that such a range of spectators and actors produced an equal variety of reactions.

However, it would be wrong to conclude from the above quote that the department's cultural efforts were limited to entertaining a circle of regulars. In the early years, Richard Samuel, head of Germanic Languages at Melbourne University, supported the exchange with German culture on a broader scale by co-founding the local Goethe Society and he kept encouraging the presentation of German plays in professional theatre companies. Thus, in 1959, he assisted in the translation for Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* for the UTCR. In 1982, he wrote to John Sumner, the director of the MTC, expressing that he was pleased with the company's decision to stage Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* and suggesting the production of another German play, namely Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*.[2] Consequently, the German department at Melbourne University aimed at both entering into an intercultural dialogue and maintaining the German cultural heritage.

It is the latter function which was most significant for the *Kleines Wiener Theater*. This consisted of a group of mainly Jewish refugees, many of whom had left Vienna for Sydney after 1938. Some of its members had been involved in professional theatre like its founder, Else Baring, or in political cabaret like Karl Bittman.[3] The immigrants had the feeling of having left Europe for a young country without an established cultural life as they knew it.

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[1] Cf. Personal letter, 18.7.96. Wiemann called the first ten years after 1945 "good and exciting years at Melbourne University. They were catch-up years for a lot of people (...). We had some of our best students during these years".

[2] Letter to John Sumner, 17.3.82.

[3] Bittman's involvement in the cabaret of the Social Democrats was one of the reasons for him having to leave Vienna, cf. "A Stage of My Life - My Life on Stage", 193, in: Bittman (1988), 191-200..

They especially perceived the lack of a European theatre tradition[1] as a vacuum which they tried to fill by staging plays by European playwrights and by performing the cabaret evenings *Bunte Abende*. As far as European plays are concerned, the *Kleines Wiener Theater* staged some plays providing light entertainment as well as plays by Anouilh, Brecht, Gide, Hoffmansthal, Kästner, Klabund, Shaw, Strindberg, Werfel and others.

Thus, the group represents one of the few German-speaking groups which had the opportunity to and aimed to preserve their cultural heritage and adapt gradually to their host country.[2] In particular, this is illustrated by the *Bunte Abende*[3], which, in form of a loose sequence of cabaret scenes, represented the group members' new life as migrants in Australia in a mixture of Austrian dialect, Jiddisch, German and English.[4] Both, content and use of language of the *Bunte Abende*, developed during their 50 years of performance history along with the group's cultural activities becoming open to a more general public.

Looking back at their early years in 1961, Karl Bittman defined the function of their previous theatrical activities as a "Kulturinsel":

> The 'Kleines Wiener Theater' thus tried to create a sort of *Kulturinsel*, a 'Theater im Kreis' for this circle ("Kreis") where the mother tongue in all its dialects, hidden meanings, beauty and power of expression could be heard form the stage. This was not so much for nostalgic reasons, but as a cultural enrichment 'unseres Hierseins und Daseins'.[5]

However, about 20 years later, the migrants' attitude towards Australia had changed so much that the protagonist of *Continental Mathilda* could profess: "'Drüben war unsere

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[1] "The theatrical scene in Australia at the time was rather limited. Very little serious theatre or Kabarett, in the sense Viennese people had known it, existed then, and language difficulties compounded the situation.", Karl Bittman, Owen Grant, "The Viennese Theatre. A Transplant of a Special Kind", 203, in: Bittman (1988) 201-208. Albrecht Dümling reports similar feelings on part of composer George Dreyfus, who left Europe for Perth as a child to escape the persecution of Jewish people: "Was hätte aus ihm werden können, wenn er in Berlin geblieben wäre! Daß er entscheidende Jugendjahre in Australien verbrachte, hält Dreyfus unter musikalischen Gesichtspunkten für ein Unglück. (...) An diesem abgelegenen Ort, [Perth], den er künstlerisch als Wüste empfand", in: *Der Tagesspiegel*, Berlin, 25.6.95.

[2] The other major, even larger, German-speaking community were the German Lutherans who had settled in the Barossa Valley and who had a cultural impact through their *Liedertafeln* and, in a wider sense, the *Turnvereine*, cf. Jupp (1988), 485, Voigt (1987), 59. Apart from this, the general cultural contribution of German-speaking settlers has been more subtle, which is partly due to a strong tendency of these migrants to assimilate quickly, cf. Jupp (1988), 507. Historically, it is also important that the majority of people with German background in Australia had been forced to give up their cultural heritage, including their mother tongue during World War I, cf. Jupp (1988), 487-489.

[3] Although they did guest performances in Melbourne between 1951 and 1966, these were set for a similar audience; they were also loosely associated with a similar company in Melbourne called *Theaterfreunde*.

[4] Gradually, the sequence of loosely connected scenes developed into a continuous plot with intermittent solo numbers and specially composed music, cf.: Bittman and Baring (1960).

[5] Karl Bittmann, *20 Jahre Jubiläumsprogramm* (1961), 16. This is illustrated by the *Bunter Abend* of 1949, entitled *Künstlich - Natürlich*, which reflects the newcomers' problems with their new environment by jokingly advocating the miracle pill "Lingolin" which not only promises linguistic but also social competence, cf. Bittman and Baring (1949).

Heimat, aber hier sind wir zu Hause', meaning: 'There was our homeland, but here we belong.'"[1]

In 1961, the *Kleines Wiener Theater* performed for the first time in English. The programme notes for the ensemble's 25th anniversary, written in English, explain the underlying change of attitude as follows: "To us and our German-speaking friends, it does not make any difference, for we are bi-lingual. We could, in Vienna (...) as the 'Little Sydney Theatre' play in English."[2] This developing sense of belonging resulted in the function of the ensemble's cultural activities gradually modifying. The group became less insular and more involved in cultural activities in Sydney through readings at university, amongst them *Faust* in 1955, and through making audio tapes for university students. In 1975, they participated in a performance in collaboration with the local Goethe-Institute, entitled *Zwei Sprachen - ein Gedanke*.

Consequently, it seems as though the *Kleines Wiener Theater* only played a role in Australia's mainstream cultural life in its later years; however, the group made a valuable contribution to Australian theatre all along because it helped to create a faithful audience which appreciated theatre as an art form and would support the young professional theatre companies. Accordingly, Viennese born Stefan Haag, executive director of the Australian Elisabethan Theatre Trust[3], reflected "that the majority of persistent theatre goers in Sydney are Viennese-born and have enriched the Australian way of life by bringing their innate love and appreciation of theatre to this country."[4]

The discerning tastes of these audiences were important given that many Australian spectators were used to productions only under the umbrella of J.C. Williamson Ltd, often referred to as 'the Firm'. According to Katharine Brisbane, this "largest theatrical chain in the world" had "dominated Australian theatrical and musical life for a hundred years" providing, together with the Tivoli, light entertainment, mainly in the form of operettas and

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[1] *Viennese Theatre. 25th Anniversary Programme*, 16.

[2] *Viennese Theatre. 25th Anniversary Programme*, 23.

[3] The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the first public body for the performing arts, "undertook the task of transforming the arts community's largely amateur outlook into a professional one", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 44.

[4] Liffman (1984), 40 (No source given). Similarly, the Adelaide German ensemble *Die Brücke* performed plays in German with a high degree of skilled acting. Its productions of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, in which Peter Luhr from the Munich Kammerspiele appeared, was of such a high standard that it had an excellent review in *The Bulletin* (Robert Ward, 27.8.66). Cf. also the history of Musica Viva.

musicals.[1] Tim Rowse, in an article for the *Companion to Theatre in Australia*, reported that Allan Aldous suggested that only two per cent of 'the Firm's' regular patrons were serious theatre goers and an anonymous historian of New Theatre pointed to 'the Firm's' failure to train staff and audiences.[2] While many agreed that Australian theatre and audiences' tastes should be improved, there was little consensus as to what this new theatre and its emerging new audience might be.[3] The analysis of Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera* has shown that Cherry had considered Brecht's plays as part of a repertoire aimed at educating audiences' tastes. In the same year, Cherry described the ideal spectator as "theatre lover (...) who does not seek sensationalism, but craftsmanship and artistry".[4] Therefore it was an important factor that the *Kleines Wiener Theater's* audiences as well as those at universities had many spectators amongst them who were able to compare local performances to past productions in Europe.

Another kind of discerning spectator, who was interested in a new Australian theatre, made up a big part of the audience of the Sydney Independent Theatre, which "was a bridge between amateur and professional theatre".[5] Its low production costs allowed it to experiment with a range of plays which, at first, would appeal to small, open-minded audiences.[6] Its founder and director, Doris Fitton, devoted much of her life to theatre; her "ambition, determination and a forceful personality gained her respect as she fought for nearly 50 years to keep the Independent Theatre open to inform and entertain the Sydney public with plays from Australia and other parts of the world".[7]

At the Independent, Raoul Cardamatis directed Schiller's *Maria Stuart* in 1946 and Goethe's *Faust* in 1951. According to Fitton, Cardamatis was "a Greek doctor, educated in Germany (...). He loved the theatre and produced a number of European classics (...), some of which had originated from the great productions of Max Reinhardt, with whom he had studied in Germany."[1] As in the productions described earlier, an individual with a German background brought about the staging of a play by a German-speaking playwright and thus served as a mediator. Even in this production, university played a certain role by

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[1] Brisbane (1991), 13. Brisbane is of the opinion that, even nowadays, "there is no permanent body of educated discrimination upon which the arts can rely for patronage", in: Brisbane (1989), IX.
[2] Parsons and Chance (1995), 67.
[3] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 68.
[4] *The Age*, 17.1.59.
[5] Parsons and Chance (1995), 292.
[6] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 67.
[7] Parsons and Chance (1995), 228.

providing the play's translation.[2] As I discussed earlier, the fact that Cardamatis chose a classic might have helped in having this early performance of a German play take place in a public theatre.

11. PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF PLAYS IN THE 1960S

In the 1960s, plays by the two Swiss playwrights Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt dominated the production of dramas by German-speaking playwrights. They were mainly staged at semi-professional or professional companies. Amongst the productions were Dürrenmatt's *The Visit, The Physicists* and *Romulus* as well as Frisch's *The Fire Raisers* and *Andorra*. The dominance of the two playwrights matched with their being considered world-wide as the leading German-speaking playwrights.[3]

The interest in Frisch and Dürrenmatt took place shortly after Australian non-commercial professional theatre had come into being and Brecht's plays had started to be performed. Thus, the reception of Frisch and Dürrenmatt's plays must be read against the background of those tendencies of reception I have established in context of the Australian reception of Brecht.

The Australian reception of Brecht has shown the early and mid-1960s to have been divisive times. Politically, they were characterised on the one hand by a strong support for the Liberal Party in the 1966 election, on the other hand by the emerging youth movement. The theatre scene became equally diverse in the second half of the 1960s; while mainstream theatres like the UTCR / MTC and the Old Tote had reached a state of consolidation[1], the first alternative theatres started to emerge and question established playwriting and theatre and began experimenting with new ideas. The British influence gained renewed influence in the early 1960s through the Queen's visit to Australia and through the new influence of popular culture such as The Beatles.

My study will show that, overall, this led to a predominantly conservative approach in the production and reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights. As with the Australian reception of Brecht, there was an inclination to tone down the political implications of the

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[1] Fitton (1981), 56.

[2] Doris Fitton, who played Elisabeth I, "obtained a good English translation of *Maria Stuart* from Sydney University.", in: Fitton (1981), 56.

[3] Cf. the introduction to Dürrenmatt in the programme notes for *The Visit* at the Independent: "His reputation as the most outstanding representative of the new generation of German writers has been growing steadily over the past ten years."

plays presented, and, on the aesthetic level, the predominant response was to naturalise them.[2] Concerning the plays' and performances' possible application to local audiences, the picture was mixed, just like the times. Although Australians had started to show an interest in plays with socio-political relevance to their own context through productions of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and *The One Day of the Year*, an overall conservative attitude prolonged the tradition of taking over foreign plays in most cases, especially from English-speaking countries, without testing them for their relevance for Australian audiences or without stressing their possible relevance. In the case of Hochhuth's and Weiss' plays the possible recognition of their relevance was also hampered by their sensitive subject matter. However, as my analysis will show, at the same time, some directors and critics started to point out areas where plays and productions could build a connection to with local audiences.

11.1 Plays by Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt

Regarding the content of Frisch and Dürrenmatt's plays, world-wide - and partly Australian - interest in a number of their plays was due to their touching on issues that could be considered as related to the Nazi-era and the Holocaust; their Swiss origin was perceived as a neutral stand on the issues. In this respect, their plays' productions also reflected on Australian-German cultural relationships. Just like Dürrenmatt himself had perceived Emil Staiger's preoccupation with the classics as presenting a misleading ideal world[1], the Australian production of German classics after World War II could easily have been considered as removed from recent and contemporary German life. Frisch and Dürrenmatt, on the other hand, encouraged their audiences to face a range of contemporary topics as well as issues more or less directly related to recent historical events. This possibility was seized by a number of Australian ensembles, including those who had previously shown classics, like the Independent Theatre and theatre groups at universities.

Although Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays had a more or less developed allegorical character and thus did not refer directly to historical facts, the Australian New Theatre with its tradition of political engagement seized the opportunity to apply these plays to concrete historical events and to use them as a catalyst for bringing about discussions about the past.

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[1] Cf. John Bell, "Established Theatre and Alternative Theatre", 67-68, in: Holloway, 66-76.

[2] Wal Cherry's intention to use Brecht's work as a catalyst for change in local drama and theatre can be considered as an exception, which does not come into play in this context.

For instance, they felt the urgent need to reflect upon the Nazi-time which is illustrated by New Theatre's programme notes for its 1968 production of *The Fire Raisers*. In these notes, the freedom of interpretation granted initially is revoked in the following paragraph:

> In any symbolic play the person seeing it will naturally interpret the symbolism according to his own experience and philosophy and we invite you to do this.
>
> However, we think it quite clear what Frisch is writing about. The way in which Joe and Willie work has a striking parallel in the way Hitler rose to power and in the events which shook Europe before and during the last war. That millions of Jews were exterminated while most people in Germany, and indeed in much of the world, remained silent, is a horrifying indictment of apathy and self-interest.[2]

As the world-wide reception of the play shows, New Theatre was not the only one who took *The Fire Raisers* as a parable for the Nazis' rise to power; for instance, the first German performance in 1958 in Frankfurt had been interpreted on the same line. The fact that this was not necessarily the only response is illustrated by the fact that, in the same year, Zürich audiences had understood the play as a warning against communist infiltration.[3] In Australia, there were also reviews which interpreted the allegorical character of the play in more general terms. Thus, Isabel Carter called it an "anti-war play" when reviewing Wal Cherry's 1963 production at Emerald Hill.[4] None of the reviewers indicated a potential relevance to Australian audiences, though.

Another play by Frisch, which has been linked to the Holocaust, because it deals with antisemitic prejudices, is *Andorra*. In 1963, it was staged at the German department at Melbourne University.[5] Two years later, it was produced by the New Theatre in Sydney. In 1966, it could be seen as a guest performance by Perth's National Theatre as part of an Interstate Theatre Season which travelled to a number of Australian cities.[6]

Since the 1970s, interest in Frisch's plays has been generally low with the exception of *The Fire Raisers*. This play was staged by Gary Stonehouse at NIDA in 1979 and it was performed again in the 1990s; for instance in 1994 by Peter Hayes at Crossroads Theatre and in 1992 by Glenn D'Cruz at the Open Stage Theatre of Melbourne University.[1] The latter production illustrates the latest stage in the developments regarding the Australian

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[1] Cf. Dürrenmatt (1968), Staiger (1967).
[2] Programme notes; no name given.
[3] This interpretation was based on Frisch's diary in which he had first written down the plot in context with his reflections regarding the Communist coup in Prague in 1948.
[4] *The Herald*, 29.6.63.
[5] Director: H.B. Koopmann, assisted by Hector Maclean.
[6] The productions were shown in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Launceston, Newcastle, Wollongong, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne; cf. Sumner, 181.

reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights in which directors and actors attempt to own these plays. D'Cruz production read the play again as an allegory of the rise of Nazism, but, at the same time, it gave an example of how Frisch's play could be given a contemporary meaning which made it "resonate with Australian audiences".[2] D'Cruz explained that this musical version of *The Fire Raisers* "attempted to look at questions of history and memory as they related to the resurgence of racism in Europe. The production adopted a self-conscious 'postmodern' style".[3] Thus, the production attempted to provide opportunities to assume ownership of Frisch's drama in two ways. Firstly, it reconsidered Frisch's ideas from a contemporary point of view, choosing to problematise "questions of political action from a postmodern standpoint". Secondly, it applied the issue to local circumstances. Although it interpreted *The Fire Raisers* mainly in context with contemporary instances of "Nazi violence in Germany", the production also referred to Australia; D'Cruz reported that "the actors stepped out of their roles to relate their own experiences of racism in Australia".[4] Thus, a Brechtian technique, which was already present in Frisch's play in form of the chorus, was used to make the play relevant for Australian audiences.

The other popular Swiss playwright in the 1960s was Dürrenmatt. One of the productions which enjoyed great success was the 1963 production of *The Visit* at the Independent. Doris Fitton described it as one of the theatre's "greatest dramatic presentations, running for eleven weeks to packed houses".[5]

The play's reception shows an emphasis on the themes of guilt, morals and morality. For instance, Norman Kessel, in his review for *The Sun*, paid much greater attention to what he called the story of "vengeance" and guilt in the play than to the play's second plot, which deals with moral corruption through money. This did not seem to be entirely warranted by the production's style because R.C., who reviewed the production for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, presented it in a more balanced way.[1] Kessel, however, entitled his review "Allegory of Hate" and concentrated on the character Ill recognising his guilt and accepting responsibility for it. He wrote with admiration: "As he [Ill] comes to realise that his life is

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[1] It was part of a course which aimed at conducting "research through the construction of a theatre production", Personal letter, 4.12.96.
[2] Personal letter, 4.12.96.
[3] Personal letter, 4.12.96.
[4] Personal letter, 4.12.96.
[5] Fitton (1981), 127; in 1965, Ken Hannam directed for the Independent *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*.

forfeit, the man is at first afraid, but comes to accept the inevitable with dignity and courage." This sentence had been printed in bold in order to give it additional weight.

Although Dürrenmatt's plays have a strong moral component and although they have been repeatedly interpreted in a religious context[2] they face a range of contemporary topics as well as issues more or less directly related to recent historical events. Kessel's moralising interpretation is of particular interest for this study because it confirms the strong tendency to naturalise a play of German-speaking origin, which has become apparent in the contemporary Australian reception of Brecht. Similarly, the (Sydney) *Herald* music and drama critics had turned Brecht's political intentions into moral ones when they stated in their preview of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* that "as it is a Brecht play, the moral is offered without apology".[3]

The Australian tendency to focus on *The Visit's* moral components outlasted its first productions. According to Peter Ward, who reviewed Theatre de Complicite's 1990s production of *The Visit* for the Festival of Perth, the majority of Australian productions until then had turned out to be "a clotted moral essay".[4]

Moreover, Kessel's interpretation was characteristic of aesthetic norms in Australian theatre at the time. Thus, he stressed and praised those elements of Dürrenmatt's plot which seemed to coincide with traditional drama, such as a storyline consisting of a single, linear plot and of the protagonist's response to fate. Although the idea of fate is already part of Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy, it is misleading to neglect the grotesque elements associated with the "the worst possible turn"[5] of the story's development. Regarding *The Visit*, it further distorts the play's meaning to pass over the doubling-up of its plot, which also contains the story of an entire town's venality. In his subtitle for *The Visit*, Dürrenmatt called the play a "tragic comedy"[6], and in his theoretical writings, he stressed that he considered the often grotesque comedy as the only means to encompass his time because "comedy creates distance".[7] In this respect, Dürrenmatt's concept of drama and theatre contravened just as much as Brecht's with the expectation of many Australians to become completely

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[1] *SMH*, 2.5.63; no complete name given.
[2] Cf. Brock-Sulzer (1986), 36.
[3] No names given, *SMH*, 1.7.64.
[4] *The Australian*, 1.3.90.
[5] Dürrenmatt (1982a), 155; "Eine Geschichte ist dann zu Ende gedacht, wenn sie ihre schlimmstmögliche Wendung genommen hat.", in: Dürrenmatt (1988), 208.
[6] Dürrenmatt (1982c), 71; "Eine tragische Komödie", in: Dürrenmatt (1980b).
[7] Dürrenmatt (1982b), 253; "Die Komödie schafft Distanz (...)", in: Dürrenmatt (1980c), 61.

emotionally involved in a play when attending the theatre.

Kessel simply smoothed out these clashes between Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy and prevailing Australian theatrical norms by ignoring *The Visit's* elements of comedy and of the grotesque. Instead, he concentrated on the character Ill, who allows audiences, to a certain degree, to feel compassion for his fate. Accordingly, Kessel praised Alexander Archdale's presentation of Ill's "final condemnation and punishment" as "excellent".[1] It is worthwhile repeating that the Australian expectation of complete emotional involvement was closely related to the demand for the actors to evoke compassion through their acting; it was often implied that it is "compassion which is the mechanisms by which fully-rounded characters are made interesting on stage"[2], and it seems as though Archdale had fulfilled this requirement to Kessel's satisfaction.

Kessel's preferred acting style[3] points also to an historical factor which had strongly influenced Australian theatre and its acting style. When Kessel praised Doris Fitton's performance as Claire Zachanassian and explained audiences' enthusiasm partly as a tribute to Fitton's reappearance as an actress, his review shows remnants of the former star-system. In the 19th and early 20th century, this had been encouraged by companies like J.C. Williamson's 'the Firm', which brought international stars out to Australia. It is possible that the Independent's collaboration with J.C. Williamson's had affected it in this respect.[4]

This possible influence of the former star system on the reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights has been less obvious in responses to Brecht's plays. This might be partly due to Dürrenmatt's dramas containing characters which can be presented as heroes more easily - although he prefers the term 'mutiger Mensch'[5] - than those in Brecht's plays, and also due to Brecht's theatre theories which encourage ensemble work rather than individual stardom. Additionally, Doris Fitton reportedly had a strong stage presence

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[1] *The Herald*, 29.6.63.
[2] McCallum (1981), 161.
[3] The strong connection between Kessel's preference for entertaining theatre and the "quality of acting" is also apparent in his responses to a questionnaire for a presentation of leading critics in 1968, published in: Allen (1968), 53.
[4] During the early years of the Independent, J.C. Williamson took up some of its successful productions, cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 293.
[5] Cf. "Es ist immer noch möglich, den mutigen Menschen zu zeigen.", in: Dürrenmatt (1980c), 63; cf. Dürrenmatt (1982b), 255. In the context of the reception of Brecht, I have shown, though, that the star system affected the quality of interviews with actors which were predominantly restricted to superficial questions regarding costumes and personal habits.

herself.[1] Against this background, it is no surprise that she praised in her memoirs Archdale's acting in *The Visit*[2] and that the programme notes announced the production as "The Independent Theatre presents Doris Fitton & Alexander Archdale [in] *The Visit* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt".[3]

Against this background, Kessel's naturalising interpretation of *The Visit* seems to come as no surprise. However, it is astonishing when taking into account the version of the play which was used as a textual basis for the production. This was the American adaptation by Maurice Valency[4] which, according to Mona Knapp, transformed Dürrenmatt's original into light entertainment suitable for Broadway. For instance, it turned Ill into a superficial, funny character[5], thus contrasting starkly with Kessel's interpretation. Neither the reviews nor Fitton's memoirs provide enough information to conclude whether the production itself suggested to interpret Ill as the tragic character asking for compassion or whether it was Kessel's personal interpretation. In any case, a preference for an interpretation in moral terms and thus a naturalisation which went both against the German original and the American version can be detected. This illustrates how strongly local theatrical norms influenced productions at the time.

Another factor, which was also characteristic of the contemporary Australian reception of Brecht, was the British and American influence. In the reception of other German-speaking playwrights, this influence becomes repeatedly apparent in the choice of plays. Regarding *The Visit*, the American influence is obvious because the production was based on an American translation. The British influence is apparent in the programme notes which refer to the "record- breaking" production at the Aldwych Theatre in London[6], and in Fitton's description of the Queen's approval of Fitton's choice of play at a luncheon during her visit to Sydney. Fitton reported: "When asked what we were playing, I told her [the Queen] it was Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*. She said she had seen it in London and thought it a very good play."[7] Although Fitton had not chosen the play on the Queen's advice, her memoirs illustrate the strong presence of British culture and authority at the time, which could easily

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[1] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 228.
[2] Fitton (1981), 127; Fitton also acknowledged the contribution of the play's director, Peter Summerton.
[3] Programme notes.
[4] Programme notes. R.C.'s review indicates that Fitton's production did not take over all of the changes which *The Visit* had undergone under Valency.
[5] Cf. Knapp (1977), 60-63.
[6] Programme notes.
[7] Fitton (1981), 128-9.

be explained as the cultural cringe that I have described in context of the reception of Brecht.

Moreover, Fitton's invitation to the luncheon illustrates the important role she and her theatre played at the time, which must have led to wide exposure of *The Visit* through her production.

Amidst these conservative responses to *The Visit* was an open-minded review by the reviewer for the *SMH*, R.C.[1], who called the play "at once moralistically terrifying and theatrically irresistible".[2] R.C. also pointed to the shortcomings of Valency's misleading rendering of the play.[3] Thus, it might be due to Valency's efforts to locate the play expressively in a non-American, mostly German-speaking environment[4] that R.C. did not apply to Australia Dürrenmatt's critique of Western societies in a phase of booming economies. On the other hand, considering a play as remote from everyday reality was the predominant mode of reception at the time.

In contrast, the *Kleines Wiener Theater* did take this step in the programme notes for its production of Dürrenmatt's *The Physicists* in 1963. Here, it clearly stated that the play contained issues which were relevant to its audiences, "problems to which we cannot close our eyes".[5] The declared aim was to make audiences return to "their everyday life in a reflective mood".[1] Indeed, the play could have been perceived as highly topical, one year after the Cuba Crisis in a country which had allowed nuclear tests to take place on its territory. It is very important that, for the first time in the Australian production of Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays, an ensemble declared openly its belief in a connection between life on stage and in reality, thus pointing to the question of relevant theatre which would soon become very important. This was all the more significant as the *Kleines Wiener Theater* performed *The Physicists* concurrently in German and English, indicating that the ensemble directed it at a wider public beyond their regular audiences.

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[1] It is not clear whether the critic was female or male. As most critics at the time were men, the masculine forms will be used.

[2] *SMH*, 2.5.63. Although the description of "guignolish excitement and purely theatrical power" is not clarified any further, it could be referring to the grotesque elements in the production.

[3] M. Knapp characterised the version as follows: "[Die Übersetzung verfehlt] Charakter und Substanz des Stückes.", in: Knapp (1977), 58.

[4] Valency chose to use signs in German, such as "Güllen", "Fahrplan", "Eintritt verboten", thus avoiding any possible identification with the play's critical dimension, cf. Knapp (1977), 59.

[5] "Die Physiker in Dürrenmatt's Stück ringen mit den Problemen, die unserer Zeit ins Auge starren.", programme notes.

In the same year, George Fairfax also directed *The Physicists* for the St. Martin's Theatre in Melbourne. This time, however, the author of the programme notes seemed to be anxious to preclude negative audience reactions both towards the challenges of the play's content and aesthetics.

Fearing that audiences could interpret the production "largely on a political plane", the programme notes quoted Dürrenmatt saying:

> It is not so much a play about the hydrogen bomb as about science itself, and the impossibility of escaping the consequences of one's thinking. Once a scientist has followed a certain trend of thought he simply cannot run away from its consequences, its practical results.[2]

This quote gives the impression that the company had the courage to choose a highly topical and thus possibly provocative play, but that this choice was accompanied by a concern of strong audience reactions. This might have led the company to toning down *The Physicists'* political relevance, which was a recurrent pattern in the Australian reception of Brecht at the time.

Apart from being wary of political implications, the programme notes also point to an awareness of a possible clash between traditional audience expectations in Australia and the challenges of Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy. In this respect, *The Physicists* represented an even greater challenge than *The Visit* because *The Physicists* completes a move away from a theatre of illusion; here, the plot is a self-contained story with its own logic that no longer depends on direct references to everyday life. The only audience involvement which Dürrenmatt used is purpose-orientated; he wanted to lead the spectators into a "mousetrap"[3] in order to make them face issues they could easily avoid facing.[4]

However, the programme notes did not defend Dürrenmatt's own dramaturgy; instead, they tried to dissociate him from absurdist theatre, stating: "Unlike many of the modern school of writers who attack logic and language as means of thought and communication (...), Dürrenmatt is concerned with the strict application of logical thought."[5]

This quote is of particular interest because it indicates that, ironically, Brechtian theatre

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[1] "Wer den Worten [Dürrenmatts] gut zuhört. (...) geht nach dem letzten Vorhang schweren Herzens und mit nachdenklichem Sinn vom Theater zurück in die Welt des Alltags.", progamme notes.
[2] Programme notes.
[3] Dürrenmatt (1982b), 256, Dürrenmatt (1980c), 64.
[4] Cf. point 21 on *Die Physiker*, Dürrenmatt (1980a), 93, Dürrenmatt (1982a), 156.
[5] Programme notes.

and absurdist theatre à la Ionesco[1] were regarded as a common threat, since they both worked against a naturalistic theatre as the preferred form of Australian theatre.[2]

In order to further underline *The Physicist's* acceptability to Australian audiences, the programme notes used Dürrenmatt's success in London and on Broadway as an additional endorsement of St. Martin's choice of play.[3]

In summary, the reception of Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays confirms the results of my analysis of the Australian reception of Brecht. It seems that, at the time, a direct application of plays by German-speaking playwrights to local reality was unthinkable. The confrontation with history or current issues was considered to only affect foreign countries; this marked the limit of what was accepted in Australian theatre at the time. While shortly after these productions, in 1966, John Ellis and Elijah Moshinsky approached Brecht's *Mother Courage* for the first time in an innovative way and made the first steps towards assuming ownership of the play, contemporary productions of Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays tended to adapt their dramaturgical framework to conventional drama structure. The only productions clearly aiming at presenting topical productions were those by ensembles situated very much on the fringe of Australian theatre, such as New Theatre and the *Kleines Wiener Theater*.

11.2 Rolf Hochhuth, The Representative

In 1965 and 1966, Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative* was staged in Australia, two or, respectively, three years after it had premiered under Erwin Piscator's direction in Germany. In Australia, the play was performed with great success in all Australian states except for the Northern Territory and Tasmania; the UTCR even revived John Sumner's production a few months after its first season had finished. In the following discussion, this production will serve as the main example.

Unlike Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays, *The Representative* could not be interpreted as a parable removed from political reality; instead, it was documentary theatre, which used

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[1] The distanciation from this type of theatre could have been related to Irene Mitchell's 1960 production of Ionesco's *Les Chaises* at Russell Street Theatre.

[2] In an attempt to reassure audiences, the programme notes established a "parallel [of *The Physicists*] with classic theatre in the workings of chance and inevitability", which ignored the important role these concepts play on a formal level in Dürrenmatt's dramaturgy. Cf. points 4, 5 and 8, Dürrenmatt (1980a), 91, Dürrenmatt (1982a), 155.

[3] The programme notes refer to the success of *The Visit* on Broadway and of *The Physicists* "on the Continent and in London", programme notes.

historical facts and people to raise provocative questions. As it was the first documentary drama to be performed in Australia it became paradigmatic for the genre. The main discussion about the play was centred around the question of whether the late Pope Pius XII had a duty to speak out publicly against the extermination of European Jews during the Nazi time and failed to do so. All over the world, this resulted in direct political reactions which caused contention in many countries. In fact, Piscator, in his preface to the play, called it "one of the few essential contributions to bringing about a confrontation with the past".[1]

The reception of Hochhuth's play shows that, at the time of its performance, to many directors and spectators, theatre was still meant to provide an evening of entertainment removed from any real concerns. This has been illustrated by the majority of responses to productions of Dürrenmatt's plays and fairy-tale-like productions of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.*[2] At the same time, however, Australian plays like *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and *The One Day of the Year* represented early signs of local playwriting and theatre which were of socio-political relevance. Against this background, it is interesting to see how great *The Representative 's* potential political impact was in reality, as reflected in the reviews of its productions.

Unlike in Germany and other countries where the play had caused furore[3], Australian responses towards the play and its productions were considerably less vehement. For instance, an article in *The Bulletin* commented on the imminent production of *The Representative* at the Sydney Old Tote as follows:

> For a play which was stopped by the police in Rome and which led to riots when it was performed elsewhere in Europe and in the United States, Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Representative* (...) looks like having a comparatively quiet reception when it comes to Sydney.[4]

Looking for possible explanations firstly, it is obvious that the Roman Catholics were the main group to feel challenged by the play. In Australia, Roman Catholics made up only about 26 per cent of the population[5], whereas in Germany, where the play had a much

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[1] "Hochhuths Stück *Der Stellvertreter* ist einer der wenigen wesentlichen Beiträge zur Bewältigung der Vergangenheit". in: Piscator (1974), 32.

[2] Cf. my analysis of Richard Campion's production for the Old Tote in 1964, and John Sumner's production of the same play in 1971.

[3] Regarding the play's reception in Germany, Raddatz reports that about 6 months after its premiere in Germany, about 3000 reviews, reports and letters had been written. cf. Raddatz (1963). Germany even saw a questioning without notice at the *Bundestag*. For the stir caused in other countries cf. Hoffmeister (1980), 23-31 and 69-77.

[4] *The Bulletin*, 29.5.65 (Part of "National Notebook").

[5] Cf.Jupp (1988), 94, cf. Archer (1965), 280.

stronger impact, they not only amounted to about 45 per cent of the population, but also the Church represented an historically grown, unchallenged moral institution.

Secondly, in Australia, much of the debate which the play provoked between leaders of the Roman Catholic and Jewish communities had preceded its actual performances. This is partly due to the fact that *The Representative* can be used as a provocative reading play because it contains much information and many comments which cannot and are not intended to be entirely represented on stage. As a result, the early debate concentrated on the contentious issues presented in the play text rather than on a production, which is highly unusual in the Australian reception of German-speaking plays.[1] Therefore, before *The Representative* was first produced in Sydney in mid-1965, *The Bulletin* merely summarised the previous discussion. It was introduced by the statement that "the storm which raged in Europe and North America on the main issue of the play (...) has subsided" and it seems that this applied also to the Roman Catholic and Jewish debate in Australia.

However, this did not mean that audiences were no longer interested in seeing the play on stage. Theatre critic Geoffrey Hutton described the play in retrospect as a "blockbuster"[2] and John Sumner recalled that the theatre was filled "at 95 per cent capacity".[3] In fact, it appears that Sumner strategically used the play's reputation of being controversial in order to obtain good box office results and even, perhaps, to attract a greater number of patrons which could fill the planned new venue for his company.[4] For the same purpose, the advertisement avoided offending any possible theatregoer by billing the play, according to *The Bulletin*, as a "Jewish Catholic Nazi World Theatre Play".[1]

While one outcome of the novelty of presenting burning questions on stage was increased attendance by theatre patrons, theatre critics reacted to the play's and its performance's political dimension in different ways.

In the Melbourne daily press, a difference between two generations of critics is evident. Clearly, Geoffrey Hutton from *The Age*, who belonged to the generation of critics used to the predominant Australian naturalistic theatre, was not at ease with a play that confronted

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[1] Cf. *The Bulletin*, 3.7.65; the article summarised the exchange of "Jewish and Roman Catholic commentaries on the play by people who had then only read it".
[2] Hutton (1975), 62.
[3] Sumner (1993), 180.
[4] Cf. Hutton (1975), 62.

him with political issues, a kind of play which could not easily be toned down. In his first review of *The Representative's* production in Adelaide, he declined to take a personal stand stating that "here I am not in a position to confirm nor to deny Hochhuth's documentation".[2] Both his statement in the first person and his failure to put the play's central topic in concrete terms convey Hutton's insecurity towards the challenges of the so far unknown documentary theatre.[3]

The way Hutton dealt with the play's political challenges differed from that of his successor, Leonard Radic, who, in an article of 1966[4], voluntarily provided an overview of the debate concerning the position taken by Pope Pius XII. Even more information was offered in *The Australian*; here, Francis Evers referred to comments by the author, including those in the German newspaper *Die Welt*, as well as to prominent commentators such as Hannah Arendt.[5] The high standard of this review confirms the quality of theatre criticism in the then young newspaper, which I have already pointed out in the context of Evers' 1964 review of Richard Campion's production of *The Caucasian Chalkcircle.*[6] The reviewer of the catholic *Advocate*, Frank Murphy, wrote a lengthy article trying to refute the accusation against the Pope, in detail, and wrote that "alleging that Pope Pius XII turned deaf ear or a blind eye to Jewish suffering" was "absurd".[1] Murphy was only marginally interested in Hochhuth's play as such and his main focus was what he called "Hochhuth's propaganda success". This article was as close as the performance-related discussion came to being an emotional controversy.

In order to compare the play's political reception with that of the contemporary reception of Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays it is worthwhile analysing whether *The Representative's* political message was perceived as relevant to Australian audiences. Hochhuth intended the character of the Pope to be representative of anybody in power with the story setting a

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[1] The fact that the extent of cautioness had reached the degree of ridicule is obvious in the comment which followed the billing: "They should get in everyone except the Red Chinese." *The Bulletin*, 26.2.66 (Part of "One More Week").

[2] *The Age*, 1.12.65.

[3] When reviewing the later Melbourne production, Hutton seems to have gained more confidence and avoided taking a stand more skilfully by passing on the role of judgment to "the historians" (*The Age*, 16.2.66). About 20 years later, in his history of the MTC, the historical distance facilitated him providing a brief detached summary of the play's content, cf. Hutton (1975), 63.

[4] *The Age*, 5.2.66. A similar outline of the debate's arguments was provided by Madeleine Armstrong also, who reviewed the Sydney production for *The Bulletin*, 17.7.65.

[5] *The Australian*, 19.2.66.

[6] Fancis Evers, *The Australian*, 18.7.64. At the time, Evers appeared to be the only critic who had read the play in translation. Regarding the standard of criticism in *The Australian*, cf. also: Serle (1987), 213.

precedent. However, few Australian critics recognised this dimension of the play. In the Melbourne press, Howard Palmer, *The Sun's* theatre critic, was aware that the play reached beyond the concrete facts it presented, but instead of attributing a general political application to it he interpreted it in religious terms.[2] Francis Evers took a neutral stand in *The Australian* when he quoted Hochhuth's statement that "Pope Pius is a symbol not only for all leaders, but for all men... Christian, atheists, Jews".[3]

Yet, most reviewers were either not aware of the Pope's symbolic significance or they relegated the play's underlying problematic to Germany only. For instance, Radic wrote in *The Age*:

> Like so many postwar German writers, he [Hochhuth] is concerned with the question of the German people's guilt. In particular he is concerned to find a scapegoat on whom the war and the Jewish massacres can be fairly blamed."[4]

Although, internationally, Radic was not the only one to make this accusation[5], remarks like this could be easily accepted uncritically in a country whose relationships with Germany had not only been strained by the second but also the first World War.[6] The fact that the past heavily influenced Australian-German relationships in the mid-sixties is further illustrated by a short article in *The Herald*. Here, Mollie Maginnis created sensationalist interest in her report about how a factory worker, who made Nazi uniforms for the Sydney production without having been informed about their purpose, alerted the police.[7]

However, there were also some signs of Australians overcoming the dissociating 'you' [the Germans] and 'us' [the Australians] patterns and of interpreting the play's message in more general terms. Both Doron Ur, in the programme notes for the Perth production, and Phillip Adams, in *The Bulletin*, employed a 'we' that included Australian theatregoers in their reflections. Especially Adams' reflections took into account possible psychological barriers of facing the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. After having pointed out the play's shortcomings, Adams concluded:

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[1] *The Advocate*, 10.2.66.
[2] *The Sun*, 16.2.66.
[3] *The Australian*, 19.2.66.
[4] *The Age*, 5.2.66.
[5] Cf. Hoffmeister (1980), 27.
[6] Regarding World War I, J. Perkins wrote: "The intensity of the anti-German feeling expressed by the majority of Australians during the First World War, and the extent of the translation of that feeling into legislative and administrative actions directed against those of German birth and German descant residing in Australia, perhaps appear incomprehensible today"; in: Jupp (1988), 488. Concerning the influence of the World Wars on Australian-German relationships cf. also my chapter on the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project.
[7] *The Herald*, 29.1.66.

> Yet what Hochhuth has achieved makes this play crucially important. In a way its weaknesses are merciful. By focusing one's attention on flaws of the writing, acting and sets, we can protect ourselves from the impossible truth of six million dead Jews.[1]

Underlying this quote is the realisation that the extermination of Jews represented an historical event of a dimension which had repercussions for humanity as a whole and thus required the whole world to reflect upon it.

In her contribution to the programme notes for *The Representative's* production in Perth, Doreen Ur went against the tendency to apply the play solely to Germany's Nazi past and interpreted it in general terms writing: "As we sit here and watch one dramatic description of a period of shame, persecutions continue elsewhere."[2]

About thirty years later, some Australians and Germans even started to draw parallels between the Holocaust and the persecution of Australian Aborigines. My analysis of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project will show, though, that these comparisons may easily result in misleading oversimplifications of historical facts.

Overall, it is difficult to assess the degree to which the critics' interpretations had been inspired by actual performances. It seems that the only production which aimed at creating dismay was John Tasker's production for the South Australian Theatre Company and the University Theatre Guild.[3] Terry Stapleton reported in *The Bulletin* that Tasker showed a film just before the final curtain:

> [It was] a film which shows, in horrifying and gruesome detail, scenes of the mass murder. Its effect was electric and immediate; the atmosphere in the auditorium was instantly chilled with waves of mute revulsion and guilt. But our consciences should have been crawling long before then.[4]

Both the director and the critic approved of this means for confronting audiences with the Holocaust directly.

Concerning the play's aesthetic reception, it needs to be said that the world wide attention the play and its productions attracted was due less to its aesthetics than to its contentious content. Radic confirmed this reason for the Australian reception by stating that "the argument centred around Pius' stand has distracted from consideration of the play's merits as a play" which he called "debatable".[5] This mode of reception is illustrated by Frank Murphy's article in *The Advocate* which did not take into account the play's

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[1] *The Bulletin*, 5.3.66.
[2] Programme notes.
[3] This is another production which illustrates the strong ties between Australian universities and theatres.
[4] *The Bulletin*, 27.11.65.
[5] *The Age*, 5.2.66.

aesthetics at all.[1] The majority of Australian critics who did take them into account, like their colleagues in other countries, focused their criticism mainly on Hochhuth's characterisations. Evers called his characters "cardboard figures, or mouthpieces for the author's dialectic"[2] and Radic criticised the characterisation of the Pope particularly.[3] That Hutton noticed the mixture of Hochhuth's writing and dramatic styles became evident when he pointed out elements of *Verfremdung* and tragedy in the play.[4]

In Australia, after its productions in the mid-sixties, the play was not performed again, which confirms that it was mainly received as a *Zeitstück*.

In the years following the productions of *The Representative*, two other documentary plays were performed in Australia; in 1969, John Sumner directed Hochhuth's *Soldiers* for the MTC and in 1968 Robert Levis directed Peter Weiss' *The Investigation* for the Independent Theatre. With *Soldiers*, it is likely that Sumner tried to follow on from *The Representative's* success and advertised the production accordingly.[5] This time, the debate centred on Churchill as a controversial figure.[6]

Weiss' *The Investigation*, presented Australians with exclusively authentic historical material which Weiss had taken from the Frankfurt trial of SS officers from the concentration camp at Auschwitz. While critics acknowledged the play's political and historical importance they tended to criticise its dramaturgy and, without mentioning it, Brecht's influence on Weiss. Thus, Harry Kippax pointed out that "there is little attempt to dramatise emotion"[7] and lamented the "lack of dramatic development" and audience involvement.[8] Katharine Brisbane stated that "this may well be a document for our time but as it stands it is not theatre"[9], in short, declaring that documentary plays did not fit her

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[1] *The Advocate*, 10.2.66.
[2] *The Australian*, 19.2.66.
[3] *The Age*, 7.6.66.
[4] *The Age*, 1.12.65. Rainer Taëni is one of the scholars who has pointed to the mixture of epic and tragic styles in *The Representative*, in: Taëni (1987).
[5] "*Soldiers* by Rolf Hochhuth, author of *The Representative*", cf. the advertisements in *The Age*.
[6] The play was announced in "The Ageguide to Entertainment and the Arts" (6.6.69) as "Hochhuth's controversial and patchy documentary play which suggests that Churchill connived at the wartime murder of the Polish leader, General Sikorski, in order to appease Stalin."; Anne Latreille, in "Curtain Calls" (*The Age*, 4.6.69), reported that many theatre patrons called the play "Churchill" when they phoned the theatre to make a booking for *Soldiers*. Sumner himself does not mention this production in his memoirs.
[7] *SMH*, 10.1.68. In line with his preference for "'Credible humanity in action'", as pointed out in McCallum (1981), 153, Kippax approved of "the telling moments, striking at the imagination, [which] are the eruptions of human unpredictability that in fact occurred at the trial" in Levis' production.
[8] *The Bulletin*, 20.1.68.
[9] *The Australian*, 5.2.68.

concept of theatre. Thus, the play's impact fell well short of the effect it had in Europe where it premiered at 15 major theatres simultaneously, including at the Aldwych Theatre in London.[1]

Overall, documentary theatre exposed Australian audiences to a new kind of theatre, but failed to elicit enthusiastic responses. Therefore, it is unlikely that the above productions contributed considerably to a politicisation of Australian theatre, unlike in Germany where the documentary theatre marked the end of the theatre of the Adenauer period and the start of intense discussions about whether theatre should present actual political issues directly on stage.

With regard to the development towards Australians assuming ownership of German-speaking playwrights, the above analysis has confirmed many of those tendencies shown in the Australian contemporary reception of Brecht. In the early to mid 1960s, Australia was a divided society leaning strongly towards the consolidation of theatrical styles in its mainstream theatres rather than questioning and welcoming experimentation. Therefore, the majority of responses indicate that conservative directors and spectators continued to perceive productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights as unrelated to Australian life and its concerns. Where the plays did not meet this criterion, theatre practitioners and critics alike tended to naturalise them. This applies to the sensitive content and challenging form of the documentary theatre, as well as to the more approachable subjects and forms of Frisch's and Dürrenmatt's plays.

11.3 Other Productions in the late 1960s

Apart from the documentary plays mentioned above, the late 1960s saw only two other productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights other than Brecht. In 1969, Arthur Schnitzler's *The Affairs of Anatol* was performed at the Independent Theatre[2] and in 1968, John Ellis directed Weiss' *Marat / Sade* for his Melbourne Youth Theatre. The latter production is representative of the period's inclination to see theatre, particularly in a student environment, in a stronger political light than ever before or after. Thus, Ellis reported the following audience reaction after performances at Monash University's Alexander Theatre:

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[1] 19.10.65.
[2] Under the direction of Stephan Beinl.

> It is the only open political comment I have experienced in theatre while directing plays in Melbourne. After the chorus had spoken the last words [demanding "revolution"], audiences just remained seated in silence for about half an hour. When I directed the play again five or six years later the play's political edge had disappeared and the strong audience reactions had gone.[1]

Along with audiences' and especially student audiences' readiness to embrace political theatre, the strong reaction towards *Marat / Sade* indicates also the acceptance of a wider range of styles in playwriting and performances than previously seen on stage. As I have demonstrated in the analysis of the Australian reception of Brecht, this shift in expectations corresponded to general socio-political and cultural developments in Australia such as the protest movements and the exploration of new styles by the emerging New Wave writers, directors and performers. This has been illustrated by Brian Davis' production of Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule* for La Mama in 1969, in which a political play had been selected and traditional staging styles had been questioned. Moreover, the production initiated changes in the relationship between the audience and the stage by opening up from the proscenium stage and moving towards environmental staging techniques.[2] To some extent, it facilitated the Handke fashion in the mid-1970s which could build on the considerations about audience - stage relationship and the nature of theatre in general.

12. PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF PLAYS IN THE 1970S

12.1 Plays by Peter Handke

The 1970s saw the arrival of a new German-speaking playwright in the Australian theatre scene, a scene, which had been dominated so far by the work of Brecht, Frisch and Dürrenmatt.[3] The Austrian Peter Handke was the only playwright, apart from Brecht, whose plays had become fashionable and were performed over an extended period.[4] In 1973, Australian actor and director John Bell called him "perhaps the most exciting new dramatist on the scene".[5]

In Sydney, the promotion of Handke's plays was closely linked to Richard Wherrett's keen interest in them. One critic attributed to Wherrett, after his third production of a play

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[1] Personal interview, 27.3.00. No significant reviews could be found.
[2] Cf. personal interview with Lindzee Smith (26.10.98), who used an environmental staging technique when directing *The Mother* for the APG in 1975.
[3] The occasional production of a play by Weiss and Schnitzler has been mentioned earlier.
[4] This was followed by one production in the 1980s and occasional productions in the 1990s, amongst them two of *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* in 1995.
[5] "Established Theatre and Alternative Theatre", 74, in: Holloway (1981), 66-76.

by Handke, "a compulsive fascination with Peter Handke".[1] In Melbourne, director Lindzee Smith from the APG, as well as other practitioners associated with the APG and La Mama, also found Handke's plays impressive.

Between 1972 and 1979, thirteen Australian productions of plays by Handke could be seen, predominantly in alternative theatres connected to the New Wave. The most popular plays were *The Ride Across Lake Constance*, *My Foot My Tutor* and *Kaspar*. In comparison to Handke's pure 'speech plays', such as *Offending the Audience*, these dramas seem more accessible.[2] Although lacking a traditional plot and denying overt reference to the 'real' world, they can be interpreted as searches for a glimpse of insight into how communication and, to a certain degree, perception and consciousness are controlled by conventions.[3]

In my analysis, I shall concentrate on Wherrett's production of *The Ride Across Lake Constance* for Nimrod and the APG's production of *My Foot My Tutor*[4], which were both performed in 1975. They provide a good basis for my analysis because the material related stretches across a range of newspapers. As Handke's plays represented an unprecedented challenge to critics, the productions of his plays, more than other playwrights' performances, offer an opportunity to analyse the way in which Australian critics saw themselves, the role of theatre at the time and of how they interpreted the recent concept of relevance.

All over the world, Handke and his writing have been considered as representing a controversial avant-garde. He first attracted public notice in 1966 when he delivered an attack on contemporary German writing at a seminar of the *Gruppe 47* at Princeton University. Apart from his personal image being reminiscent of an "intellectual Beatle-character"[5] which invited polemical comments, his plays aroused debate over a number of

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[1] Geraldine Pascall, *The Australian*, 24.2.75. In Perth, it was Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre which staged *The Ride* in 1976 under the direction of Sally Holmes.

[2] Roelcke distinguishes between the metacommunicative *Offending the Audience* and those plays which have no direct communicative function such as *Self Accusation* and *Calling for Help*, and those which stress 'speech acts', in: Roelcke (1994), 107.

[3] *Kaspar* plays a special role because it contains 16 stages of development. In his introduction, Handke was quick to destroy any impressions of a realistic, biographically oriented play, though: "Das Stück *Kaspar* zeigt nicht, wie ES WIRKLICH IST oder WIRKLICH WAR mit Kaspar Hauser. Es zeigt, was MÖGLICH IST mit jemandem.", in: Handke (1972b), 103; "The play *Kaspar* does not show how IT REALLY IS OR REALLY WAS with Kaspar Hauser. It shows what is POSSIBLE with someone.", Handke (1997), 53.

[4] Directed and performed by Bob Thorneycroft and Joe Bolza.

[5] Schultz described Handke's "ephebenhaft-friedliche Silhouette der intellektuellen Beatlefigur" and considered this a clever marketing device, in: Schultz (1978), 76.

aesthetic and political questions.

Regarding politics, Handke's statements divided critics internationally. His work appeared like a self-indulgent affront against purely literary issues, particularly if read against the background of documentary theatre. This impression was reinforced by provocative, quotable statements such as "Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms".[1] In his introduction to the English translation of Handke's plays, Tom Kuhn summed up Handke's initial West- German political reception effectively:

> For the left-wing cultural establishment (...) Handke soon became something of a hate-figure, while the more conservative critics tried to write him off as some deviant representative of the 'Beat-generation'.[2]

Therefore it is remarkable that, in Australia, Handke was predominantly performed at the APG and the Nimrod Theatre, both of which were closely connected to the New Wave and the student protests.[3] Yet, while Handke's disengaged individualism would make him an unsuitable choice for such companies, his revolt against traditional theatre and his initial search for more immediate artforms appeared to fit within their frame of alternative thinking. To a certain degree, parallels could be drawn between the APG's attempt to merge life and art and some of Handke's considerations in "Straßentheater oder Theatertheater".[4] Moreover, Handke's experimental and playful approach to conventional dramaturgical concepts probably appealed to his Australian directors. It needs to be added, though, that both Wherrett and Smith had spent some years overseas, where they had been exposed to the latest developments in innovative theatre to a much larger extent than they had experienced in Australia.[5] Wherrett's 1973 production of *Kaspar* had an especially close link to Peter Brook's work via the actor Philip Sayer. Sayer remained in Sydney when Peter Brook's company disbanded after its Australian guest performance of *A Midsummer*

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[1] Handke (1972a). "I am an Ivory Tower Dweller".

[2] "Introduction", X. in: Handke (1997), IX - XXIV. Kuhn offers a balanced view of Handke's political stance looking back at Handke's early reception from about 20 years after the initial criticism. Studies by Renner and Michaelis show that the concurrent critical assessment of Handke's political position tended to be rather one-sided, cf. Renner (1985), Michaelis (1978).

[3] Radic has described Nimrod as less radical in political terms writing: "The Nimrod was more businesslike and practical, with none of the APG's radicalism.", in: Radic (1994 (Spring)), 474.

[4] Cf. my analysis of Lindzee Smith's production of *The Mother* at the Pram Factory and Handke (1974), Handke (1998).

[5] When Smith did a Masters in Directing at the University of California between 1970 and 1973 he was impressed by groups such as the Living Theatre. Similarly, Wherrett discovered Handke during his stay in Britain between 1965 and 1970; he also became interested in Grotowski and the Living Theatre at the time. Moreover, Peter Brook researched the sign system in theatre and of theatre at his *Centre International de Recherches Théâtrales* in Paris. The analysis of Davis' *The Exception and the Rule* has shown that similar ideas were circulating in Australia.

Night's Dream in the same year.[1] The fact that Wherrett and Smith staged Handke's work in the later years of the New Wave[2] might have facilitated the production of plays by a non-Australian playwright because in the early years the pressure to perform exclusively Australian work was stronger. In fact, Handke's *Kaspar* was "Nimrod's first staging of a contemporary non-Australian play".[3] Despite the generally favourable circumstances, Smith reported some resistance at the APG towards staging non-Australian work at the time.[4] Leonard Radic commented in his review of *My Foot My Tutor*:

> The APG's reputation rests on its Australian works. If the group feels the need to branch out and experiment, they should use the small Back Theatre for this purpose or go back to La Mama around the corner.[5]

As illustrated by the above comment, the controversial character of Handke's plays served as a catalyst for bringing out in reviews underlying concepts of the role of theatre and its critics. This became apparent in political considerations provoked by Handke's plays as well as in the challenge of how to interpret them.

Although the plays under consideration, *The Ride Across Lake Constance* and *My Foot My Tutor*, in some ways differ - the most obvious difference being that the latter is a play without words - they evoked similar critical reactions. Australian critics reacted in primarily two ways to the aesthetic challenges of Handke's plays.

One group of critics regarded Handke's plays as useless linguistic and theatrical games, which were difficult to label. Many pointed out that Handke's plays reminded them of French absurd theatre[6], and some went as far as dismissing *The Ride Across Lake Constance* as "gymnasium exercises" and "a drama workshop" like Romola Constantino[7] or "a scripted series of acting exercises" as Kevon Kemp did.[8]

This indicates that a number of critics were uncomfortable with a play which did not present them with a traditional plot or did not lead to a meaning which could be pinpointed and summarised easily. Such critics tended to perceive their role in a traditional way, as an adviser who assists audiences in choosing the right entertainment for a night out.[9] Following

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[1] Sayer also contributed to other experimental work at the Nimrod, cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 510.
[2] Fitzpatrick notes that the New Wave was nearly past its peak: "By the mid 1970's, there was a distinctly post-boom feeling about theatre in Australia.", in: Fitzpatrick (1979), 157.
[3] Press release, 71.1.73.
[4] Personal interview, 26.10.98.
[5] *The Age*, 1.3.75.
[6] Cf. *Manly Daily*, 25.5.75, *National Times*, 3.3.75, *Sun*, 20.2.75, *SMH*, 19.2.75.
[7] *SMH*, 19.2.75.
[8] *National Times*, 3.3.75.
[9] This is how Howard Palmer, critic for the Melbourne *Sun*, defined the critic in Allen (1968), 51.

this line of thinking, Kemp thought it "not legitimate" to present this unconventional kind of theatre to spectators who "pay money to be entertained and involved and shown new ways".[1] In Melbourne, Radic reacted similarly to *My Foot My Tutor* at the APG.[2] Both critics equalled the purchase of a ticket with the spectators' rights to be entertained rather than fundamentally challenged in their views.

These critics also tended to interpret the notion of relevance as closely connected to box office success. Kemp, for instance, introduced his review of *The Ride Across Lake Constance* explaining that to him the "Nimrod choice of plays [including Handke's] has been a worry (...) because their new and larger theatre needs a run of full houses for the company's finances to stay sound."[3]

Although previous productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights other than Brecht had generally not included considerations about relevance, for reasons explained earlier, my analysis of the reception of Brecht has illustrated that the concept has been referred to increasingly since the late 1960s and early 1970s.[4] This became obvious in Sharman's 1973 adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera* to the Australian depression, as well as in Cherry's collaboration with Willett on the same play in 1975. It is worthwhile recalling that, in New Wave Australian playwriting, the question of relevance was linked closely to an Australian setting and subject matter.[5] This was the climate in which the commissioners of the "Industries Assistance Commission on the performing arts" defined the term 'relevance' in their 1976 report as "having meaning for and being of consequence to people".[6] Despite its apparent general meaning, this definition becomes more specific when read in context with the remainder of the commissioners' document, which accused the performing arts of representing a "coterie culture" preoccupied with "superficial forms of excellence", thus often resulting in "irrelevant" productions.[7] It seems as though this report reflected the

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[1] *National Times*, 3.3.75.

[2] "Since audiences are being asked to pay good money for the privilege [to see the production], a few cautionary comments are called for"; *The Age*, 1.3.76.

[3] *National Times*, 3.3.75.

[4] An early exception was Richard Murphet who used the term 'relevant', noting that Ellis and Moshinsky's production of Mother Courage deserved attention "in terms of its relevance to our times", *Lot's Wife*, 9.5.67. Cf. my analysis of the production.

[5] I have pointed out earlier the vehemence with which anything non-Australian was refused. This is illustrated by the fact that Australian playwrights such as Louis Nowra, whose plays were initially non-Australian in their setting and their subject matter, were considered remote and not relevant to Australian audiences. cf. Radic (1991), 138; cf. also McCallum (1984).

[6] Reported by Hoad in his article "The vain quest for relevance", *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77.

[7] *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77.

traditional Australian "tall poppy syndrome". This endorsement only of forms of culture which satisfy the masses was considered by people like Australian director Rick Billinghurst as a "'relevance to us to-day' game - usually on an eggs, cheese and butter level of thinking".[1]

Although a number of people challenged this concept of the arts, its influence persisted until today[2] and had repercussions for the funding of the arts. Thus, the above report foreshadowed a tendency to measure a production's relevance in the financial terms of box office results.[3] Against this background, the commissioners argued for relevance as "the major justification for public subsidy of the arts".[4] Their report indicated the many cuts to the performing arts which followed.[5]

The commissioners' already narrow concept of relevance becomes even more restricted when interpreted as applicability to everyday Australian reality. This was the gist of Robin Ingram's comment in her review of *The Ride Across Lake Constance* for the (Sydney) *Sun*. She noted: "To spend an evening at Nimrod Theatre with Peter Handke is to spend an evening in a world far more distant than Surrey Hills".[6] Obviously, Handke's plays fitted neither the criterion of mass entertainment nor that of local relevance.

However, Handke also provoked reactions from another group of critics, who had a different perception, than their colleagues, of their role, of theatre and of audiences. Their understanding of theatre criticism allowed them to admit their mixed feelings and uncertainty regarding Handke's plays' and their productions. Thus, in his review of *My Foot My Tutor*, Ian Robinson admitted: "I do not know how to assess a play of this nature. All I

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[1] Billinghurst made this comment in an article about directing Büchner's *Danton's Death* for the MTC, in: Billinghurst (1973), 32.

[2] In a recent article, Susan Mitchell described how the influence of the 'tall poppy syndrome' on the arts becomes obvious in the Australian reluctance to acknowledge an outstanding production through a standing ovation. She also pointed to the well known fact that a number of Australian performers, writers and intellectuals felt the need to leave Australia "to excel and be recognised for it", *The Australian*, 29.4.00.

[3] Jo Litson recorded the continuing effects of the 'tall poppy syndrome' on opera in Australia in an article entitled "Small Poppies": Here, Sydney music and opera critic John Carmody noted: "Opera Australia's funding represent only 25 per cent of its budget compared to 80 or 90 per cent at many German houses. 'This reflects a fundamentally different attitude to culture', says Carmody. 'In Western Europe it is seen as an essential part of life; here it is seen as something to have when you can afford it'", *The Australian*, 1.4.00.

[4] *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77.

[5] Hoad already reported on the effects of financial pressure in 1976 noting "this was the year in which often innovative activities out in the fringe (as The Stables in Sydney) were allowed to collapse through lack of deserved subsidy.", *The Bulletin*, 8.1.77.

[6] *Sun*, 20.2.75; Nimrod had just made its contended move to new premises in Surrey Hills.

can say is that I don't regret having gone."[1] About a decade later, this critical attitude of asking questions and evaluating rather than judging would be favoured by many critics and theatre practitioners who attended a conference entitled "Theatre Criticism in Australia".[2]

Robinson was also willing to admit a kind of theatre in which individual reactions can vary greatly. He commented:

> Some will detest it utterly and become extremely frustrated. Others will find it intensely stimulating. The lack of information from the stage will mean that the pre-dispositions, both intellectual and emotional, that one brings in to the theatre will substantially affect one's reactions and the same person may have totally different responses to different performances.[3]

Here, Robinson acknowledged the fundamental characteristics of any communication and reception in the theatre. He also illustrated how the increased indeterminacy of Handke's plays and their great number of 'blanks' have an effect on the individual reception of their performances as well as on the individual spectator's horizon of expectation.[4] Thus, Robinson was in tune with recent developments in communication studies as well as in theoretical discussions within the theatres.[5]

Like Robinson, Brian Hoad[6] was ready to embrace new developments in audience - stage relationships. In his review of *The Ride Across Lake Constance* for *The Bulletin*, he toyed with the idea of the audience intervening actively in the performance. He wrote: "Some patrons (...) might well feel like interrupting the proceedings with a few cries of 'Rubbish!' or 'For Heaven's sake get on with it!'"[7] Hoad reacted similarly to some German audience members who saw Claus Peymann's first production of *Offending the Audience* and refused to accept the conventional role of the relatively passive spectator by commenting aloud on

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[1] *National Times*, 3.3.75. In a review of *The Ride*, the reviewer for the *Manly Daily* felt he / she could be even more bold noting: "I don't really see any reason why I should pretend to be smarter than my peers", (25.2.75, no name given).

[2] Cf. Eccles (1987), Chapter 4.

[3] *National Times*, 3.3.75.

[4] Cf. my considerations regarding "Leerstellen" in the introduction. *Offending the Audience* indicates Handke's awareness of audience expectations and his tendency to play with them: "Jedenfalls haben Sie sich etwas erwartet. Allenfalls haben Sie sich das erwartet, was Sie hier hören. Aber auch in diesem Fall haben Sie sich etwas anderes erwartet." Handke (1972b), 19.

[5] This awareness might have resulted in Robinson being the only reviewer to ask whether Tenschert's production of *Mother Courage* was relevant to Australian audiences, *National Times*, 2.7.73; cf. my analysis of responses to the production.

[6] Hoad is one of the few critics to whom an article in the *Companion to Theatre in Australia* has been dedicated. Here, Brisbane reports that Hoad initially worked as a reporter at the London *Times*, and, in Australia, worked for *The Bulletin*. Brisbane describes him as controversial but "assured in his background and (...) rounded in his outlook", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 277.

[7] *The Bulletin*, 1.3.75.

and intervening in the performance.[1] Along with reflecting critically on the spectator's role, Hoad was in favour also of a theatre that ventured into new directions. He called Wherrett's production of *The Ride Across Lake Constance* "an important step in an important direction and a major event in the theatre, whether you enjoy it or not".[2]

The above quotes show that both Hoad and Robinson endorsed a theatre that exceeded the strict definition of relevance. By inviting individually different reactions towards a production and for productions which dare to experiment with new ways of making theatre, they seem to apply a more liberal interpretation of the term 'relevance'; they interpreted relevance in the sense of being important and meaningful "in a certain context" or "to the matter at hand".[3]

Probably, Handke's plays only offered relevance to a small Australian audience interested in universal considerations concerning the nature of language, communication and theatre. Therefore, his plays did not promise any box office successes - despite some notable productions such as Wherrett's *Kaspar*.[4] Accordingly, Lindzee Smith was aware that "Handke seemed to have a kind of 'cult' following, a very specific audience", when he directed *Kaspar* at the APG.[5]

Nevertheless, Handke's plays played an important role in Australia which could not be measured in box office success or favourable reviews. His contribution to Australian theatre consisted in extending the repertoire of alternative theatre companies and in reinforcing new reflections on the nature of theatre and theatrical communication which were already in the air.[6] As Smith expressed it, "Handke (...) injected a contemporary feel into theatre both on the level of language and staging".

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[1] Cf. Fischer-Lichte (1993), 416. In Australia, *Offending the Audience* was first performed in 1972 at NIDA and only much later in a public theatre.

[2] He was also the only critic who thought deeply about the play pointing to similarities between Wittgenstein's and Handke's reflections on language and quoting the press release noting that "*Lake Constance*, in one sense, investigates the fearful dark vacuum that lies beneath the thin ice of conversation", *The Bulletin*, 1.3.75; Press release.

[3] The definition given in *Duden* reads: "in einem bestimmten Zusammenhang bedeutsam, [ge]wichtig", in: Drosdowski, Alsleben, and als. (1983), 1025; the second quote has been taken from Pearsall (1998), 1567.

[4] The production has been listed as "notable" by Ron Blair in Parsons and Chance (1995), 636.

[5] Similarly, Wherrett reported that *Kaspar* was especially successful with young audiences, personal interview, 25.6.99. In the 1980s, interest in Handke's plays dropped sharply. Despite this, in 1995, three years after its premiere, his new play *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* was produced twice in Australia.

[6] In a personal interview (28.12.98), Melbourne actor Eileen Chapman went even one step further and noted: "It seems to me that German drama has been more interesting to people within the theatre rather than people outside like the audience and the critics."

Barrie Kosky's speech at the Shakespeare Youth Festival illustrated that these kinds of reflections and experiments are necessary because they prevent theatre from going stale. Kosky argued that a theatre which remains completely tied to its traditions and prescribed forms becomes "dead theatre". My study of the reception of Brecht has shown that, ultimately, this kind of theatre loses touch with its time and audiences and, ironically, becomes irrelevant.

12.2 Play-readings and other cultural initiatives at the Goethe-Institute in Sydney

The analysis of the production and reception of Handke's plays in the mid-1970s has shown that a number of Australian theatre practitioners and critics were ready to experiment with new ideas. This was the ideal climate for the Goethe-Institutes to begin their work in Australia. In 1972, the Goethe-Institute in Melbourne was founded, followed by institutes in Sydney and Canberra in 1974.

For my study, I shall focus on the cultural initiatives of Rainer Lübbren, the first director of Sydney's Goethe-Institute. In many respects, his work in the late 1970s and early 1980s represents a model for an effective promotion of a culture in a foreign country because it took into account the horizon of expectations in the receiving country.

Lübbren was fortunate in being able to build on the predominantly open-minded attitude of the contemporary Australian theatre world. The specific interest in German plays was also assisted by the interest raised by German film at the time.[1] On this basis, Lübbren organised a series of important cultural initiatives related to German theatre, which consisted of play-readings, public talks and discussions, a conference entitled "Beyond the Backyard", visits by German theatre practitioners and a guest production by the German director Harald Clemen.

Two of these activities - the conference and the rehearsed readings - are of particular interest for this study because Australian theatre practitioners were strongly involved and the venue was carefully chosen. As a result, these activities had a considerable impact.

Despite the generally positive conditions for the staging of German drama, the only play

[1] Lübbren mentioned the positive influence of German film in the records of the Goethe-Institute and Susie Eisenhuth, in her review of *My Foot My Tutor* (*Sunday Telegraph*, 1.12.74), mentioned the screening of *The Fear of the Goalie* at the recent (Sydney) Film Festival. It would exceed the framework of this thesis, though, to analyse the influence of German film on the reception of drama in detail.

by a German-speaking playwright performed in the year, in which the Goethe-Institute in Sydney opened, was Handke's *My Foot My Tutor*. Consequently, Lübbren aimed at enlarging the proportion of German plays (and, to a degree, of Austrian and Swiss plays) by convincing local theatres to stage them. As Nimrod showed interest in his projects, but regarded a full production as too costly and risky, Lübbren suggested a series of rehearsed readings. According to him, this introduced a new practice to Australian theatres because this form of presentation had not been used in Sydney so far and it proved so successful that it was soon applied to Australian plays.[1]

Lübbren's initiative led to a series of readings between 1978 and 1982 which introduced 16 plays to Sydney audiences.[2] As the readings were carried out by professional actors, preceded by an introduction and followed by a discussion, Nimrod announced them under the title "workshops". According to Goethe-Institute records, audiences were mixed; amongst them were many young people, some traditional Nimrod supporters, students, theatre practitioners and about 10 per cent were Germans. The last figure shows that, in line with the cultural politics of the Goethe-Institute, the readings were clearly not perceived as cultural events for Germans but as initiatives targeted at Australian audiences. In general, the discussions which followed the readings were lively and indicated a keen interest in the plays presented.[1] The debate about Heiner Müller's plays demonstrates that, from an intercultural point of view, it was as important to provide a forum for discussion of the plays as to present the plays as such, because the discussions provided an occasion for voicing Australian perspectives on the plays presented.

Although it was ultimately up to Lübbren to decide on the choice of plays, the evenings were greatly influenced by two enthusiastic mediators of German drama in Australia, Gerhard Fischer and Michael Morley. As my previous analysis has shown, many Australian productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights have taken place at the instigation or in collaboration with mediators, who were especially interested in German drama and theatre. As Fischer and Morley were both academics, their involvement helped to maintain the strong link between universities and theatres, which I have pointed out earlier. Also, Fischer and Morley made a particularly consistent contribution to the production of German

[1] Personal letter, 3.9.99. Given the fact that La Mama and the APG used a predominantly experimental approach to plays, often in workshops, it seems unlikely that these companies had not discovered readings as a form of presentation earlier on.
[2] For a list of the readings, cf. Appendix III.

drama in Australia because they continued to spread the knowledge about German drama and to support productions in a number of ways after the series of readings was finished.[2]

Apart from Fischer and Morley, directors from Nimrod, such as John Gaden and Ken Horler, and the guest directors Martin Esslin and John Willett were involved in the play-readings.[3]

When comparing the choice of plays for the play-readings with those plays staged concurrently at Australian theatres, it becomes clear that Lübbren and the workshop organisers at Nimrod took into account audiences' horizons of expectations by taking up the interests of Australian theatre practitioners and spectators at the time. For instance, when, in Melbourne, Lindzee Smith directed Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Michi's Blood* at the APG and Robert Menzies *Men's Business* at La Mama, Sydney audiences were introduced to *Farmyard* under Lübbren's direction.[4] Of great importance was also the introduction of Heiner Müller's plays to Australian audiences. Before the first full production of one of his plays at Anthill in Melbourne, in 1982, Fischer directed rehearsed readings of *Cement* in 1978 and *Hamletmachine* as well as *Gundling's Life Frederick of Prussia Lessing's Sleep, Dream, Scream* in 1980. Lübbren recalls: "Müllers Stücken folgte eine angeregte Diskussion, da sie mit einer völlig neuen Art von Dramaturgie bekannt machten, die extrem dem in Australien vorherrschenden Naturalismus zuwiderläuft."[5] In a way, presenting an entirely non-naturalistic dramaturgy was a first step towards exposing Australians to German dramas which could be perceived as showing worthwhile alternatives to Australian naturalism. This line of thought was developed further through the weekend seminar analysed below.

Amongst the plays presented at the readings were also plays by the GRIPS theatre, through which Australians, who were still predominantly used to the production of fairy tales for young audiences, could discover new ways of making educational and entertaining

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[1] Records of the Goethe-Institute.

[2] Cf. my analysis of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project, which illustrates Fischer's ongoing interest in Heiner Müller. My analysis of the reception of Brecht has shown Morley's long standing active involvement in this area as well as his influence as scholar and critic.

[3] Cf. my analysis of Esslin directing Günter Grass' *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*; According to Lübbren (personal letter, 3.9.99), Willett's rehearsed reading of Georg Kaiser's *From Morning Till Midnight* came close to a full production; Willett had also translated much of the German text himself.

[4] *Michi's Blood* was staged in 1977, *Men's Business* and *Farmyard* in 1978.

[5] "Müller's plays were followed by a lively discussion because they introduced an entirely new kind of dramaturgy, which contrasts with the naturalism which dominates in Australia.", personal letter, 15.9.99.

theatre for young people.[1]

The readings were completed by a number of public lectures; in 1976, Lübbren lectured on "German contemporary drama" at the University of NSW and in 1978, Gero von Wilpert spoke at the Goethe-Institute about "Theatre during the Third Reich".[2]

It is difficult to measure the influence of the readings, discussions and lectures directly as they might have created an awareness of and interest in German-speaking drama which only materialised much later and in a subtle way.[3] One visible result was Nimrod's full production of Ödön von Horváth's *Tales From the Vienna Woods* three years after it had been shown as a rehearsed reading at the same theatre.[4] The records indicate that there were similar plans for Wedekind's *Marquis of Keith* and Strauß' *Big and Little*, which were not realised in the end.[5]

The other important event which Lübbren organised was a conference entitled "Beyond the Backyard", which took place in partnership with the School of Drama at the University of New South Wales. The conference analysed and questioned the role of naturalism in Australian playwriting and performance whilst looking for alternatives. Its title was based on a late 1950s statement by Englishman Hugh Hunt, who was retiring as a director of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust at the time. In *The Making of Australian Theatre*, Hunt raised the concern that the "backyard realism" of most Australian plays was limiting.[6] Although this statement was initially regarded as insensitive[7], it has been repeated in modified form by Australian academics with a close connection to Australian theatre, such as Peter Fitzpatrick and James McCaughey. In a special section on "Theatre in Australia" in the 1976 student magazine *Farrago*, McCaughey explained why naturalism dominated in Australian theatre and argued for challenging its predominance. He noted:

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[1] As explained in the introduction, children's and youth theatre would open another interesting avenue for this research which would exceed the framework of this thesis, however. In 1988, GRIPS also performed their famous musical, *Linie 1*, at the World Expo in Brisbane. Later, Fischer founded the Sydney Surf 'N' Theatre, which has staged a range of plays previously performed by GRIPS.

[2] Personal letter, 15.9.99.

[3] For instance, the influence on some actors and university students might have been a profound one, which only showed itself subtly in their future career.

[4] The low number of this play's Australian productions makes it difficult to judge whether its early performances are also connected to the 1977 London success, as was the case in the United States, cf. Jarka (1988), 83.

[5] Possible explanations for the plans not being realised are the changes at Nimrod in the 1980s, Lübbren leaving Sydney for a new placement in 1982 and financial pressures in the Australian theatre of the 1980s.

[6] Hunt (1960), 17.

[7] Some of this resentment is still present in Brisbane's introduction to a tome of Australian plays entitled "Beyond the Backyard". Brisbane did not refer to the conference, though, cf. Brisbane (1989).

> It is natural that the first phase of theatre in any community be fundamentally naturalistic - that is to say, intent on showing that the language of that community can become a theatre language and that its concerns and conflicts can be material for the stage. So the rise of Australian theatre was associated with the portrayal of things Australian on stage. But once that theatre is established, the portrayal of the society in which it is placed becomes a sterile, provincial pursuit. (...) We will only have an Australian theatre when some of our plays are set in China, when we penetrate through the surface of existence to disclose what otherwise might be hidden.[1]

McCaughey's statement confirms the initial mirroring function which I have attributed to naturalistic playwriting and staging in my analysis of the reception of Brecht; I have also pointed to the strong hold of naturalism resulting in the frequent rejection of other playwriting and staging styles.

In his 1979 study *After 'The Doll'*, Peter Fitzpatrick attributed the restrictive character of what he regarded as a combination of "naturalistic form and a concern for cultural definition", partly to "the extraordinary prevalence and durability of the combination."[2]

The above quotes demonstrate that the conference "Beyond the Backyard" was very much in tune with the period because it, too, dealt with "the limitations of backyard realism" and asked "whether by taking thought the Australian theatre can change". Yet, it tried to avoid Hunt's mistake of being "insensitive" by asking "whether it is desirable or sensible to look for change".[3] This precaution indicates that the conference organisers were aware of the contentious challenge this conference represented because, like in Hunt's case, foreigners were involved in questioning local culture and this could be easily interpreted along the lines of cultural cringe and patronising attitudes. Therefore, the organisers tried to be diplomatic in presenting the conference's aims. This diplomacy made it easier to attract a range of Australian scholars, actors and playwrights to the conference. Amongst the playwrights were Alex Buzo, Dorothy Hewett, Louis Nowra, Alan Seymour and David Williamson. It was a considerable achievement that the organisers managed to attract such a range of notable playwrights, including Williamson, a clear exponent of Australian naturalism. A critical analysis of naturalism was still a burning and contested issue at the time[4], and this becomes evident in the precautionary measures which were undertaken to ensure that participants felt uninhibited to voice their opinions. For this purpose, the seminar was "strictly in camera" and excluded press coverage, with applicants having to "state their

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[1] *Farrago*, vol. 54, no 21, 17.9.76, Melbourne University, 10.
[2] Fitzpatrick (1979), VII-VIII.
[3] Programme.
[4] McCallum noted that "the few playwrights who have at any time been prepared to admit to being naturalistic have been defensive about it.", McCallum (1981), 168.

background and the nature of their interest in the seminar".[1]

Despite the growing efforts to expand the stylistic range of Australian theatre, a critical analysis of naturalism was perceived as a challenge because it required the still young theatre culture to question part of its tradition and with it the majority of its aesthetic norms. In other words, it challenged Australian theatre practitioners to take a first step towards being "bold", as Kosky expressed it much later in his speech. As my analysis of the reception of Handke's plays has shown, the Goethe-Institute and the UNSW had chosen an appropriate time for hosting their conference because discussions about the relevance of theatre productions and plays were topical.

Another collaboration between Australians and Germans was the 1988 production of Botho Strauß's *Big and Little* under German director Harald Clemen for the Sydney Theatre Company. Previously, Lübbren had invited Clemen to travel around Australia in order to familiarise himself with Australian theatre and to find out "where and in which form [German] plays could be produced" in Australia.[2] This led to the 1988 production of *Big and Little* which, apart from Clemen and designer Peter Schulz, involved only Australians; Robyn Nevin, "one of Australia's few star stage actors"[3], played Lotte. Accordingly, Australian critics perceived the production as an intercultural collaboration with an Australian flavour.[4]

Australian critics appreciated its high standard. Their reviews show that the production achieved the Goethe-Institute's long term goal to expose Australians to non-naturalistic or "anti-naturalistic" productions[5], especially because Schulz created a set which differed greatly from what Australians were accustomed to.[6]

The production would have represented an entirely successful intercultural exchange, if organisers had not misjudged audience expectations in a big Australian mainstream theatre.

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[1] Programme notes. The exclusion of critics, though, might have led to an increased "antipathy between the critic and the artist", which, according to Brisbane, a London critic observed in Australia, in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 176.

[2] Personal letter, 3.9.99. At the time of the production, Lübbren had left Sydney.

[3] Parsons and Chance (1995), 398.

[4] Cf. Jeremy Eccles who speaks of the Goethe Institute's generosity [...] transporting a more recent peak of their theatre with director and designer, to the Drama Theatre, and allowing it to be localised through adaptation and acting.", *Australian Listener*, 15.10.88.

[5] Ken Healey, *Financial Review*, 7.10..88.

[6] This inspired Jeremy Eccles to suggest that "Australian designers should flock to see what might be achieved with, I presume, unworldly sums of money.", *Australian Listener*, 15.10.88; cf. also Brian Hoad's comment: "Here, stage design ceases to be mere decoration, appropriate or otherwise, and becomes a central protagonist.", *The Bulletin*, 18.10.88.

My analysis has shown that most spectators developed expectations in line with the repertoire and with the style of the theatre they attended.[1] As Australian mainstream theatres tended to favour conservative plays and production styles, the majority of innovative initiatives and productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights in Australia have taken place in alternative theatres.[2]

Thus, the earlier success of the Goethe-Institute's play readings was partly based on them connecting to Nimrod audiences. Most STC patrons, however, were used to a more conservative play and production style than that of Clemen's production. Frank Gauntlett, reviewing *Big and Little* for the *Daily Mirror*, was one of several critics to note:

> It may be that the Sydney Theatre Company and its associates at the Goethe Institute have over-estimated the public's capacity to respond to new, adventurous and demanding theatre - Sydney Opera House Drama Theatre is a large place to fill.[3]

In 1985, when Jenny Kemp directed *Big and Little* for the STC in Adelaide, audiences reacted similarly. Hector Maclean, who translated the text for this production, remembered a divided audience. He noted: "On the first night, nearly half of the audience left during the performance, the other half stood and applauded in the end, which is really rare in Australia." According to him, it was "the avant-garde nature of the play that made it a challenge (...). It was not very well received by the 'mainstream-audience'".[4]

As in the previous production of *Big and Little* at the STC in Adelaide in 1985[1], it appears that mainly the critics and a restricted number of spectators appreciated Strauß' play in Sydney.

Apart from the misconception regarding potential audiences of *Big and Little*, however, the above initiatives by the Goethe-Institute illustrate how the promotion of German culture in Australia could work effectively because it was based on the collaboration with local partners and took account of local expectations. With the help of committed individuals, these activities added a German perspective to the strong British and American influence on

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[1] My analysis of the Mudrooroo / Müller Project will show in more detail how the venue and framework in which a production takes place influence its reception.

[2] John Ellis made a similar observation in a personal interview (27.3.00): "Many innovative productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights have been performed on the edges of the Melbourne theatre scene. For a long time, there was no exchange of ideas between Melbourne mainstream theatre and the fringe scene."

[3] *Daily Mirror*, 4.10.88; cf. also *Financial Review*, 7.10..88, *Sydney Review*, October.

[4] Personal interview, 25.1.97. May-Brit Akerholt based her translation for Clemen's production on Maclean's.

Australian theatre, including the production of plays by German-speaking playwrights. The initiatives contributed to the Australian search for a greater range of styles in Australian theatre at the time.

In relation to my study, the above initiatives are also of value in two other respects. Firstly, the fact that Nimrod preferred rehearsed readings over full productions of plays points to the growing problem of lack of funding in Australia, which has restricted or interfered with many innovative productions. The fact that Nimrod played to an average 75 per cent capacity between 1970 and 1976, "a record rarely equalled before or since"[2], and nevertheless had to worry about financial issues shows the constraints which financial consideration started to put on creative work in Australian theatre.[3] This factor became even more important in the 1980s.

Secondly, attendance rates at the readings reflect general developments in Australian theatre. While Lübbren described audiences during the first years as very enthusiastic, he noted a fading interest in 1982. In the following year, the readings were not revived, which was probably partly due to the fact that Lübbren had left Sydney for a new placement with the Goethe-Institute, partly due to lack of interest. My analysis of the reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights will show that a combination of funding cuts and the definite end of the New Wave movement in its original form led to an attempt to preserve the achievements of the 1970s, which did not leave much room for developing new areas of interest. Although the Goethe-Institute organised rehearsed readings after 1982, these did not become a regular event as in the past.

13. PRODUCTION AND RECEPTION OF PLAYS IN THE 1980S

13.1 Translations and adaptations of German plays in the 1980s

In his book *After 'The Doll'*, Peter Fitzpatrick described the achievements of the New Wave as "very vulnerable".[1] The way in which Australian theatre developed in the 1980s, after the demise of the New Wave, confirmed Fitzpatrick's observation. After a period which Hibberd characterised as a mood of *fin de siècle ennui*, caused by "a weird strain of

[1] Cf. James Waites' review for the *National Times*, 26.7.85. Waites wrote about *Kid's Stuff* and *Big and Little*: " two of the best shows the city has seen in ages closed recently without having attracted the audiences that they deserved."
[2] Cf. Parsons and Chance (1995), 407.
[3] Financial support for the arts declined when Fraser replaced Whitlam as Prime Minister in 1975.

uncertainty"[2], much of the innovative energy in Australian theatre appeared to have lost its momentum. The exceptions were areas of theatre, which had been marginalised so far, such as groups concerned with feminist, ethnic and community-based issues.

While some of Brecht's plays were still included in the steadily growing community theatre, general conditions for staging European drama were unfavourable. This was aggravated by financial cuts in the funding of productions and to theatre generally, including cuts to institutions involved in the teaching of drama.[3] At the time, the Australia Council emphasised the funding of community theatre through the specially created Community Arts Board. The limited remainder of funding available for other areas of theatre had to be shared by a greater number of companies competing for financial support than before. Melbourne director Wendy Joseph illustrates the adverse conditions for performing European drama when she recalls:

> [During the 1980s] I was interested in directing Strauß' *Big and Little*, Kroetz' *Men's Business* and Weiss' *Marat / Sade*, but I could not obtain any funding. At the time, the Australia Council told me the policy was 'Australian plays first'. I was told that doing European work was left to Anthill Theatre.[4]

Consequently, it was nearly impossible to obtain funding for one-off productions of drama by German-speaking playwrights because, at least in Melbourne, the already restricted resources for foreign plays were channelled into a single company. European plays were not regarded as important enough to be performed in several venues at once; in other words, European plays were considered to be of marginal interest and relevance to Australian audiences, which also becomes obvious in the graph showing the number of productions in the 1980s.[5] It is likely that, in the case of German plays, this general disinterest in European plays was reinforced by specific prejudices towards German drama. According to Nowra, Australian audiences do not take easily to German dramas because, from their point of view, they "seem too formal, too one paced and seem to broadcast their

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[1] Fitzpatrick (1979), VII.

[2] "Proscenium Arch Blues", 413, in: Holloway (1981), 411-418.

[3] In a personal interview (27.3.00), John Ellis pointed to "the amalgamation of institutions involved in the teaching of drama. For instance, Rusden State College was amalgamated and received considerably less funding for its drama activities." For a more detailed analysis of the conditions cf. my introduction to the reception of Brecht in the 1980s.

[4] Personal Interview, 1.3.00. Joseph directed Kroetz' *Request Programme* at La Mama in 1991 and was supported by the Goethe-Institute. It bears repeating that even Anthill had a difficult stand with critics already expressing in the 1980s "that in times when Australian theatre is in danger of being wiped out, presenting European plays is a luxury we cannot afford", *National Times*, 12.9.82. Regarding the binary of "Australian / non-Australian" theatre in government funding, cf. Fotheringham, "Boundary Riders and Claim Jumpers", 34, in: Kelly (1998), 20-37.

[5] Cf. Appendix I.

change of tone in a laborious fashion, and there seems to be no break in their intensity".[1] This negative perception is aggravated by "the sense that German theatre lacks humour, is plodding, earnest and didactic".[2] The latter prejudice might be strongly linked to the predominant role Brecht's work has played in the Australian reception of German drama. My previous analysis has shown that reviewers repeatedly attributed these characteristics to Brecht's plays, their performances and Brechtian theatre in general.

Against this background, it is astonishing that Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg*, Wedekind's *Lulu* and Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* were staged in the early 1980s.

The production of *Minna von Barnhelm* at the MTC in 1982 came about because Australian playwright Ray Lawler, who worked as Literary Adviser to the MTC at the time, was aware that Australian audiences tended "to confine their theatre going to a limited number of well worn English favourites, where the classics are concerned" and he tried "to extent the MTC repertoire".[3] Lawler was one Australian playwright at the time who opened Australian mainstream theatre to foreign influences.

In his adaptation, he aimed to bring out what he perceived to be "beyond period humour in the concentration on honour as a male preserve, which women are asked to respect, even if to do so may be to their own disadvantage." Lawler added: "I could see elements of the present day clash of gender boundaries and distinctions, for instance."[4]

Lawler used a 19th century English translation of *Minna von Barnhelm* for his adaptation. He explained: "Its dry as dust literal quality freed me to expand on what I felt to be the theatrical qualities of the piece." He felt that the question of the translation being out of copyright was a minor one, but that this helped "to urge the lesser financial risk of putting on an unknown (to local audiences) foreign classic" and that he "further urged this by doing the adaptation as a work of love".[5] Lawler received some assistance from the head of the MTC technical department who was German and knew the play in the original. This detail anticipates the fact that intercultural collaboration within national structures can bear fruitful

[1] Personal letter, November 97. This preconception is illustrated by Tim Lloyd's review of Nowra's production of *The Prince of Homburg*, in which he called the play "an arduous play that demands a lot from the audience in order to be rewarding", *Adelaide Advertiser*, 4.10.82.
[2] Personal letter, November 97.
[3] Personal letter, 14.6.00.
[4] Personal letter, 14.6.00.
[5] Personal letter, 14.6.00. Lawler added: "I would emphasise, however, that the question of a copyright fee would not have deterred the Company from presenting German classics, given a suitable play and translation."

results, an observation which participants in the conference "Australia - Europe. Cultural Crossroads - Lasting Values and Limitations"[1] would make four years later.

Lawler was right in perceiving the challenge of this project as consisting in "attracting an audience to an unfamiliar play (...), in the local sense".[2] My detailed analysis of Sharman's and Nowra's productions will show that productions, which tried to raise the interest of Australian mainstream audiences in pre-20th century German playwrights, had a difficult task. Lawler was one of a small number of Australian theatre practitioners and playwrights who made this kind of production possible through personal commitment.

The MTC programme for 1982 clearly indicates the company's concerns when staging the play because the description of Lawler's production attempted to avoid the possible dismissal of the play as an irrelevant worn out classic by announcing it as follows: "MTC is proud to introduce this wise and substantial play in a glittering new version by Ray Lawler."[3]

Critics' reactions to this adaptation and production were mixed. While Neil Jillett, in *The Age*, responded favourably to the theme, enjoying "its sprightly feminism, especially in the portrait of the charming Minna"[4], Jessica De Siso, in the *National Times*, criticised "the attempt to garner as much lightheartedness as possible from the original" as "a little forced"[5]. Garrie Hutchinson's review for *Theatre Australia* was overshadowed by his anger and disappointment about the demise of the APG and the planned destruction of the Pram Factory building at the time. Against the background of a major alternative theatre being under threat in Melbourne, he wondered "why anyone would bother blowing the dust off this one [Lessing's play]".[6] What Hutchinson did not take into account, though, was that an extension of the repertoire in mainstream companies, if successful, could have contributed, to a certain extent, to a rapprochement between Australian mainstream and alternative theatre in the long run. As my study will show, a greater openness in mainstream theatres was needed in order to make the boundaries between Australian mainstream and alternative theatres easier to overcome. If Australian mainstream companies were ready to expand their repertoire beyond the traditional this would open up new avenues in Australian theatre.

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[1] As reported in Heibert and Merschmeier (1986).
[2] Personal letter, 14.6.00.
[3] MTC programme 1982.
[4] *The Age*, 18.2.82.
[5] *National Times*, 28.2.82.
[6] *Theatre Australia*, April 82.

In Adelaide, Jim Sharman and Louis Nowra were trying to do exactly this. The production of Wedekind's *Lulu* in 1981 and Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg* in 1982 at the State Theatre Company of South Australia (STC) came into being through a coincidence of fortunate circumstances. Even before Jim Sharman became director of the STC in 1983, during an "interregnum period"[1], Sharman was encouraging productions which anticipated the spirit of his creative work to come. In these productions, he collaborated with Australian playwright Louis Nowra, who later became his "literary manager and right-hand man"[2]. Both men were enjoying considerable support. Sharman successfully directed the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1982. Similarly, Radic reports that "Nowra's star was clearly on the ascendant at the time".[3] It was this conjunction of favourable factors that enabled them to premier *The Prince of Homburg* and *Lulu* in a theatrical environment otherwise reluctant to embrace European plays.

An article on "European influences [on Australian theatre]" in the *Companion to Theatre in Australia* attempts to explain why European plays in general are regarded as a challenge to Australian theatre:

> There remains a strong streak of anti-intellectualism in the Australian theatre, both with the audiences and the profession; and plays that can find a bond with audiences without making too great a leap from a foreign context, are probably the most successful. Audiences are generally incurious about what they do not easily understand.[4]

However, my study has uncovered the need to differentiate between audiences in Australian mainstream and alternative theatres, as illustrated by responses to Handke's plays in the 1970s and to initiatives by the Goethe-Institute in Sydney. Audiences' predominantly conservative expectations of mainstream theatre were reinforced by funding policies which increasingly demanded 'relevant' productions in the sense of being relevant to the majority of theatre patrons. Adelaide audiences had the reputation of being particularly conservative.[1]

Despite these limits, Sharman took the risk and supported the production of *The Prince of Homburg* and *Lulu*. This foreshadowed his work as artistic director of the STC because,

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[1] Until then, Adelaide theatre had been dominated by Colin George. Radic reports that during the "brief interregnum marked by acrimonious debate about the company's artistic standards and choice of plays, public feelings were running high", in: Radic (1991), 183.
[2] L. Radic, *The Age*, 10.6.81.
[3] Radic (1991), 188.
[4] Katharine Brisbane, Tony Mitchell and Anne Murch, in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 216.

during his position at the STC, he aimed to move "right away from the British rep. tradition with its diet of Shaw, Wilde, Coward, Chekhov and Sheridan, laced with light contemporary comedies and Ben Travers farces"[2] and to include Australian plays, classics and European plays instead.

Aware of the provocative nature of his programme, in an interview with Leonard Radic for *The Age*, he admitted "that there are probably limits to what Adelaide audiences are prepared to take" and Radic reported that Sharman expected that by the time his three years "as company director are up, those limits will have been reached."[3] This implies that he did not rely upon educating his audiences. In the same interview, clearly he was aware of the financial constraints on theatre in the current climate, without bowing to those additional pressures.[4]

Thus, Sharman's work illustrates a way of realising Kosky's demand to be "bold" with respect to unprogressive attitudes. In one sense, though, in the 1980s, Sharman went a step further than Kosky. Although Kosky did not make it explicit, implicit to Kosky's ideal of creating "bold" productions with a strong audience connection is an audience open to innovative and challenging work. In fact, Kosky has never worked within the structures of mainstream theatre over an extended period of time and consequently has never faced the constant problem of being measured against box office results.[5] Sharman, however, tried to realise a bold approach within the structures of mainstream theatre.[6]

In Nowra, Sharman found a playwright who had shown similar perseverance by defending his stand as an "internationalist" playwright and refusing to restrict himself to an Australian setting and to Australian issues. John McCallum's article on the "Cosmopolitanism in the

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[1] Cf. Katharine Brisbane's review, *National Times*, 14.6.81. Cf. also my earlier remarks about audience reactions towards Jenny Kemp's production of *Big and Little*. In his retrospective review of *Lulu*, Peter Ward painted the STC at the time as "a comforting, conventional regional theatre company", in: Ward (1992).

[2] L. Radic, "Lighthouse and its Keeper", 183, in: Radic (1991), 182-194. Sharman also tried to create a permanent acting ensemble, an attempt which has failed repeatedly in the Australian theatre history.

[3] *The Age*, 15.11.82.

[4] Radic reported that Sharman "admits that if he were to make one criticism of his own programming, it would be that it is possibly more suited to times of prosperity than to times which are financially more limiting.", *The Age*, 15.11.82. In the 1970s, Sharman had shown similar persistence when he produced plays by Patrick White thus creating a new awareness of White's dramatic work.

[5] Kosky's long-term work was with Gilgul, his Melbourne company known for a trilogy of Jewish plays. He directed the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1996. He has created individual productions for mainstream companies.

[6] This also involved the organisation of the Lighthouse (formerly STC). Sharman engaged "a company of 13 actors, all of one-year contracts" and he decided "to run productions in repertory.", Leonard Radic, *The Age*, 11.10.82.

plays of Nowra and Sewell" observes that, even in 1984, it was still "an issue that Louis Nowra and Stephen Sewell set their plays in places like Russia, Paraguay and West Germany".[1] This confirms that an interest in German plays was probably equally provocative to a number of Australians in a climate with such a strong focus on local plays, including a local setting.

Despite this, Nowra was ready to work on an adaptation of Wedekind's *Lulu* plays, which Sharman directed in 1981. In the following year, Nowra directed his adaptation of Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg*.

Apart from not fitting the criterion of localness, these two plays and productions presented a number of challenges on various levels. While *The Prince of Homburg* has been claimed by various ideologies, including by National Socialism[2], and has aroused much critical controversy, the *Lulu* plays carried philological problems as well as a reception history marked by censorship issues and overloaded with preconceptions regarding the main character.

Here, I shall concentrate on the Australian production and reception of the *Lulu* plays because, apart from specific problems connected to these texts, they exemplify wider issues regarding the production and reception of German drama at the time.

When Nowra agreed to adapt the plays - after his interest in Wedekind had been raised during a stay in Munich[3] - he accepted a complex task. Patrice Pavis has pointed out that the role of the translator exceeds the mere linguistic challenges of translating a dramatic text between two languages. The translator must mediate between different situations of

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[1] McCallum (1984), 286. According to McCallum, this was due to a continuing "pervasive influence of (...) theatrical nationalism", in: McCallum (1984), 286.

[2] According to Radic, the company had "been accused of being 'neo-Facists'" for staging *The Prince of Homburg*, *The Age*, 11.10.82. Radic himself, however, used this short remark, which was not the main focus of his article, as part of the heading, entitling his review "Fascism and a Farce", with the latter referring to Bill Harding's *Silver Lining*. Thus, Radic created sensationalistic interest in his article by making use of the fact that Germany's Nazi past has been imprinted on the mind of Australians until today.

[3] In 1976. In Nowra's own work, further connections to German playwriting can be found. Although Nowra himself claims not to have been influenced by Handke's *Kaspar* when writing *Inner Voices* (Personal letter, November 97) this connection has been made by others (cf. Rex Cramphorn, in: Holloway (1981), 403-407). In *The Golden Age*, he made his characters witness a production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* and he generally considers Kleist as a major influence on his work, Personal letter, November 97. Furthermore, Nowra translated Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* which was directed in 1980 by Richard Wherrett for the STC. Cf. also Nowra (1982 (May)).

enunciation in the source and the target culture as well as different cultural backgrounds.[1] Ideally, a translator would work with the stage in mind, therefore taking into account how the close connections between word, rhythm and gestures can be communicated by the actor's body to the target language and culture.[2]

In the specific case of translating the *Lulu* plays, Nowra was faced with philological problems also. The commonly used German version of *Lulu* at the time, consisting of *Der Erdgeist* (*Earth Spirit*) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*), has been based on a version by Wedekind's daughter Kadidja, in which she had turned the two plays into a double tragedy.[3] Ruth Florack has described the resulting difficulties as follows:

> Beide Texte [sind] als Bühnenstücke mit einem je unterschiedlichen dramaturgischen Gestus entstanden, so daß der grotesk-melodramatische *Erdgeist*, ein Sittenstück, und die makabre Naturalismus-Parodie *Die Büchse der Pandora* höchstens der kolportagehaften Handlung nach zusammenpassen. [4]

Florack reported that this led to many reviewers criticising a discrepancy between the first and the second part of most of the productions[5], which Nowra's adaptation and Sharman's production did not manage to iron out.[6]

It was only in 1990 that Hartmut Vinçon provided a new critical edition of *Die Büchse der Pandora. Eine Monstertragödie*[7] which was based on the original version from 1894. This version finally provided a text which was consistent in tone. When it premiered in 1988 under Peter Zadek's direction at the Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, it enabled a production which was "a homogenous whole"[8] without being one-dimensional. This raw original version, with its different vocabulary, tone and emphasis in plot and character to Kandidja's

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[1] "On ne traduit pas simplement un texte linguistique en un autre, on confronte et on fait communiquer des situations d'énonciation et des cultures hétérogènes, séparées par l'espace et le temps.", in: Pavis (1987), 419.

[2] Cf. "Théorie du verbo-corps", in: Pavis (1987), 422. Cf. also Kruger (1985 (April)), 34-35. Given the differences in actor training I have pointed to in the context of the reception of Brecht, it would be interesting to analyse possible distinctions between Australian and German acting styles. However, this would exceed the framework of this thesis and would require additional sources to the ones used for this study.

[3] Cf. Florack (1996), 4.

[4] Florack (1996), 5-6. "Both texts have originated as plays with different dramaturgical *Gestus*; as a result, the grotesque-melodramatic *Earth-Spirit*, a play of manners, and the macabre *Pandora's Box*, which parodies naturalism, only are held together by a sensationalist plot."

[5] Florack (1996), 5-6.

[6] Cf. Kippax's (*SMH*, 23.7.81), Morley's (*Theatre Australia*, July 81) and Radic's review (*The Age*, 10.6.81).

[7] Wedekind (1990a).

[8] "Plötzlich liegt die eigentliche *Lulu* auf dem Tisch (...). Das Ding ist aus einem Guß, klar sauber, ganz nah bei *Frühlings Erwachen*. Fünf Akte. Ein Abend, nicht ein zusammengestoppeltes Stück, das eigentlich sieben Stunden laufen sollte.", in: Zadek (1990), 346.

version[1] presented a de-mythologised Lulu. Moreover, Vinçon and Zadek had managed to free the production from "*fin-de-siècle*-sensuousness" and "the bombast of the Wilhelminian Era".[2]

However, Nowra, and Sharman indirectly, still had to deal with the original texts: two different plays, whose "unwieldiness" struck Nowra. In an interview with Michael Morley, he noted: "you feel that there's a play in there somewhere, but it just has to be ferreted out."[3] For this reason, Nowra translated the entire source text and then edited it.[4] In a way, Nowra attempted to create an English version, which reinstalled the raw original German version before the final version had been published, by focusing on "the brutality of the way the people communicate, their bluntness and straightforwardness, the lack of reserve"[5]. At the same time, though, Nowra tried "to pare away irrelevances in terms of the dialogue", which, ultimately, affected the development of the plot. According to Morley, the plot-line became "even more episodic and disjointed than the original", confusing and bemusing the audience.[6]

Given the fact that Nowra's translation was the basis for *Lulu's* premiere on an Australian mainstream stage[7], clarity would have facilitated Wedekind's successful introduction. It seems that in reinterpreting and reshaping the *Lulu* plays, Nowra had tackled a task which had eluded a number of German directors and theatre practitioners before him.[8] In a personal letter, he admitted: "The real problem was that I didn't know what I was after in my adaptation. It wasn't confronting enough like the original play must have been."[9]

One of Nowra's intentions while dealing with the figure of Lulu was "to make her a little

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[1] Rischbieter (1988). 8.

[2] Rischbieter (1988). 8. It is not clear which translation Peter Wilkins used for his production with the Narrabundah College at Hawk Theatre, Canberra in 1992. Neither the entry in *ANZTR* (Nov. 92, 54) nor Ann Nugent's review for the *Canberra Times* (7.11.92) provided this information.

[3] Morley (1981 (June)-b).

[4] Personal letter, November97.

[5] Morley (1981 (June)-b). In this respect, Nowra's interest in *Lulu* corresponded to his general interest in language as an instrument of power and the search for what might lie behind the conventions of civilised behaviour.

[6] *Theatre Australia*, July 81, vol.5, no.11; Similarly, H.G. Kippax reported "incongruities eliciting the wrong kind of laughter", *SMH*, 23.7.81.

[7] Sydney audiences had the opportunity to see an earlier production of *Lulu* by the Rocks Players in 1979. Apart from this, productions had been restricted to performances of *Spring Awakening* at institutions teaching drama. The staged reading of *The Marquis of Keith*, directed by Morley , has been mentioned earlier.

[8] Cf. Florack's overview over German productions of *Lulu*, in: Florack (1996).

[9] Personal letter, November 97.

more 'real'".[1] In an adaptation that made do without easy local references, this allowed local audiences, predominantly used to naturalistic plays, access to the foreign playwright. It was also a means of contravening the prevailing image of Lulu as a mystic "femme fatale, a vampire, a predator"[2], without reducing her multifaceted character. According to Rainer Lübbren, Judy Davis in the title role managed to convey a complex and enigmatic Lulu, as intended by Wedekind, without critics noticing.[3] Most of them interpreted Lulu as "love's sleepwalker"[4] and saw the production as part of Sharman's "interpretation of dreams"[5]. Others panned the production "and Judy Davis for failing to be Raquel Welch".[6]

The production's emphasis on "the interpretation of dreams" rather than on "the interpretation of reality"[7] might have been one of the reasons why most critics did not comment on whether they considered the play's content as a provocation for contemporary Adelaide audiences. The only exceptions in this respect were Morley and Radic. The latter remarked about Sharman's choice of plays in general that "Adelaidians who want safe, undemanding British rep-style will have to look elsewhere".[8] Morley was the only one who referred directly to Wedekind when he commented in an interview with Jim Sharman:

> To Australian audiences, the name of Frank Wedekind (1864-1918) probably suggests little. Yet he is one of the most distinctive voices in 20th Century European theatre, an author who shocked society with his revolutionary social and sexual attitudes."[9]

Widely differing reviews make it difficult to assess the actual production; the only common feature of most of the reviews was a recognition that "the Playhouse audience experienced a genuine shock of the new".[10] In their assessment of the production, reviews ranged from Morley criticising that "the almost mythical and quasi-metaphysical aspect of the characters receive[d] little attention"[11] to Brisbane regretting that "the production [was] so self-contained, so like a fairy tale", taking the audience "into its own exotic world, which bears on no real locality, no time and place"[12]. Moreover, the great differences in critical responses do not appear to be due to the production solely but to the majority of the critics

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[1] Personal letter, November 97.
[2] Radic, *The Age*, 10.6.81.
[3] Personal letter, 15.9.99.
[4] Radic, *The Age*, 10.6.81.
[5] Brisbane, *National Times*, 14.6.81.
[6] Alan Roberts, *The Advertiser*, as reported by Brisbane, *National Times*, 14.6.81.
[7] Brisbane, *National Times*, 14.6.81.
[8] *The Age*, 10.6.81.
[9] Morley, 1981a (June), 20.
[10] Ward (1992), 100.
[11] *Theatre Australia*, July 81.
[12] *National Times*, 14.6.81.

also being unfamiliar with the German text.[1] It is also astonishing that none of the critics referred to Alban Berg's operatic version in the daily papers although, elsewhere, this opera was called a "recent success".[2]

For the purpose of my study, however, an individual production's success or failure is not of utmost importance.

It is significant, though, that a production without general approval prevents the play and, to a certain degree, the playwright, from being considered for any further productions in a mainstream theatre.[3] Firstly, this means that a translator or adaptor does not have the ideal opportunities of reworking and adjusting his text to the target theatre and audience.[4]

Secondly, the fact that plays by German-speaking playwrights usually get one chance only to prove their potential interest for Australian audiences, has serious consequences for their overall production and reception. Staging those plays which have been barely or never presented on the Australian stage previously involves a high risk. This results in the Australian production and reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights focusing predominantly on 20th century playwrights[5], presumably, because they are perceived to relate more easily to contemporary Australian audiences than earlier plays. If isolated productions out of this range take place, they cannot rely on audiences being familiar with the tradition of playwriting in the German language.[6] Also, this affects the understanding of 20th century plays, which, in one way or another, build on previous traditions and thereby partly explains why audiences have the impression that some European plays need to make "too great a leap from a foreign context"[7] to be meaningful.

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[1] While Kippax freely admitted "I don't know the originals" (*SMH*, 23.7.81) most critics did not provide information about their knowledge. The only critic familiar with both languages and texts appeared to be Morley, cf. *Theatre Australia*, June 81 and Morley (1981 (June)-b).

[2] Richard Coleman, in an article about the rehearsed reading of *The Marquis of Keith*, directed by Morley, which was part of the series of readings organised by the Goethe-Institute, *SMH*, 26.5.81. Sharman explained that Nowra had taken into account "Pabst's screenplay and Berg's libretto", in: Morley (1981 (June)-a), 21.

[3] The next production of *Lulu* was in 1992 by Narrabundah College, Canberra, under the direction of Peter Wilkins.

[4] Brecht, for example, was fortunate enough to be able to adjust his translation of *Galileo* according to previous reception; cf. Kruger (1985 (April)), 38-40.

[5] Nowra, however, advocated the production of plays less known to Australian audiences, such as plays belonging to 19th century French realism, "a Kleist play, or one from German Romanticism", in: Davidson (1980), 484.

[6] Cf. my earlier quotation of Katherine Sturak's remark referring to Anthill's work: "Here [in Australia], to a great degree, one is at the level of 'introducing' classics to the public whereas in Europe one is interpreting them.", Personal letter, November 94.

[7] Parsons and Chance (1995), 216.

As a result of the general reluctance to stage plays by German-speaking playwrights on a mainstream stage, the majority of such performances have been and continue to be relegated to the alternative or "fringe theatre"[1].

On a wider scale, this leads to a reinforcement of the already inflexible structures prevailing in Australian mainstream theatres.[2] Reactions against Sharman's plan to "take a mainstream theatre and give it a new approach" show that some critics did not endorse this undertaking from its very beginnings. Thus, some articles related to his production of *Lulu* indicated that their authors preferred productions which appealed to the general theatre community. Radic's choice of heading, "Something for everyone"[3], and Kippax' "*Lulu* is not for all tastes"[4] anticipated that, in the end, the criterion of general relevance would stand in the way of a more flexible and innovative mainstream Adelaide theatre. Brisbane and Morley, however, were carefully optimistic about Sharman's project.[5]

Consequently, it would be naïve to apply Kosky's approach to mainstream productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights without taking into consideration the nature of Australian mainstream theatre. My previous analysis and the above study have shown that plays by German-speaking playwrights will not find a place in mainstream theatres unless their policies allow for a greater variety of plays and include innovative productions. This, however, would require taking greater risks and providing increased funding. Yet, these decisions would need to be preceded by an insight like Nowra's that "to survive, any culture needs a breath of fresh air from other cultures".[1]

13.2 Theater Heute *reports on Australian theatre in 1986*

Nowra's conviction was shared by Frank Heibert and Michael Merschmeier who wrote the first and, so far, only report about Australian theatre in the prominent German theatre

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[1] Nowra noted: "Cultural influences from Germany seem more at home in 'fringe theatre'", personal letter, November 97.

[2] John Ellis confirmed: "For a long time, there was no exchange of ideas between Melbourne mainstream theatre and the fringe scene. When I was asked some years ago how many successful directors from the fringe scene had successfully moved into mainstream theatre I could not name a single one. This has only happened very recently and to a limited extent.", personal interview, 27.3.00.

[3] *The Age*, 15.11.82. Radic concluded: "Whether Adelaide is quite ready for it [something new and adventurous] is another question altogether."; Jo Peoples reports that, John Gaden, "appointed artistic director of the STC in 1986, faced the task of improving the company's prestige and finances.", in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 556.

[4] *SMH*, 23.7.81.

[5] Cf. Morley (1981 (June)-a): Brisbane concluded: "Sharman knows what he wants and he is going the right way about getting it. Despite itself, Adelaide might even get to like it.", *National Times*, 14.6.81.

magazine *Theater Heute.*[2] After attending a conference entitled "Australia - Europe. Cultural Crossroads - Lasting Values and Limitations"[3] they endorsed the participants' conclusion that Australia would benefit from ongoing exposure to European cultures, not only in Europe but on Australian theatre stages also.[4] They also argued in favour of an exchange between Australian and German theatre practitioners which could lead to "a new quality for both sides [involved]".[5] However, as the article was not intended, primarily, to argue for intercultural exchange, the authors did not define exactly what they meant by "quality". Possibly, part of the enriching experience they had in mind was that artists from both countries could gain deeper insight into matters concerning both countries, such as considering culture as a means of creating or enhancing national identity. Heibert and Merschmeier interpreted the recent building of arts centres and theatre complexes as a means of self-expression and confidence, and they drew a parallel to the German tradition of regarding culture as a way of enhancing national identity: "Die Erkenntnis, daß Kultur ein Medium nationaler Identität sein könnte - für Mitglieder der deutschen 'Kulturnation' kein neuer Gedanke - (...)".[6]

In an article published in the previous year, entitled "Überlegungen zur Hermeneutik der Germanistik in Australien"[7], Walter Veit pointed out this common concern about national identity as part of a number of experiences shared by Australians and Germans. Yet, although many Australians ascribe an important role to culture as a means of contributing to a national identity[8], it seems as though Australian theatre practitioners have not yet explored this common concern between Australians and Germans. At least none of my sources indicated an awareness of this parallel between the Australian and German cultures. Neither

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[1] Davidson (1980), 484.
[2] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986).
[3] The conference took place in Melbourne and was organised by the Victorian Ministry of the Arts together with the French, German and Italian cultural institutes.
[4] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 8. Some of the practical advantages of an Australian - German collaboration in Australian theatre have been illustrated by Lawler's *Minna von Barnhelm*.
[5] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 19. "Wechselseitiger Kulturaustausch könnte für beide Seiten eine neue Qualität begründen."
[6] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 13. "That culture can be a medium to create national identity [is] not a new insight for members of the German 'cultural nation'".
[7] Walter Veit, "Überlegungen zur Hermeneutik der Germanistik in Australien. Aspekte eines Paradigmas interkultureller Literaturwissenschaft". 321, in: Wierlacher (1985), 314-326. Cf. also Veit (1999).
[8] Cf. Louise Adler's question directed at Martin Portus when reviewing performances in Australia: "If you look at the performing arts as a whole, do you think that we are making some progress in creating a national cultural identity, an Australian point of view?", in: "Arts Today", ABC, Radio National, 2.12.96. Cf. also Nugent (1999). According to the recent Saatchi & Saatchi report, "75 per cent [of Australians interviewed] say the arts help them define and express their cultural identity.", *The Australian*, 22.6.00.

have theatre practitioners used Leslie Bodi's observations concerning common features in the Austrian and Australian national consciousness.[1]

Heibert and Merschmeier did not expand on such considerations. The main purpose of their article was to introduce Australian theatre and bring a particular awareness to German readers: that the 'tyranny of distance' does not only apply to Australia's disconnection from Europe but that it can also impede qualified information about Australian theatre from reaching Germany. In this context, it is worthwhile recalling a basic characteristic of theatre performance, mentioned earlier, which consists of it being an art form which does not travel easily. The generally poor state of information about Australian theatre in Germany resulted in Heibert and Merschmeier feeling the need to dispel some of the prejudices associated with Australian theatre.[2] They offered a detailed introduction to the Australian theatre scene of the period, which took into account the state differences, and completed their impressions with an overview of historical milestones in Australian theatre and drama.

They entitled their article "Die Wirklichkeit des Regenbogens", thus referring to an exotic image of Australia summarised in the question "Känguruhs, Koalas, aber Kultur?".[3] In another respect, the title was alluding to Phillip Adams' ironic philippica for the opening of the "Cultural Crossroads" conference, in which he suggested, tongue in cheek, a new Australian flag, which would depict a rainbow as "a perfect symbol for multiculturalism" and would replace the dominance of 'white' Australians.[4] Heibert and Merschmeier considered Adams' speech important enough to include it in an abbreviated version in their article. This was appropriate because, amongst other things, Adams' speech explained to German readers the concepts of multiculturalism and cultural cringe. In their article, Heibert and Merschmeier stressed that, from their point of view, Australian feelings of inferiority regarding Australian cultural achievements in the theatre or of being a "mirror-image of Europe" was unwarranted. In their eyes, Australian theatre companies, especially alternative companies, compared favourably to German theatre companies. To a large extent, the

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[1] Cf. Bodi (1995a), Bodi (1995b). In 1994, Melbourne audiences could see the results of a successful collaboration between theatre practitioners from Melbourne and Vienna when *Woyzeck* was staged at the IRAA Theatre (D: Renato Cuocolo, dramaturge: Martina Winkel, music: Otto Lechner). The production did not focus directly on aspects of national identity, though.

[2] For an overview of Australian drama performed in Germany until 1979 cf. Wolf (1982), 34-36.

[3] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 6.

[4] Having pointed to other countries who have chosen a celestial symbol for their flag, Adams explained: "[Der Regenbogen] gäbe doch eine wunderbare Farbe ab, als Aufgliederung des Weißen in die anderen Farben: ein perfektes Symbol für Multikulturalismus.", Phillip Adams, "Australien heute", translated by Frank Heibert, in: Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 12-13.

authors attributed their positive impression of alternative theatres to the fact that these represented "Reiches Armes Theater" which managed to create lively performances with very little funding.[1] My study, however, has shown that the creativity in Australian alternative theatres had reasons more complex than the funding shortages. Also, the authors were aware of their tendency to see the positive effects of funding problems in Australian theatre, because of their own dissatisfaction with publicly funded German municipal theatres: with the *Stadttheater*.[2] In order to present a more balanced view, they acknowledged that Australian actors made a substantial indirect financial contribution through accepting their low wages and that it was difficult for companies to finance a large part of their expenses through the box office.

Closely connected to the differences in funding structure were, and continue to be, other major organisational differences between Australian and German theatre. Notable is the absence or, respectively, existence of a permanent company with fixed members, productions in repertory and continuously growing public subsidies. However, Heibert and Merschmeier failed to point out another major difference: Australian theatre is "a much smaller world in which there are fewer companies, fewer stars, fewer newspapers and fewer critics"[3] than in German theatre. Nevertheless, they drew attention to an important aspect of Australian theatre criticism. They reported the difficult situation for theatre criticism in Australia, especially after the demise of *Theatre Australia* early in 1983. As a result, reviews in daily and weekly papers represented the only public forum for theatre at the time. The German journalists observed that critics working at these newspapers found their task difficult to fulfil, as they had to cope with lack of space and with editors' general lack of interest in reviews of theatre productions, as shown in more detail below. According to Heibert and Merschmeier, this absence of a strong critical public opinion had led to the loss of orientation experienced by many theatre practitioners with whom they had spoken.[4]

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[1] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 8. Grotowski's influence on Australian alternative theatre has been considerable. Thus, Australian actor Eileen Chapman noted: "La Mama was originally inspired by Grotowski's 'Poor Theatre'. This was for financial and for ethical reasons.", Personal interview, 28.12.98. To a certain degree, this influence could also be detected at the Pram Factory. Cf. also Radic (1991), 56.

[2] Cf. "Die Zweischneidigkeit solcher Existenznöte soll nicht beschönigt sein - aber diese Gratwanderung wirkt immer noch spannender als ein Spaziergang durch den Stadt(theater)park.", Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 13.

[3] Eccles (1987), no page numbers given. Eccles compared Australian theatre to the UK and USA, but his comparison applies to German theatre also.

[4] Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 19.

13.3 Discussions about Australian theatre criticism in the 1980s

The mid- and late 1980s were a time when Australian critics started to reflect on their roles and the conditions under which they worked. A number of publications included these reflections and confirmed and expanded on the findings of my study to this point.

In 1984, Gareth Griffiths, lecturer in Drama at Macquarie University, published an article on "Theatre Reviewing in Australia" in *Meanjin* and criticised a great number of reviewers for writing a "notice" with the main purpose of telling "the audience what is worth seeing". Griffiths condemned this kind of journalism for reinforcing "existing commercially fostered theatre-going habits and (...) prejudice[ing] the new and innovative".[1] My earlier analysis of the Australian reception of Handke's plays supports Griffiths' assessment, and I have also pointed to the strong tendency of these critics to connect box office success with relevance. Griffiths' perspective also corresponds to my analysis in so far as he, too, considered small alternative theatres to be affected by this critical attitude severely. He noted:

> Although the whole field of estimating the effect of reviews on audiences is marked with pitfalls and contradictory evidence it seems fair to conclude that it is the struggling, innovatory company which is most affected by a decisive review - but, ironically, mostly for the worst.[2]

My study of Sharman's and Nowra's work, however, has shown that critics, similarly, appear to be able to hold and create strong negative preconceptions and reactions regarding innovative work in mainstream theatres, which are likely to further deter conservative audiences whose expectations already clash with innovative changes of repertory from the outset. Although Griffiths rightly stressed that critics' direct influences are difficult to measure, the facts that some artists perceive their relationship towards theatre critics as "a state of war"[3] and that many Australian audiences rely on one dominant critic in their city, expose a certain power on the critics' side.

Ideally, Griffiths would like to see the commercially oriented critics replaced by a new group of critics, who are "theatre specialists properly equipped for the role of encouraging

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[1] Griffiths (1984 (March)), 187.

[2] Griffiths (1984 (March)), 187. Griffiths explains that small companies "are more vulnerable to the bad notice which may put off the drop-in audience, since they are less able to afford wide advertising; conversely, they benefit less from the good notice since they can't afford to repeat its gems as part of their paid publicity.", 192. Cf. also Peter Wilmoth's article in *The Age*, 25.6.95.

[3] Eccles (1987); Brisbane and McCallum report the following reaction by the London *Guardian's* theatre critic during his 1993 visit in Australia. The critic noted that the "gulf which exists in all societies between the critic and the artist in Australia threatens to widen into a chasm (...). I have noticed an extraordinary preoccupation, especially in theatre, with the role of the critic", in: Katharine Brisbane, John McCallum, "Criticism and Journalism", 176, in: Parsons and Chance (1995), 169-176. The 'state of war' was also illustrated by the debate between David Williamson and *The Age* critic Guy Rundle, cf. Wilmoth, *The Age*, 25.6.95.

developments in our theatre"[1], and preferably are working as "full-time arts critics and commentators"[2].

In 1985, under director Philip Parsons and convenor Katharine Brisbane, a conference at the UNSW provided an opportunity for editors, critics and journalists to discuss issues related to theatre reviewing in Australia, including space allocated to reviews, quality of coverage and careers for commentators working in the field.[3] In the following year, the Adelaide Festival offered an International Theatre Critics' Symposium, on which Jeremy Eccles reported in the *Australian Theatre Record*. The broad coverage of Eccles' report reflects how much conditions and opinions regarding the situation and role of the Australian theatre critic differed. Yet some of the issues raised in the previous conference resurfaced. Critics' lack of time, money and space were seen to be at the centre of many problems experienced by Australian critics and their readers.

As I have pointed out earlier, lack of space for reviews had implications for my research. In a few reviews, brevity resulted in problems in understanding the critic's comments, which, in some cases, might have been caused by poor editing. Also, most reviewers had no room to explain the underlying "critical tenets and principles"[4] of their criticism.

Since participants of the symposium were aware that lack of space was a primary concern, much of the discussion at the symposium was dominated by the role of the arts editor because he or she represented "the lynchpin who is currently symptomatic of the ills of theatre journalism in Australia. His / her lowly status within the newspaper world reflects that of the arts (...)".[5] Although participants quoted contradictory surveys regarding readers' interest in theatre and in theatre criticism[6], most participants agreed that the status

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[1] Griffiths (1984 (March)), 192.
[2] Griffiths (1984 (March)), 190.
[3] Rob Jordan, "Preface", in: Eccles (1987).
[4] Griffiths (1984 (March)), 191.
[5] Eccles (1987). Eccles reports that, indirectly, a great number of pragmatists amongst the conference participants responded to Griffiths' suggestions for improving the standard of reviewing "claiming that the admitted inadequacies of criticism in this country (...) could be ameliorated more by strengthening the authority of the arts editors within newspapers than by the unlikely solution of demanding the employment of critics and arts journalists on a full-time specialist basis".
[6] Don Riddell, the *Advertiser's* Managing Editor, said that a survey of Adelaide audiences had indicated that "arts criticism came behind gardening, handyman hints, consumer advice, health, travel, feminist news, car test and hobbies in its readers' order of priorities". By contrast, Eccles quoted a recent Throsby and Withers household survey in Sydney which "revealed a 73% current interest in theatre, and a 30% multiple attendance in the previous year". Eccles (1987). According to the recent Saatchi & Saatchi report, perceptions of the arts are split, "suggesting a 50-50 breakdown between those who place a high or low value on the sector.", *The Australian*, 22.6.00.

of the performing arts and of its reviewing needed a boost in the second half of the 1980s.

There was also general consensus on the fundamental task of the critic to, in Katharine Brisbane's words, "evaluate and illuminate, rather than to judge".[1] My study of the reception of Handke's plays has shown that those reviewers who favoured interpretative arts journalism over judgmental criticism gave innovative, and thus unusual, work a chance rather than measuring and condemning it according to traditional criteria. When participants discussed whether, in Australia, interpretative arts journalism should be more lenient towards local work, opinions were divided. However, that Michael Morley reported an anonymous director calling for critics "to tend the soil rather than just sniff (or trample) the flowers"[2], proves that a number of directors and critics continued to assess local and foreign work according to different standards.

The symposium also confirmed my finding that, as far as productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights are concerned, often only a small number of critics appeared familiar with the drama text. Jim Waites from the *National Times* complained that, "on $120 a week, he didn't have the money to buy necessary playtexts [in English], let alone the time to read them".[3] This shows that it was unrealistic to expect the average reviewer to research the quality of translations available, let alone have access to the original playtext. This situation only changed when a greater number of academics began working as critics from the 1980s onwards.[4]

Overall, the symposium reflected a greater awareness of the role and standard of Australian theatre criticism. It thus helped to pave the way for sustained "serious criticism of theatre by journalists" in the years to come.[1]

Finally, the symposium was also indicative of contemporary problems in Australian theatre reviewing in another way. The report on the symposium appeared in the *Australian Theatre Record* rather than in a specialist theatre magazine which would have then provided the opportunity for ongoing debate. At least, though, the next thorough debate on

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[1] Eccles (1987). This was discussed publicly in context with Guy Rundle's "vituperative" review of Williamson's *Dead White Males* in *The Age*, 25.6.95.

[2] Eccles (1987). This problem was discussed again in *The Age*, 25.6.95. The role of the critic was also discussed at the International Critics' Conference at the Festival of Perth in 1995, cf. *The Age*, 6.3.95.

[3] Eccles (1987). Eccles notes: "(NB. The *National Times* has subsequently dispensed with Waites' services - along with all their other State critics. It has instead appointed a single travelling national critic.)"

[4] Brisbane and McCallum also point out that these critics started to provide an historical background in their reviews.

Australian theatre criticism, provocatively entitled *Pearls before Swine*, appeared in the literary magazine *Meanjin*.[2]

14. PRODUCTION OF PLAYS IN THE 1990S - WAYS TOWARDS OWNING GERMAN DRAMA

1990 to 1996 saw a new rise in productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights. As explained in the study of the reception of Brecht, unlike the previous peak in the second half of the 1970s when Brecht's plays represented more than half of the productions, this new height of productions did not involve a great number of Brecht's plays. In the 1990s, the focus on plays by German-speaking playwrights became spread more widely. It included playwrights who had figured earlier, such as Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Max Frisch, Frank Wedekind and Peter Weiss, as well as new ones, amongst them Herbert Achternbusch, Thomas Bernhard, Tankred Dorst, Oskar Kokoschka and Ernst Toller. The latter were introduced predominantly through one-off productions at a number of alternative theatres or at universities. In Melbourne, Anthill Theatre continued to make an important contribution to exposing Australian audiences to plays from German speaking countries. In 1992, Anthill was the venue for Phillips Keir's production of Achternbusch's *Ella*; in 1993, it introduced audiences to Bernhard's *The Force of Habit*[3]. In Sydney, Gertraud Ingeborg and David Ritchie from Harlos Productions gave audiences access to a range of Austrian plays otherwise not shown on the Australian stage, such as Thomas Baum's *Cold Hands* in 1993, Felix Mitterer's *Visiting Hours* in 1991 and *Siberia* in 1994 as well as Peter Turrini's *Shakespeare in the Sex Shop* in 1995.[4]

Including all of these productions in my analysis would exceed the framework of this study. Therefore, I shall concentrate on those productions which add new aspects to the central question of how dramas by German-speaking playwrights could and can be

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[1] Richard Fotheringham, "Criticism, Scholarship and Publishing", 75, in: Rubin (1998), 75-76. Fotheringham wrote that this quality of criticism "did not exist in any sustained manner until the 1990s."

[2] Cf. Richards and Milne (1994 (Spring)).

[3] Original title: *Die Macht der Gewohnheit*. Jürgen Zielinski, responsible for make up and wigs in Kosky's *Faust*, confirmed the strong commercial pressures in mainstream theatres when he recalled in a personal interview (19.4.96) that the MTC did not take up his proposal to stage a play by Thomas Bernhard, such as *Ritter.Dene.Voss*, because "they considered it too difficult". Concerning Anthill's role, cf. my analysis of *Mother Courage*.

[4] Original titles: *Kalte Hände*, *Besuchszeit*, *Sibirien*, *Grillparzer im Pornoladen*. Harlos also produced Müller's *Quartet* and Kroetz' *Farmyard*. Udo Borgert, who has been involved in a number of Harlos' productions, has continued his promotion of Austrian drama through compiling an anthology of contemporary Austrian plays by women, cf. Borgert (2000).

approached and staged in a way allowing Australian audiences to relate to the production, thus resulting, ideally, in a sense of ownership. As case studies, I shall use Franz Xaver Kroetz' *Farmyard*, directed by Ariette Taylor and David Ritchie, Barrie Kosky's production of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* as well as an adaptation of Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* under the direction of Michael Kantor.

14.1 Productions of Franz Xaver Kroetz' Farmyard

The Australian production and reception of Franz Xaver Kroetz's play *Farmyard* represents an exception amongst the case studies. Australians responded enthusiastically to productions of the play which seemed congenial to them without significant adaptations to content or style. In the following analysis, I shall look for reasons as to why this immediate audience connection was possible, making the changes of a bold approach unnecessary. I shall do so by analysing David Ritchie's 1989 production for Belvoir Street theatre[1] and Ariette Taylor's production for La Mama theatre three months later. The latter is of special interest because it was revived in 1995. The comparison between the reception of the earlier and the later production shows that the first production's success was unrepeatable and points to the limits of this particular approach.

When Ariette Taylor staged *Farmyard* in 1989, her production could have been seen as a continuation of earlier productions of Kroetz' plays in Melbourne, such as *Michi's Blood* and *Men's Business* in the late 1970s.[2] However, Taylor explained that she discovered the playwright and the play after seeing a production of Kroetz' *Request Programme* by Glaswegian Eileen Nicholas at the 1986 Adelaide Festival instead of referring to previous Melbourne productions of Kroetz' plays.[3] This suggests that festivals, unlike regular local performances, are able to overcome the distance between Australian theatre capitals, thus spreading information about plays and playwrights beyond a town's boundaries. It also confirms my earlier findings that, with the exception of Brecht, it remains difficult to establish an Australian performance tradition for a German-speaking playwright. Even when interest in a playwright stands the test of time, performances do not follow each other

[1] The play was performed under its German title *Stallerhof*.
[2] Directed by Lindzee Smith in 1977 (APG) and by Robert Menzies in 1978 (La Mama).
[3] Cf. preview by Mischa Mertz, *Southern Cross*, 19.7.95. The production referred to was by Changing Woman Theatre Company at Little Theatre, March 1986. This information has not been entered into the data base because the production did not involve any Australians. *Request Programme* was staged in Melbourne by Wendy Joseph under the title *Requestconcert* in 1991 (La Mama).

closely enough for spectators to discern a connection between them.[1] This points to an additional problem in Australian theatre reviewing - a great number of critics only work in this area for a short time. Making the connection with a production of a play which dates back many years would be possible only for those critics who have worked in the profession over an extended period of time. As this did not apply to the critics reviewing *Farmyard*, they regarded the use of silence in plays by German-speaking playwrights as a novelty, without any of them making a reference to Handke's *My Foot My Tutor*[2] at the APG in 1975.

Accordingly, the reviews reflected that Taylor had to re-introduce Melbourne audiences to Kroetz. Like Nowra and Sharman in their production of *Lulu*, Taylor could not rely on critics', and thus audiences', familiarity with play or playwright.

Despite this lack of pre-knowledge, both Taylor's and Ritchie's productions had a strong effect on audiences for various reasons. Regarding the content, Taylor saw a connection between the characters being inarticulate, resulting in many silences, and what she perceived as an Australian reluctance to engage in verbose discussions. In a personal interview, she noted that, apart from the inability to express oneself in certain situations being a "universal experience", in Australia, "people don't put much into verbal communication. (...) There is no culture in Australia of wanting to sit down together and discussing."[3]

Although critics were more cautious about drawing direct parallels to an Australian national character, Helen Thomson, in her review of Taylor's production for the *Sunday Herald*, established a literary connection between *Farmyard* and an Australian play when she called the characters "almost an earlier version of Louis Nowra's atavistically speech-damaged Tasmanians in *Golden Age*."[4] Moreover, in Geoff Milne's eyes, *Farmyard* reflected Australian social and economic conditions because "Kroetz portrays all characters as victims of a society which is 'havin' an economic boom' but which has passed them by".[5]

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[1] None of the critics reviewing Ritchie's production referred to the reading of *Farmyard* in 1978 or to the production of Horváth's *Tales of the Vienna Woods* (Nimrod 1981) in relation to the revival of the folk-play genre.

[2] Directed and performed by Bob Thorneycroft and Joe Bolza. Leonard Radic was one of those long standing critics who was able to make a connection between Kroetz' *Requestconcert* and *My Foot My Tutor*. However, he attributed the latter to Fassbinder, *The Age*, 22.3.91.

[3] Personal interview, 25.7.95. Similarly, Lindzee Smith noted about *Michi's Blood* and Kroetz' plays in general: "He [Kroetz] wrote from the experience of a particular German situation. However, when it comes to people who cannot articulate, there are certain parallels to Australia.", Personal interview, 26.10.98.

[4] *Sunday Herald*, 10.9.89.

[5] *The Herald*, 7.9.89.

Milne's enthusiasm can be further explained by the fact that Kroetz peopled the stage with "poor characters", which are rarely presented on Australian stage, especially not in non-Australian plays on mainstream stages, which are dominated by "middle-class and fairly conservative" characters[1]. In summary, local audiences identified so much with the production, it can be concluded, in a sense, that they 'owned' the play and its production.

This ownership was reinforced by the production style. Both Taylor's and Ritchie's productions were predominantly naturalistic performances[2] in small venues and were built on the traditional Australian audience expectation that spectators should be able to feel with and for the characters.[3] Unlike Brecht's plays and a great number of plays by other German-speaking playwrights, many of Kroetz' plays readily lend themselves to this naturalistic style because they are shaped by a dramaturgical concept which Rolf-Peter Carl has characterised as follows:

> Kroetz ist überhaupt, wie er vor Jahren einmal eingestand, ein konservative Dramatiker, der Dramaturgie des 19. Jahrhunderts verhaftet. Bei ihm ist die Fabel überschaubar (...). Die Handlung wird von wenigen Personen, meist einer Familie, getragen und in gradliniger Spannungskurve entwickelt. Der Zuschauer soll sich identifizieren und den Weg des Protagonisten mitvollziehen.[4]

As a result of strong audience identification with the characters in Ritchie's production, Sydney critic Richard Conrad reported that "the lights at interval revealed quite a few damp eyes being dabbed with hankies."[5] He was so affected by the performance himself that he mistook Kroetz' ironic references to religion as the characters accepting "their fate stoically, finding solace in their religious faith". Here, even the small signs of criticism apparent in the characters' use of empty proverbs were lost.

Although most other critics did not become involved in the performance to such a degree as to lose critical distance, many labelled Ritchie's and Taylor's productions of *Farmyard* "compelling".[6] This adjective not only conveys the impression of the play "rousing strong interest" but also that this interest is brought about by "force"[7].

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[1] Australian playwright Daniel Keene, interview with Michael Harden, *The Melbourne Review*, 15.11.95.
[2] Taylor's production even included "the bucolic odours of horse manure", *Southern Cross*, 19.7.95.
[3] Cf. McCallum (1981), 161 and my study of the reception of Brecht.
[4] Carl (1986), 35-36. "As Kroetz has admitted himself a few years ago, he is a conservative playwright, who is closely attached to the dramaturgy of the 19th century. In his plays, the plot is easily comprehensible. (...) The story is carried by few characters, mostly from one family, and it develops a straightforward dramatic curve. The spectator is meant to identify with and become involved in the development of the protagonist."
[5] *Sunday Telegraph*, 11.6.89.
[6] For the Melbourne production, cf. Geoff Milne, *The Herald*, 7.9.89, Helen Thomson, *Sunday Herald*, 10.9.89; for the Sydney production cf. Pamela Payne, *SMH*, 12.6.89, Richard Conrad, *Sunday Telegraph*, 11.6.89.
[7] Sykes (1987), 207.

The shock felt from watching *Farmyard* is mainly created by sensationalism. *Farmyard* breaks with taboos of what can be shown on stage, while confirming, at the same time, traditional naturalistic expectations. In fact, Ulrich Heising, director of the play's premiere in 1972[1], reported how Kroetz related a number of his plays back to headlines. Heising phrased the headline for *Farmyard*, as it would appear in the tabloids, as "60jähriger Knecht schwängert minderjährige Geisteskranke".[2]

This might have resulted in spectators having mixed feelings about the play and its performance, as expressed by Melbourne critics Geoff Milne and Chris Boyd. Milne, in his review for the (Melbourne) *Herald*, summed up the production's impact as follows: "Many events in *Farmyard* are unpleasant, at times even shocking. But their presentation is seductively fascinating."[3] Similarly, Boyd considered *Farmyard* in his review for the *Melbourne Times* as "hideously engrossing. It repels and attracts simultaneously."[4] Due to the small size of La Mama, spectators were probably put into the role of a voyeur exposed for the first time to actions which had so far been relegated to the screen.[5]

However, the production's impact and success could not be repeated when Taylor revived it for performances at the Fairfax Studio of the Victorian Arts Centre and at the alternative Napier Street theatre in 1995.[6] Firstly, as Boyd noted, the different venues, especially "the plush Fairfax Studio", could not "reproduce the claustrophobic squalor created in the tiny Faraday St. theatre [La Mama] in 1989".[7] Secondly, the play and its production had lost the appeal of the new and provocative.[8] Since the first production of *Farmyard* critics had grown used to violence; they had also seen other plays by Kroetz and by German-speaking playwrights which used silence extensively.[9]

It seems that it was partly in anticipation of changed viewing habits and expectations, and

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[1] Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg.
[2] "60 year old farm-hand makes insane girl pregnant." Heising, 201.
[3] *The Herald*, 7.9.89.
[4] *Melbourne Times*, 9.9.89.
[5] Critics did not comment on the aspect of voyeurism in their reviews of *Farmyard*. However, Chris Boyd had the impression of being a voyeur when attending Wendy Joseph's production of *Requestconcert* at La Mama in 1991, *Melbourne Times*, 20.3.91.
[6] Except for Penelope Hanby playing Beppi, the cast was unchanged.
[7] *Herald-Sun*, 23.6.95. Similarly, Thomson pointed out "the claustrophobic intimacy of La Mama", *Sun Herald*, 10.9.89.
[8] Cf. Carl (1978), 13.
[9] In 1991, Wendy Joseph had successfully directed *Requestconcert* for La Mama, in 1995, Handke's *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* was staged both in Sydney and Melbourne. Chris Boyd's reviews for the *Herald-Sun* (23.6.95 and 25.7.95) show that the critic is better informed than 6 years earlier. For instance he made a reference to *My Foot My Tutor*.

partly in order to fulfil Kroetz' prescribed exact length of silences, that Taylor extended the pauses between spoken words. This increased the challenges of filling the silences with meaning[1] and contributed to a modified performance style which Steven Carroll, in his review for the *Sunday Age*, called heightened realism.[2]

This time, critics did not respond favourably to the production style[3] and the performance in general. While in 1989, they had related to the performance and text in a way which came close to the notion of ownership, they did not connect the characters' fate to Australian reality in 1995, despite the stronger impact of economic rationalism in Australia. On the contrary, Boyd not only stressed that Kroetz' characters were Germans, but he specified the location further by pointing out that they were Bavarians, a fact which Taylor's productions did not convey.[4] It could be argued that the Bavarian setting and language can be interpreted as a metaphor for backwardness, narrow-mindedness, impatience, difficulties in making friends and an inclination to violence.[5] It is doubtful, however, whether Boyd was aware of this potential metaphorical use. In any case, he did not interpret the Bavarian references as a metaphor in his review. For him, the play, its characters and the production had no application and he noted: "Brave is the director who would uproot a Kroetz play from German soil".[1] This quote shows that the play and its production had lost their immediate significance for part of the Australian audience. This contrasts with the programme notes for the production at the Fairfax Studio which acknowledged that the story takes place in Bavaria, but considered it "especially relevant to Australia", thus expecting it to be meaningful for audiences without significant adaptations.

In summary, the approach of staging a congenial play without adaptation can be one way of presenting a meaningful foreign play to Australian audiences. However, such an approach works effectively only at times when the play's and production's content and style happen

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[1] Guy Rundle pointed to the difficulty of making the silences meaningful "by the surrounding signs that contextualise it", *The Age*, 25.7.95. Cf. also Heising's considerations, in: Heising (1985), 204-207.

[2] *Sunday Age*, 30.7.95.

[3] The main criticism consisted of the play and production being too conservative, representing a "traditional fourth-wall drama with a less than interesting storyline" (Guy Rundle, *The Age*, 25.7.95; cf. also Sue O'Sullivan, *Spinout*, 30.6.95) and the pace being too slow (Steven Carroll, *The Age*, 28.7.95 and *Sunday Age*, 30.7.95).

[4] In a personal interview (25.7.95), Taylor said that her productions did not attempt to show the characters as Bavarians.

[5] Cf. Hans Berndt, "Wo liegt der Weißwurst-Äquator?. Franz Xaver Kroetz' *Stallerhof* in Hamburg uraufgeführt", 93: "Die Niederbayern und ihr ungehobelter (...) Dialekt stehen im Theater für Rückständigkeit, Engstirnigkeit, Unduldsamkeit, Kontaktarmut und Neigung zur Gewaltätigkeit.", in: Carl (1978), 93-94.

to coincide with local audience expectations. As this coincidence is unusual, this approach does not represent a viable alternative to a bold approach which can adapt any play in production at any time in order to build a strong connection to local contemporary audiences.

After 1995, Taylor did not direct another play by Kroetz. However, a common link can be discerned between her work on *Farmyard* and her successful collaboration with Australian playwright Daniel Keene. Both playwrights centre their plays on "poor people", characters who "aren't well served on the Australian stage - especially by the major theatre companies".[2]

14.2 *Barrie Kosky's production of* Faust

Unlike the 1989 production of Kroetz' *Farmyard*, which was perceived as a congenial play presented in a well accepted production style, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* represented challenges in various ways. As I have shown previously, in Australia, the production of Goethe's plays, like Schiller's, had been relegated to universities. Outside universities, Goethe's plays were hardly known or performed. Exceptions to this were Phillip Keir's 1985 production of *Torquato Tasso* for the Sydney Theatre Company and Florian Messner's 1991 production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* at the Lookout Theatre Club in Woollahra, Sydney[3].

Critics' responses of these productions point to prejudices connected to Goethe's plays generally. In his review of *Torquato Tasso*, Paul McGillick wrote that, in Australia, "we don't like too many ideas cluttering up the edges". According to McGillick, Australians follow the English "distrust of ideas" which clashes with "the Germans' speculative interests".[4] In his review of *Iphigenia*, James Waites reported those characteristics commonly associated with German "neo-classical theatre: (...) wordy, formal, intellectual, masterly theatre writing".[5] However, it seems as though the reviewers failed to

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[1] *Herald Sun*, 25.7.95.

[2] Interview with Michael Harden, *The Melbourne Review*, 15.11.95. Keene criticised that major theatre companies continue to show characters that "are fairly middle-class and fairly conservative." He noted: "I still believe that we are basically a blue-collar country, no matter how much people like to think we aren't." In her review of the "Keene / Taylor theatre project" in 1998, Helen Thomson also noted the effective use of silences (*The Age*, 20.2.98)

[3] Messner being Austrian, this is another case of a production under a director with a strong connection to a German-speaking country.

[4] *National Times*, 26.7.85.

[5] *Sydney Review*, June 91.

acknowledge that, despite their negative claims about them, Australian audiences are used to being exposed to ideas in plays such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Thus, their quotes established an artificial contrast between Goethe's plays and local expectations which could point to unconscious prejudices towards German theatre and culture.[1] However, their examination would exceed the framework of this thesis. Therefore, it should be only noted that the prejudices may have impacted on the spectators' horizon of expectations when attending Barrie Kosky's production of Goethe's *Faust* in 1993 for the Melbourne Theatre Company.[2] Using a translation by Robert David MacDonald[3], Kosky applied a bold approach to a work which generally is considered classical and canonical in the history of German literature.

Kosky's production, particularly of *Faust II*, presents an important case study which will show the limits and benefits of Kosky's bold approach towards drama, especially classical drama, as explained in his speech for the Shakespeare Youth Festival.[4]

When Kosky staged *Faust* as part of the 1993 MTC season, he followed in the footsteps of Jim Sharman's production of *Lulu* in so far as he, too, was in charge of a provocative production of a play, barely known to Australian audiences, in a mainstream theatre.[5] The fact that the gulf between mainstream and alternative theatre had not closed since 1981, is confirmed by Fiona Scott-Norman who reviewed *Faust* for the *Bulletin / Newsweek*. She wrote:

> In the theatre, the general rule is that the more money there is riding on a production, the safer it will be. Zany, poor fringe theatre gets to take the moral high ground and state theatres get to pander to their subscriber audiences.[6]

Consequently, Scott-Norman congratulated the MTC for going beyond its normal scope

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[1] In this context, it bears repeating that Louis Nowra observed the following Australian prejudices towards German dramas: They "seem too formal, too one paced and seem to broadcast their change of tone in a laborious fashion, and there seems to be no break in their intensity". According to Nowra, another prejudice consists of the perception "that German theatre lacks humour, is plodding, earnest and didactic.", Personal letter, November 97.

[2] With Barry Otto as Faust, Matthew Crosby as Mephisto and Melita Jurisic as Gretchen and Helena. In the same year, students from the Department of German Studies performed *Faust* at Monash University. They gave the play a new interpretation by casting Faust as a woman.

[3] Originally, the translator had been commissioned by the Glasgow Citizens Theatre. Chris Boyd called the translation a "vibrant, user-friendly version", *Financial Review*, 13.8.93.

[4] Cf. Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)). Although Kosky made the above speech after his production of *Faust*, he already incorporated its underlying principles in the production.

[5] Kosky also shared Sharman's interest in *Lulu*, which he directed as a student production during his studies at Melbourne University.

[6] *Bulleting / Newsweek*, 24.8.93.

by mounting this production. By calling it "chutzpah" [1], she captured the spirit of Kosky's bold approach to Australian theatre. As Kosky's style had developed some regular followers, the audience for his production of *Faust* was mixed. In the *Melbourne Times*, Kate Herbert thought the audience at the opening was "as eclectic as the style of the play. Conservative MTC subscribers, Goethe Institute members and avant-garde theatre followers milled in the foyer."[2]

MTC subscribers were probably prepared, to a certain degree, for an unusual production based on Kosky's reputation[3] and by Kosky having chosen the Russell Street Theatre as a venue instead of the more conventional theatres in the Victorian Arts' Centre, which Heibert and Merschmeier had described in *Theater Heute* as "the theatres banned under ground: tombs lined in uterine red, where any performance needs a lot of resilience in order to avoid being absorbed by the soft void."[4] However, many conservative audience members voted with their feet against this production and left at interval.[5]

There are several possible reasons for this. According to Jürgen Zielinski, responsible for make-up and wigs, one such reason might lie in most MTC subscribers' expectations being too strongly influenced by British and American plays and theatre to connect easily to *Faust*. He pointed to the clash between English and German theatre as described by Paul McGillick and James Waites.[6] This was aggravated by the particular structure of *Faust*. It challenged those spectators who preferred plays with a strong unity of time, space and plot like the well-made British and American plays which had long dominated Australian mainstream stages.

Moreover, Kosky did not hold back when it came to shocking conservative theatregoers; at the beginning of the performance, several actors entered from the aisles dressed in gorilla suits and masks, clashing cymbals. *The Age* - theatre critic Leonard Radic thought the cymbals "loud enough" and "the incidental music (...) even louder, not to say abrasive (...)

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[1] "Shameless audacity"[Yiddish]. in: Sykes (1987). 180.
[2] *Melbourne Times*, 11.8.93.
[3] Cf. Neil Jillett's comment: *Faust* (...) will be directed by the much-praised and much-damned Barrie Kosky.", *The Age*, 19.2.93.
[4] Heibert and Merschmeier characterised the atmosphere of the Arts' Centre theatres as follows: "die in die Erde verbannten Theatersäle: in uteralem Rot samten ausgeschlagene Grüfte, wo eine Aufführung schon enorme Überlebenskraft braucht, um nicht aufgesogen zu werden vom weichen Nichts.", in: Heibert and Merschmeier (1986). 16.
[5] Cf. John Larkin, *Sunday Age*, 15.8.93.
[6] Interview with Brigitte Döllgast, 3 ZZZ, 26.7.93.

punctuated in places with the chatter of machine guns"[1] and probably spoke for a number of spectators.

Yet, although the first part of the production was "bold, unexpected, and intentionally disconcerting" it represented a meaningful whole, or as Chris Boyd expressed it in the *Financial Review*, Kosky had "sufficient intellectual, cultural and dramatic powers to hold the nucleus together."[2] The impression from the second part of the production was that Kosky had relinquished this control.[3] The outcome was an extremely condensed and shortened version of *Faust II*, performed in a quick series of "dramatic snippets"[4] and a "chaotic collage of parodies of musicals, opera, ballets and myths"[5].

It appears that Kosky chose this style for *Faust II* in order to launch an aggressive attack, parodying the values presented by Goethe. The director's notes for *Faust* confirm this intention through giving an indirect answer to the questions "What do (...) the characters represent?"[6], thus inquiring about *Faust's* contemporary relevance. When Kosky expressed that he perceived Goethe's presentation of history as "part school lesson, part operetta", with "experience reduced to re-enactment"[7] he indicated that, from a contemporary point of view, he considered the experiences expressed in *Faust II* as both remote and not genuine. Parody might have seemed a suitable way of presenting *Faust II* because it is a mediated presentation relying on imitation of an original, a form of "re-enactment"; it enabled Kosky to express an attitude of doubt and ridicule towards the original.

In practice, Kosky chose to have a number of characters enter and exit the stage via a giant toilet, which followed a principle of parody by replacing the noble with the vulgar.[8] Kosky applied this principle also to the figure of Helen. While many scholars consider Helen, in the original text, as representing Faust's ultimate experience of beauty and the

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[1] *The Age*, 9.8.93.
[2] *Financial Times*, 13.8.93.
[3] Chris Boyd, *Financial Times*, 13.8.93.
[4] *The Age*, 9.8.93.
[5] *Melbourne Times*, 11.8.93.
[6] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).
[7] Programme notes.
[8] Cf. Pavis (1987), 274.

'divine' and bringing about an instant of harmony[1], Kosky chose to present her as a grotesque Madonna-Marilyn figure. Helen Thomson, in her review for *The Australian*, described Helen and the other characters in this production as caricatures in "an operatic send-up".[2]

When analysing the effect of this parody of *Faust II* it is useful to refer to the following explanation by Patrice Pavis:

> La parodie d'une pièce n'est pas seulement une technique comique. Elle institue un jeu de comparaisons et de commentaires avec l'œuvre parodiée (...). Elle constitue un métadiscours critique sur la pièce d'origine.[3]

However, it is doubtful that the majority of Melbourne audiences were able to endow Kosky's comic technique with meaning because their lack of knowledge of *Faust II* prevented them from comparing the parody with the original text.[4] Fiona Scott-Norman voiced her frustration as follows:

> Although Part II has its moments, it lacks the integrity of Part I and at times veers perilously close to entertaining gibberish, unless you really know your *Faust* and can fill textual holes".[5]

When applying his bold approach to *Faust*, Kosky failed to take into account that, in Australia, *Faust II* was part of a classical text in the sense of literary history, but not in the sense of it being a well-known work with a long, even fossilised, performance tradition, upon which he could rely. His audiences' lack of information corresponded to the knowledge of Southern Californians who saw Peter Lackner's production of *Faust* in 1990 and 1992. Lackner drew the following conclusions:

> When producing *Faust* in Southern California, one can safely assume that the vast majority of spectators hardly know the drama; a rebellious interpretation would neither stand out as being particularly original nor would it find a resilient surface of 'traditional' treatment against which it could rub in creative friction. In this situation a director's main responsibility should probably be to introduce the drama to this audience as clearly and comprehensively as possible.[6]

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[1] Cf. Neumann (1992). Hannelore Schlaffer, who considers herself as part of a scholarly tradition which interprets sections of *Faust II* in an ironic way, reads *Faust II* as a parody. However, she is of the opinion that Goethe's choice of parody was a forced one which ultimately reinforces the author's values and aspirations and writes: "Die Parodie des Paradieses ist das Eingeständnis, daß es ein Paradies nicht gäbe, wenn die Dichtung in der Lage wäre, von ihm zu sprechen.", in: Hannelore Schlaffer, "Paradies und Parodie: Die letzten Szenen in Goethes letzten Werken", in: Brown, Lee, and Saine (1994), 102-111.

[2] *The Australian*, 13.8.93.

[3] "The parody of a play is not a mere comic technique. It establishes a game of comparisons and commentaries with the work which is being parodied. It constitutes a critical meta-discourse about the original play.", in: Pavis (1987), 274.

[4] Radic points out that the legend of *Faust I*, though, was better known because of Christopher Marlowe's version, and "numerous reworkings for theatre, film and the operatic stage.", *The Age*, 9.8.93.

[5] *Bulletin / Newsweek*, 24.8.93.

[6] Peter Lackner, "Directing *Faust* in America Today", 252, in: Brown, Lee, and Saine (1994), 252-261. Lackner produced *FaustI* and *II* with the Theatre Artists Group in 1990 as well as a multi-media event based on this production in 1992 for the conference "Interpreting Goethe's *Faust* Today" in Santa Barbara.

An alternative would be a production which is largely independent from the original text and which makes sense as a new unified whole.[1] Clearly, Kosky's strong preference for a bold approach would lead to him favouring the latter.

However, when the original text is not characterised by traditional unity itself, creating a coherent production as result of a bold approach represents an additional challenge.[2] *Faust II* follows a non-linear plot structure and does not respect the unities of time and place. My analysis of Kantor's productions below will investigate further if there are ways of handling these texts as suggested by Kosky, that is to "throw them up in the air, rewrite them, adapt them, develop them [and] pull them apart"[3], which allow effective communication with the audience.

Finally, Kosky's response to *Faust II* being unsuccessful might have been due to the overwhelming complexity of such a text, which has been called a "self-sufficient parallel universe"[4]. As a result, perhaps Kosky gave free reign to associations and parody, relinquishing control.[5] This is unsurprising as both scholars and directors around the world have discussed repeatedly how and even if the second part of *Faust* could be performed[6], a fact which was acknowledged by John Larkin[7] and Helen Thomson[8]. When Kosky loosened control in the production, a series of "fireworks" resulted.[9] Their speed made it difficult for those spectators, who were familiar with Goethe's text, to decode and interpret what was presented to them on stage. As a result, even these spectators were unable to play an active

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[1] My analysis of Nowra's adaptation and production of *Lulu* has illustrated that clarity is required to introduce a play by a German-speaking playwright to the Australian mainstream stage.

[2] Peter Stein's production of the complete text in 2000 shows that it is difficult to apply a consistent interpretation to *Faust II* even if the text is neither altered nor shortened. Cf. Peter Kümmel's review in *Die Zeit* (27.7. 00) where he compared the play to Kraus' "Marstheater" and called Stein's production "ein leerer Karneval".

[3] Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[4] Herzinger (1999), 23.

[5] Cf. Chris Boyd, *Financial Review*, 13.8.93.

[6] Cf. C. Bernd Sucher's retrospective analysis in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12.10.92. Moreover, in the previous year, both Peter Zadek and Peter Stein had cancelled their planned productions of *Faust*. Cf. also Peter Lackner, "Directing *Faust* in America Today", 253, in: Brown, Lee, and Saine (1994), 252-261, C. Bernd Sucher, "*Faust* -Inszenierungen in Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien seit 1980", in: Brown, Lee, and Saine (1994), 262-270 and Rühle (2000 (July)).

[7] *Sunday Age*, 15.8.93. Radic's and Larkin's reviews in *The Age* illustrate the benefits of two critics writing for the same newspapers as they show different aspects and assessments of the production. Overall, reviews illustrate the problems of Australian theatre reviewing discussed in the previous chapter. The lack of space only left enough room for short references to Goethe's complex text but it did not allow for an ongoing discussion of this controversial production.

[8] *The Australian*, 13.8.93.

[9] Helen Thomson, *The Australian*, 13.8.93. Thomson also described the production as "a kamikaze attack which self-destructs as it takes the ship down with it."

part in the production through filling it with meaning and were distanced from the production.

Despite these shortcomings, most critics accorded some value to Kosky's production. Although Leonard Radic aired his frustration by labelling Kosky's style undergraduate playfulness"[1], he was still prepared to give the production the credit that it would become a "talking point"[2] and was optimistic enough to conclude that this "may also drive some to read - or re-read - the original text".[3] Herbert appreciated the production simply for being innovative and taking "risks with space, form, text and physicality"[4], which suggests that some critics encouraged a greater number of innovative productions on mainstream stages. John Larkin from *The Age*[5] and Jason Romney, writing for the *Herald-Sun*, were the only critics who perceived the production as pertinent, discovering "resonances between the story and the events of the 80s when people seemed to sell their souls for power and greed."[6] With this comment, Larkin and Romney designated a possible area, which Kosky could have explored for building a stronger audience connection.

Reviews of Kosky's production differed from those of most other productions because Kosky's uncompromising approach provoked theoretical considerations about fidelity to an original text. Helen Thomson was the critic who voiced this question most clearly when she commented that Kosky's *Faust* "assaults any notions of appropriate theatrical form. Kosky's signature is everywhere: Goethe's voice struggles to be heard."[7] It is noteworthy, that other critics also commented on the question of "work fidelity" more or less directly, indicating the important role which fidelity plays in a bold approach like Kosky's.[8] As a logical consequence of his bold approach, Kosky himself rejects the notion of such fidelity:

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[1] *The Age*, 9.8.93; The fact that Jason Romney refers to the accusation of "undergraduate self-indulgence" in his review of the same day (Herald-Sun, 9.8.93) indicates that critics had a debate amongst themselves concerning Kosky's first professional production in a mainstream theatre.

[2] Kosky considers creating a debate, even if caused by indignation, as "one of the major functions of art", *The Age*, 11.11.96. The fact that there was an increased awareness of *Faust* which exceeded the actual production is obvious in Maximilian Walsh's article in *The Age* (25.8.93)which commented: "Paul Keating cut a Faustian deal with fate when he toppled Bob Hawke out of the prime ministership"

[3] *The Age*, 9.8.93.

[4] Kate Herbert, *Melbourne Times*, 11.8.93.

[5] Cf. *Sunday Age*, 15.8.93: "But, he [Faust] remains remorseless, and in true 80s tradition, turns an old couple out of their house and home."

[6] *Herald-Sun*, 9.8.93. Romney also regarded "Barry Otto as Faust is a haunting portrait of corrupted ambition".

[7] *The Australian*, 13.8.93.

[8] Larkin endorsed a liberal treatment of dramatic texts (*Sunday Age*, 15.8.93). Romney was concerned that "much of the meaning and impact of Goethe's text are lost" (*Herald-Sun*, 9.8.93) and Radic called the production "more Kosky than Goethe" (*The Age*, 9.8.93).

> I don't subscribe to the notion that there is a text and a score which exists by itself, and the director, designer and conductor come to this sacred object and this object has an inner life. It doesn't: it's just words and music and needs the breath of interpretation to enable it to float on stage.[1]

It would exceed the framework of this thesis, however, to enter into the scholarly debate related to this issue.[2]

Kosky's *Faust* also points to the inherent danger of the bold approach of appearing self-indulgent. As most critics could not detect the purpose of this free treatment of Goethe's text, they interpreted Kosky's production as looking for innovation simply for the sake of originality.[3]

In summary, Kosky's production of *Faust*, especially *Faust II*; has illustrated that a bold approach needs to lead to a production which constitutes a unified whole and which can stand alone without overt reliance on the original text. This expectation must be fulfilled if audiences are to feel that they own the production.

14.3 Michael Kantor's production of Excavation. The Last Days of Mankind

While Kosky's bold approach towards owning a text can create a number of problems, it still remains a valuable way of accessing German drama and of making it meaningful to Australian audiences. My analysis of Michael Kantor's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* has shown that a bold approach can work successfully with a play by Brecht. Kantor has also applied it to two other productions which were based on texts by German-speaking playwrights. In 1996, he produced *Excavation. The Last Days of Mankind*[4], based on Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind*, and in 1997 he directed *Lenz*[5], based on Georg Büchner's short story of the same title. These productions indicate how Australian directors can provide a strong basis for audience connection in a bold production even when they cannot rely on a performance tradition of the original text.[6]

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[1] Michael Shmith, *The Age* (*Weekend Magazine*), 20.3.93.

[2] Fischer-Lichte's article on "Werktreue" points to some of the problems associated with fidelity to an original, such as the definition of the term and the development of criteria which allow to judge an appropriate production of a play, cf. Fischer-Lichte (1985).

[3] This is the underlying judgement of Catherine Lambert's review in the *Sunday Herald-Sun*, 15.8.93. As mentioned earlier, Radic spoke of "undergraduate playfulness" (*The Age*, 9.8.93). Scott-Norman called it "extravagant" at the expense of "audience involvement" (*Bulletin / Newsweek*, 24.8.93).

[4] In the following, I shall use the short title *Excavation*.

[5] Although this production did not take place within the time frame set for my thesis, I shall consider it briefly because it illustrates new ways of receiving and producing German literature in Australian theatre effectively.

[6] While *The Last Days of Mankind* was completely unknown to Australian audiences, some spectators might have been familiar with Wolfgang Rihm's opera *Jakob Lenz* or George Moorse's film version (USA, 1981).

To illustrate how Kantor enabled audiences to attribute meaning to the production and to relate to it, I shall concentrate on Kantor's production of *Excavation*. Like *Faust*, Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* is a drama which lacks traditional unity.[1] It includes more than 200 scenes, a huge number of characters and moves frequently between different locations. It does not contain a plot or a dramatic development in the traditional sense. Instead it presents variations of a number of themes in a circular way.

Although Kraus called it a "Tragödie in fünf Akten mit Vorspiel und Epilog", he considered it being performed unlikely[2]; originally, it was intended for a "Marstheater"[3] and it was only in 1928 that Kraus agreed to a performance and wrote a new version for the stage.[4] My analysis of the reception of *Faust II* has shown that if a play like this, performed for the second time in Australia[5], is further rewritten, adapted, developed, pulled apart[6] and cut, its production risks turning out as confusing.

Kantor tried to avoid this by applying a number of measures which would lend his production unity. He based his production predominantly on a recent translation by Antony Ernst of the epilogue "The Last Night".[7] Kantor took up the apocalyptic character of Kraus' work and developed it into an *Endgame*:

> In the abandoned Temple of God and buried deep beneath the Earth, two fallen angels await God's return. A God who made the world, like a Watchmaker, wound it up and then left it alone. When an Archaeologist from the future excavates the room, they confuse him for their deity. To inform him what has happened in his absence, the angels conjure a grotesque procession of historical debris, fragments of a race that ended during the first World War.[8]

Consequently, the performance was held together by a frame which directed audiences' expectations and provided a frame of reference for interpreting the performance. In a

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[1] In this respect, it would be worthwhile to compare its production and reception to that of plays which also lack traditional unity, such as Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth* or Paul Claudel's *Le Soulier de Satin*.

[2] After its unsuccessful Vienna premiere in 1964 (under R.L. Lindtberg), Hans Hollmann staged it to great acclaim over two evenings in 1974 and 1980 in Basel.

[3] Kraus (1957), 9; Kraus (1974), 3.

[4] Cf. Eckart Früh's epilogue, 225-226, in: Kraus (1992), 225-260.

[5] In 1995, Justus Neumann had presented excerpts of *The Last Days of Mankind* at Theatreworks in Melbourne under the direction of Hanspeter Horner. Harry Zohn also indicated that an Australian radio broadcast, a programme entitled "Surface Tensions", was partly dedicated to Kraus in April 1986; cf. Harry Zohn, "Karl Kraus in der heutigen englischsprachigen Welt. Kritische Anmerkungen aus der Werkstatt eines Übersetzers", 330, in: Strelka (1990), 319-331. It would exceed the framework of this thesis, though, to analyse the impact of radio programmes on the reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights.

[6] Cf. Kosky (2000 (Jan.7)).

[7] Cf. programme notes.

[8] Programme notes. Kantor's interest in "Endgames" becomes also apparent in his company's name Mene Mene, referring to the Bible: "Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.", Dan., 5,26, in: *The Holy Bible*(1978), 954.

personal interview, Kantor explained that, in general, he attaches great importance to finding an appropriate way of beginning a performance. He considered the frame as a way of "stepping into theatre" and added: To ease spectators into the play, "I have often used the idea of a play within a play, e.g. in *Excavation*."[1] In *Excavation*, the apocalyptic images as well as the reference to the concept of *theatrum mundi*, situated the performance from the outset. Furthermore, Dan Potra's "deceptively simple" sets visualised and explained the title, *Excavation*, consisting of "a giant mound of earth on which [lay] the steeply sloping stage".[2]

The concept of a journey into the past also created a means for interconnecting the excerpts of Kraus' text. Instead of using a traditional plot, Kantor chose a development in time and intensity as a unifying element. Accordingly, the performance began with Adam and Eve and finished with contemporary issues such as foetal technology and foetal abortion.[3] In her review for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Angela Bennie described its continuously growing intensity as follows:

> From gas mask to nuclear fission, from gas chamber to nuclear waste, from foetal technology to foetal abortion and from barbed wire to barbed, political defilement of the language, the imagery accumulates.[4]

The growing intensity also applied to the music which Tim Lloyd described as follows: "A quintet of war generals sing and act with aggressive and memorable jollity to a rag-tag military band, in a repeating sequence that begins as dark comedy and becomes very black indeed."[5] Unlike in *Faust II*, the different images presented on stage were not isolated but part of an overall concept.[6] Thus, critics, and spectators in general, were guided by a well developed structure for their interpretation.

Individual parts of the production were interconnected through leitmotifs. Apart from the musical leitmotif referred to above, Kantor employed visual ones such as a clockwork, a sort of musical box, which the angels, as directors and compères, repeatedly wound up in order to present yet another glimpse of mankind's development.

As the production created meaning by itself, Kantor was free to take up selected elements

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[1] "In *Lenz*, the window [through which the main character climbed] was a way of getting into the play.", personal interview, 6.11.96.
[2] Tim Lloyd, *The Advertiser*, 4.3.96.
[3] The Festival programme called it "an absurd theatrical procession".
[4] *SMH*, 6.3.96.
[5] *The Advertiser*, 4.3.96.
[6] Cf. Matthew Schulz' review in *Rip It Up* (7.3.96), where he summed up the gradual uncovering of historical truths as representing the theme of "Revelations".

of Kraus' text instead of attempting to faithfully reproduce the text or parts of it.[1] For instance, Kantor further developed Kraus' reduction of human beings to "Schatten und Marionetten"[2] and "Operettenfiguren, die die Tragödie der Menschheit spielten".[3] Apart from the fallen angels, the characters in Kantor's production resembled marionettes and puppets, a notion expressed through costumes and acting style. Bennie regarded this vision of humankind as "theatrically akin to (...) George Grosz"[4].

However, from this highly visual production, Kantor omitted the important role of propaganda and the press in Kraus' work.[5] To a certain degree, though, he managed to convey Kraus' criticism towards the quotations from the press through a staccato delivery. Technology, including genetical engineering, played a great role instead of propaganda.

Unlike in the case of Kosky's production, critics did not raise the question of fidelity to the original, in spite of Kantor's production being loosely based on Kraus' original text. This may be due to the fact that *The Last Days of Mankind* was even less known than *Faust*[6] and, more importantly, Kantor's production established an independent meaning, so critics did not have to refer to the original in their search for meaning.

Critics agreed that the performance had a strong impact because it was intellectually stimulating as well as addressing the senses, "a theatre of passion and ideas".[7] Its scale made it stand out from everyday theatre productions. Taking place at a warehouse, it involved a cast of about 50 students from the Adelaide TAFE's Centre For Performing Arts, professional actors Tom Wright and Louise Fox[8] and the Kidney Art Ensemble, who played live original music. Deborah Jones, in her review for *The Australian*, called it "total

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[1] In his article, "Karl Kraus in der heutigen englischsprachigen Welt. Kritische Anmerkungen aus der Werkstatt eines Übersetzers", Harry Zohn questions the very basis of a faithful production by asking whether and how it is possible to translate Kraus' work into English, in: Strelka (1990), 319-331.

[2] Kraus (1992), 3; Translated as "shadows and puppets", in: Kraus (1974), 4.; Kraus also speaks of a "tragic carnival", in: Kraus (1974), 4. Neumann, in his production, chose to perform as a clown.

[3] Kraus (1992), 3; "Characters from an operetta enacted the tragedy of mankind", in: Kraus (1974), 4.

[4] *SMH*, 6.3.96.

[5] This was criticised by Keith Gallasch in *Real Time*, no.2, 96: "The production offers vision as visual with relatively few words, a pity for Kraus as a language obsessive."

[6] Cf. Frederick Ungar, "Introduction", IX: "Karl Kraus is still largely unknown in English-speaking countries (...)", in: Kraus (1974), IX-XXII. None of the critics referred to Neumann's performance in Melbourne.

[7] *The Australian*, 8.3.96.

[8] Both actors had already worked together in Kosky's Gilgul company. Wright also played Lenz in the production of the same name.

theatre", to which audiences could respond spontaneously.[1]

While Keith Gallasch, in his review for *Real Time*, acknowledged the production style as powerful he questioned whether Australians could relate to the production's apocalyptic vision calling it "as foreign an apocalypse as ever". He explained:

> Australian culture is not strong on apocalyptic visions. Our moderation is born of a benign fatalism with its mythologies of the defeated explorers (*Voss* is an interesting attempt to add European vision to Australian lack of it), victory in defeat (the Anzac legend), perpetual youthful sporting challenges to the old world where the apocalyptic vision is possible, signalling fears of the end of greatness or dreams of transcendence. We're not in either space yet.[2]

However, Gallasch's view was not shared by Australian writer and critic Alison Croggon, who adapted *Lenz* for Kantor's production. She commented:

> There are apocalyptic visions in Australian writing. For example, there is an Australian convict writer of the early 1800s, Price Waring. He describes an apocalyptic vision as an Australian experience. But this has not been continued through the culture. These visions are marginalised, but they do exist.[3]

Important to this study is not so much the question, which opinion comes closer to reality; but that Kantor had successfully used an Austrian play to expose Australian audiences to issues which are either marginalised, ignored or non-existent. Kantor's production is thus a prime example of a play by a German-speaking playwright serving as a basis for an Australian exploration of new ideas.

Similarly, Kantor used Croggon's adaptation of Büchner's *Lenz* to provide Melbourne audiences with "no mere wallow in 19th century Romanticism, but a version of an angst with contemporary resonances".[4] By using a text from another genre as a basis for a theatre performance, Croggon and Kantor pointed to the possibility of exploring German-speaking literature in general as a source for Australian theatre. Up to then, in Australian theatre, this principle had been only applied to Franz Kafka's stories.[5]

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[1] Angela Bennie described the impact as follows: "This exciting production (...) creates such a theatrical bang that its shockwaves send shivers up the spine"; she called the production's force "not merely dramatic, it is moral". *SMH*, 6.3.96.

[2] *Real Time*, no 2, 96.

[3] Croggon continued to say: "One theory for explaining this, is that Australia has never faced up to its own history. This has been addressed by Keating in the 'Reconciliation Process' or by Hughes in *The Fatal Shore*, but it has never become part of the mainstream. Australia is quite a small culture, and the official culture is kept bland and inoffensive. In this respect, Keith Gallasch represents the official version. But behind this, is a fear - a fear of what? Dark visions are only voiced privately.", Personal interview, 5.2.97.

[4] Helen Thomson, *The Age*, 21.10.96.

[5] The first production based on a story by Kafka was *Metamorphosis*, adapted and directed by Steven Berkhoff (Nimrod, 1978).

Croggon has participated in several projects involving German literature.[1] She considers the exchange with and inspiration by other cultures as crucial to Australian cultural life, comparing an inward looking culture to "being in a bell jar in a whole lot of stale air. (...)You don't have to think then, you don't have to respond, you don't have to be excited about anything."[2]

Kantor himself approaches the question of cultural encounters through performance on a more practical level. When asked about Gallasch's challenging comments he reflected on their implications for directing a production. His answer sums up why his production was so successful: "Perhaps people are a little afraid of this type of theatre. (...) You need to target your audience very clearly."[3]

It is Kantor's ability to create a strong audience connection in his bold productions that distinguishes them. His audiences can relate to his productions without them being set in Australia or containing explicit local references. In fact, Kantor belongs to a new generation of Australian directors who reject 'Australianization' as an "obsession".[4]

In the context of overall developments in the reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights in Australia, Kantor's production of *Excavation* presents the latest stage. My study has shown that when earlier directors had tried to naturalise these plays, they had done so in most cases without thinking about the process. The process of naturalisation which they pursued resulted in yet another version of familiar theatre. In contrast, Kantor's productions represented a fresh approach which opened up new avenues for Australian theatre and its audiences. He confidently changed the source text and selected excerpts for performance as part of a conscious process. Kantor's productions illustrated how this approach, if applied successfully, allows Australian audiences to own the resulting productions.

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[1] Croggon wrote the libretto for *The Burrow*, inspired by Kafka, directed by Douglas Horton in 1995 for Chamber Made Opera and was working on a translation of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* when I spoke to her (Personal interview, 5.2.97).

[2] Interview with Chris Beck, *The Age*, 11.2.97.

[3] Personal interview, 6.11.96.

[4] Kantor thinks that "there is still an obsession with Australian stories and Australian settings. (...) This endeavour to create an Australian ethos on stage, I think it is a waste of time. It undervalues the audience's own intelligence, it nearly always ends up in cliché and is inherently untheatrical.", Personal interview, 26.10.99.

15. *THE ABORIGINAL PROTESTERS...*

In January 1996, a group of Australian Aboriginal actors and dancers[1] performed *The Aboriginal Protesters...*[2] in Sydney; about six months later, the production was shown in Germany. Thus, *The Aboriginal Protesters...* and the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project serve as an illustration of factors which influence the reception of plays and productions in an Australian-German intercultural context. The play represents the only Aboriginal response to a play by a German-speaking playwright in the Australian reception history.[3] Its genesis and performance history provide insights into a complex case of reception and into intercultural relationships between Australian Aboriginal, Australian 'white' and German culture not apparent in this study to this point.

Furthermore, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project differs from the other case studies in two ways. Firstly, the Aborigines, especially the writer Mudrooroo, reacted towards the content of a particular play, Heiner Müller's *Der Auftrag,* rather than towards a performance of that play. They did not record their reactions in reviews, but reacted by workshopping the script into a new play which frames Müller's text. This literary response is also important against the background of a young Aboriginal tradition of theatre of the spoken word.

The development of this Mudrooroo/Müller - Project has been documented in a book with the same title[1], edited by Gerhard Fischer, the project's initiator and dramaturge. Apart from Mudrooroo's new play, *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, and an English translation of *Der Auftrag*, this book contains a number of articles which illustrate the complexity of the project. The Mudrooroo/Müller - Project provides the opportunity to study a complex case of a double reception; firstly as documented in the comments by Aborigines in the printed text and, secondly, by critics' reactions towards its productions.

Secondly, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project differs from the Australian reception of many

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[1] 10.1.-28.1. 1996, at the Performance Space, directed by Noel Tovey. Actors: Gary Cooper, Victoria Kennedy, Rachael Maza, Billy Macpherson, Glenn Shea, Justine Saunders, Kevin Smith. Dancers: Jason Moore, Sue-Ann Williams. The production has not been listed in the appendix because it is not considered to be a direct production of a play by a German-speaking playwright.

[2] Fischer (1993), 75-144.

[3] Despite discussions involving Mudrooroo's true identity, i.e. by Victoria Laurie in *The Australian Magazine*, 20.7.96, the play itself is generally considered to be voicing Aboriginal ways of thinking. Apart from the author's point of view, it involved many other Aborigines such as the actors and the director. Although members of different Aboriginal cultures collaborated in this project their differences have not been explored. Like the project's participants, I shall use the term 'Aboriginal' as an umbrella covering a range of Aboriginal cultures. Mudrooroo himself hinted at the differences between various Aboriginal cultures in real life when he praises the collaboration of "a Nyoongah, Murris and Kooris", in: "World bilong tok-tok", 143, in: Fischer (1993), 135-144.

dramas by German-speaking playwrights in that the participants' intentions and reactions towards the production are mostly political. By contrast, the general Australian production and reception of Brecht's plays concentrated mainly on the aesthetic aspects of Brecht's work and tried to exclude its political implications. The following analysis will show that, as a result of the project's political orientation, the overall expectations of the project and the reactions towards it have been strongly influenced by the recipients' historical, ideological and personal backgrounds rather than by prevailing aesthetic norms. In this political context, it will become more obvious than in the previous case studies how the respective histories of Australia and Germany influence their intercultural relationships. For example, my analysis will show how both the Holocaust in Germany and an exotic image of Australia continue to impact on Australian and German audiences' prejudices and expectations.

As the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project was the collaboration of a number of participants and has brought about a multilayered and complex play and production, I shall examine the project by following its stages of development. Firstly, I shall consider the development of the script and the production, concentrating on the people involved in the process and examining their intentions and responses to Müller's play. Secondly, I shall analyse reactions towards productions of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* in Australia and Germany.

The play's full title indicates the complexity of this case study; it is called *The Aboriginal Protesters Confront The Proclamation Of The Australian Republic On 26 January 2001 With The Production Of The Commission By Heiner Müller*[2], a title which reminds the audience of plays by Brecht and Weiss. When the play was performed for the first time during the Sydney Festival in January 1996, a long period of work had come to an end.[3] In 1987/88, Sydney-based German scholar and historian Gerhard Fischer decided to mark the Australian Bicentennial celebrations and the Bicentennial of the French Revolution with a "counter-event" in order to take a political stand.[4] His aim was to develop a play in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Describing his original concept, Fischer noted:

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[1] Fischer (1993).
[2] Fischer (1993), 75-144.
[3] The long process of its development is another difference from the productions analysed in the other case studies, which were based on a short rehearsal period.
[4] Fischer (1993), 3-5.

> The play (...) holds up a critical mirror to a European (or white Australian) audience, asking the provocative question: what has become of the promise and ideal (...) of 'Liberty, Equality, Justice for All', in the old societies of Europe as much as in those overseas that were founded by conquest and oppression? It is precisely this vantage point which will allow a company of Australian Aboriginal actors to appropriate this text for themselves and their own uses and purposes.[1]

Thus, Fischer's concern is that of a critical historian who has lived in both the 'old' and the 'new' society which he wants to challenge with his project. The project's didactic intent corresponds to Fischer's association with the GRIPS-Theatre, an educational theatre for young people in Berlin.[2] This led to Fischer choosing the intended play to become a *Lehrstück*.[3]

In order to put this project into practice, Fischer intended to workshop the play *Der Auftrag*, by East German playwright Heiner Müller, with Aboriginal actors and to find an Aboriginal writer who would write a frame for Müller's text following the *Marat / Sade* model, as indicated by the title.[4] When Mudrooroo, author of *Wild Cat Falling*, agreed to participate, he intended to add an Aboriginal perspective to Müller's multi-layered script, which already showed, amongst other influences, those of Brecht's *The Measures Taken*, Büchner's *Danton's Death* and Anna Seghers' *The Light on the Gallows*.[5] *The Commission*, as Müller's play of 1979 was translated for the project, describes how, in 1789, three emissaries of the new French Republic - two 'white' Europeans (Debuisson and Galloudec) and Sasportas, a 'black' former slave from Jamaica - try to take the ideals of the French Revolution to Jamaica in order to free slaves and begin a revolution against the British colonisers. But instead of the play being a story of liberty, equality and fraternity, it tells the story of betrayal.

In 1991, the first workshop took place, in which Mudrooroo, Aboriginal actors[6], the director of the dramatic reading, Brian Syron, and Fischer as the dramaturge, took part. When Mudrooroo wrote the script for *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, he partly incorporated contributions to the workshops' discussions in his text of the frame. Thus, some of the lines

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[1] Fischer, "Production Dramaturgy: Original Concept", 177, in: Fischer (1993), 174-180.

[2] At the time of the project, Fischer was writing a history of the GRIPS-Theatre and he has since founded the Sydney Surf 'N' Theatre, which has staged a range of plays previously performed by GRIPS. Fischer has had an ongoing interest in both GRIPS - plays and Müller's plays; it bears repeating that he directed some of the staged readings for the Goethe-Institute in Sydney in the late 1970s.

[3] Fischer, "Genesis of a Theatre Project", 11, in: Fischer (1993), 3-17.

[4] Another model was GRIPS-Theatre's production of Leonie Ossowski's *Voll auf der Rolle*, cf. Fischer (1995), 143.

[5] Fischer enumerates a number of dramaturgical models such as Günter Grass' *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, Jean Genet's *Les Nègres* and Pirandello's *Teatro nel teatro*.

[6] Justine Saunders, Pamela Young, David Kennedy, Ray Kelly, Gary Cooper, Michael Watson.

given to the Aborigines in the final text have been influenced by the actors.

Mudrooroo's response to Müller's *Der Auftrag*

Both Mudrooroo's frame of *The Commission* and his articles for *The Mudrooroo/Müller - Project*[1] reflect the negative experiences of Aborigines with colonialism. As a result, Mudrooroo makes the Aboriginal *dramatis personae* reject Müller's play at the end of its fictitious rehearsal with the words "We want Blackfella theatre"[2], thus opting to pursue their search for an authentic Aboriginal theatre. They also prefer to protest against the declaration of a 'white' Australian republic with a demonstration rather than a drama production. In the case studies presented earlier in this study, Australian directors had discovered enough similarities between the intentions of the German plays and their own expectations to make them acceptable to Australian audiences with an adaptation to local theatrical norms and changes to the plays' political content. Mudrooroo, however, chose to nearly completely dissociate himself from Müller's *Der Auftrag* and it seems that this decision did not leave room to admit any profound connection between Aboriginal concerns and Müller's text or German life. This becomes obvious in Mudrooroo's frame, *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, which describes the fictive rehearsal of *Der Auftrag*.

In his criticism of Müller, Mudrooroo distanced himself not only from the East German playwright but also from Germans and German culture. For instance, when Mudrooroo condemned what he perceived as "old European" patterns of thought, especially Müller's "stagnation of defeat" in the struggle for political improvements[3], he could have taken into account that Müller's pessimistic view of history had been held against him in Germany, too. When Mudrooroo branded Müller's "treatment and construction of woman" as sado-masochistic and drew parallels to Severin's *Venus in Furs*[4] he failed to consider that the same aspect had been debated in Germany. Even within a European cultural background, the positions towards Müller's literary presentation of women extended from a "radicalised" picture of women[5] to a "female allegory"[1] with the latter position emphasising the linguistic base of the concept of Revolution as prostitution and its female personification as prostitute.

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[1] "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", "Four Poems", "We wait for our *mapan*, Master of the Ghost Dreaming to deliver us", "World bilong tok-tok", "A bicentennial gift poem", in: Fischer (1993).
[2] Fischer (1993), 120.
[3] Mudrooroo, "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 19-21, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.
[4] "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 22-31, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.
[5] Cf. Maltzan (1988): "Gewalt wird zwar vom Mann verübt, aber von der Frau verursacht" (110); cf. also 113.

Mudrooroo's approach towards Müller's text led to a predominantly confrontational tone throughout the frame-text which repeatedly opposes 'them' as 'the Germans' to 'us', 'the Aboriginals', thus strengthening the Aboriginal identity *e contrario*. This is illustrated by the following comment on the image of women:

> MARYANNE (...) we are not the sort to be passive and victims of men, even if German women are like that.
>
> EVE Not bloody likely. Maybe they have a bit of the old welfare mentality over there.
>
> MARYANNE We ain't German women, we are Koori women, black and proud.
>
> EVE (...) Does Müller really think of women like that? Do youse mob think of women like that? [2]

In his 1995 analysis of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project, Fischer observed that Mudrooroo's negative positioning led to a certain amount of "'German bashing' and of anti-German cliché in the script", especially in its first drafts.[3]

In this general process of categorically rejecting the content of Müller's text, exceptions are of great importance. On the structural level, *The Commission* served as a productive influence upon Mudrooroo. By recalling the history of Aboriginal struggle, Mudrooroo paralleled Müller's *theatre of memory*. He also used the *djangara*, the ancestral spirits of the Dreamtime, as the equivalent to Müller's 'dialogue with the dead'.[4] However, these are parallelisms to Müller's text which do not represent an endorsements of Müller's world view, especially of his disbelief in the possibilities of political change.[5]

There are three instances, though, when Mudrooroo allowed his text to have a direct connection to *The Commission*, twice by making his characters react positively towards a quote, and once by including a trace of Müller's theme of seduction and betrayal in his own text.

Firstly, Mudrooroo followed Fischer's suggestion to include a quote by Ophelia / Electra from *Hamletmachine*.[6] Mudrooroo inserted the quote after a controversial monologue by Firstlove in *The Commission*, where she tells of her feelings for the emissary Debuisson:

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[1] Vaßen (1991), 321.

[2] Fischer (1993), 86.

[3] "'Twoccing' *Der Auftrag* to Black Australia (...)", 147, in: Fischer (1995), 141-164. Here, Fischer noted that "some of the more blatant exchanges were eliminated from earlier versions of Mudrooroo's text". Cf. also Fischer, "Workshop Notes: The Dramaturg's View", 126, in: Fischer (1993), 124-130.

[4] Cf. Fischer (1995), 156-7. Mudrooroo's effective use of the *djangara* will be discussed in the context of the production's reception.

[5] Fischer pointed out that for Mudrooroo "theatre has a social-political function within contemporary Australian society which it seems to have lost for Müller in the present-day reality of German / European theatre and German / European society", in: Fischer (1995), 158.

[6] Cf. Fischer, "Workshop Notes: The Dramaturg's View", 127, in: Fischer (1993), 124-130.

love, hate, revenge, lust, despair, loneliness, rejection.[1] In *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, Maryanne, a fictional female actor, comments on this monologue with the following words:

> (Maryanne, out of role, to Bob The Director)
>
> I smash the tools of my captivity, the chair the table the bed. I destroy the battlefield that was my home. I fling open the doors so the wind gets in and the scream of the world. I smash the window. With my bleeding hands I tear the photos of the men I loved and who used me on the bed on the table on the chair on the ground. I set fire to my prison.[2]

It seems ironic that the participants of the workshop overlooked how the only quote of Müller's they approved of also points to the numerous suicide attempts by Müller's first wife, Inge Müller, and signals the total desperation of the intellectual European woman.[3] Had they realised its significance, probably they wouldn't have left it to Maryanne giving her imprimatur: "That bit of Müller says something to me."[4]

Secondly, Mudrooroo related his ideas to Müller's when it came to a revolutionary speech by the black former slave, Sasportas, which finishes with the lines "I shall be forest, mountain, ocean, desert. I, that is Africa. I, that is Asia. The two Americas am I." This speech in Müller's text had been inspired by Aimé Césaire's play *Une Saison au Congo*, in which Césaire advocates political and cultural independence in colonised countries. The connotation of independence of Müller's text facilitated an identification with the above lines and their application to the situation of Australian Aborigines. Mudrooroo did so by accepting Fischer's proposal to add the line "AUSTRALIA THAT IS I."[5]

Thus, both approvals of Müller's text depend on a third text, Müller's *Hamletmachine* and Césaire's *Une Saison au Congo*. In both cases, it was Fischer who initiated this consensus.[6]

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[1] Cf. Fischer, "Synopsis of Müller's play", 183, in: Fischer (1993), 181-184. For Mudrooroo's interpretation of Firstlove and the role of women in Müller's play, cf. "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 30-31, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.

[2] Fischer (1993), 103, Weber (1984), 49.

[3] Cf. Klein (1992), 311 and Gröschner (1988). Despite his analysis of "the gender policies of Mudrooroo's play", Dunstone ignores this quote, cf. Dunstone (1999), 96-97. In her review for *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (23.7.96), Marion Ammicht equally failed to put this quote into a wider context. In his article of 1995, Fischer expressed his regret that "maybe as a premature result of the pressures of the workshop process, the women's revolt is phrased in Müller's language and borrowed, rather than allowed to grow from within an authentic Aboriginal context", in: Fischer (1995), 149. Despite such attention to the quote, Fischer still did not clarify its connotations.

[4] Fischer (1993), 103. In the actual performance, the neglect of the context did not interfere with the purpose - i.e. to strengthen the image of Aboriginal women. Justine Saunders, who performed this part, erupted from the role of the humiliated female slave to become an energetic, revengeful woman.

[5] Fischer (1993), 118: "Text addition by GF: 'Australia - that is I'", 184.

[6] Mudrooroo himself seems to have avoided referring to Fischer as the source when he wrote: "Ophelia appears in a short Müller piece from another of his texts, *Hamletmachine*, which was slipped to me one day", "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 23, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.

Moreover, Brian Syron, the director of the dramatic reading, indirectly pointed to seduction as a possible thematic link between *The Commission* and the Aboriginal political struggle in his article "The Problem is Seduction: Reflections on Black Theatre and Film". Here, Syron noted that a theme which has been neglected in Australian theatre and film so far is "the split of someone [from the Aboriginal community] who is caught between the two [cultures]".[1] However, Mudrooroo chose not to explore the theme of seduction and betrayal as a possible thematic link to Müller's text. The closest Mudrooroo came to this theme in his play was when he gave a short insight into the identity crisis of the young Black bureaucrat, Peter, who is part of the 'stolen generation', that is of those Aboriginal children who were removed from their parents and community in consequence of Australian government policy. None of the characters, though, are orientated towards a conflict of interests or loyalties which would involve being torn and 'seduced' by the 'black' and 'white' cultures and the danger of betraying either of them. From the start, it is clear for Peter that despite his upbringing in a "nice ['white'] home" he belongs to the Aboriginal community. His conflict is phrased accordingly: "And now, well, I've got a problem. How can I escape my Aboriginality; how can I go back to ... that lie I was living."[2] Mudrooroo reinforced that Peter belonged to the Aboriginal community by making 'King' George, the old goomee[3], remark that he considered Peter to be Aboriginal right from the start and that the conflict between them was part of his "blackfella way of teaching", a strategy to reinforce Peter's ties with the Aboriginal community. Mudrooroo represented Peter's progressive 'Aboriginalising' through the acceptance and rejection of the roles Peter chooses or is forced to play within the rehearsal of Müller's original play.[4]

The theme of seduction is also touched in Clint's, the Black academic's, remarks about the importance of the media for their project. However his objections to a possible rejection of Müller's play are not elaborated further, and when the group votes against performing the play as a protest against the declaration of the 'white' Australian Republic, Clint submits without protest or further arguments. In summary, Mudrooroo stressed the group's unity rather than developing the characters' differences within their commitment to the Aboriginal

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[1] Brian Syron, "The Problem is Seduction: Reflections on Black Theatre and Film", 168, in: Fischer (1993), 161-171.
[2] Fischer (1993), 113.
[3] "A goomy (or goomee) is one addicted to drinking methylated spirits.", in: Dixon (1990), 205.
[4] Fischer analysed the roles of Sasportas and the old runaway slave in Fischer (1995), 150-3. He considered it "a subtle psychological learning experience", in: Fischer (1995), 150.

struggle and within their relationship to the 'white' establishment.[1]

One explanation why Mudrooroo avoided a deeper exploration of the theme of seduction was his determination to prevent the Aboriginal struggle from being connected to what he called Müller's "stagnation of defeat": "He [Müller] is, as an East German, interested in the stagnation of defeat; whereas I, as an Aborigine, a Nyoongah, am interested in combating the stagnation of defeat".[2] Once again, Mudrooroo used Müller to position himself through opposition. This mechanism of setting Aboriginal concerns and culture against Müller's European ideas throughout the text assisted in defining *e contrario* an Aboriginal identity as well as the characteristics of a genuine Aboriginal theatre.

Apart from this mechanism, a closer look at Mudrooroo's use of the term 'the Other' helps to explain the underlying reasons for his negative reaction towards Müller's text and ideas. Mudrooroo did not use 'the Other' to denote an unfamiliar culture in general, but he referred specifically either to the colonisers or to the colonised. The latter is the case in the following enumeration where he defined 'the Other' as "being what else but the Negro, the Other, the colonised, still able to say 'Yes Sah'".[3] His study of modern Aboriginal literature, *Writing from the Fringe*, confirms this double use of 'the Other'; here, Mudrooroo wrote: "Under the gaze of 'the other', the Aborigine became as a child."[4] These are strong indications that Mudrooroo wanted to avoid a new kind of "paternalism"[5] in the form of cultural dependence. Therefore, he wrote the rehearsal text as a frame for Müller's play in which Aboriginal actors not only dismiss an (East) German play repeatedly throughout its fictive rehearsal but also symbolically reject the potential production of Müller's text in the end. Within Mudrooroo's play, a speech by 'King' George, in which he recalls his experiences in a mission, reflects this interpretation of Mudrooroo's reaction towards Müller. 'King' George says:

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[1] Mudrooroo hinted at the differences between various Aboriginal cultures in real life when he praises the collaboration of "a Nyoongah, Murris and Kooris", in: "World bilong tok-tok", 143, in: Fischer (1993), 135-144. Fischer pointed out that another way of exploring the theme of seduction would have been to "develop the theme of Black / White sexual relations". He explained Mudrooroo's refusal to do so as "motivated by his criticism of Müller's literary treatment of women" as discussed above, in Fischer (1995), 149-150.

[2] Mudrooroo, "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 20, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.

[3] "World bilong tok-tok", 137, in: Fischer (1993), 135-144.

[4] Narogin (1990), 11.

[5] Narogin (1990), 12.

> Met a German bloke once. Pastor Ulbrecht [sic], he that ran Hermannsburg Mission in the Centre. Well, I met this pastor fella, and he looked one way, and I looked the other. You know what they did to that mob there, the Aranda, made them into all Lutherans, not much of the old ceremony any more; but big books have been written about 'em. Well, we got to move away from taking and being taken. We got our own culture, we go to that. You get real blackfella play then, proper one to take to the missions and settlement. We'll want to see proper theatre. Don't take them overseas, take 'em overground. But our theatre gotta come from us.[1]

In this speech, 'King' George draws a parallel between past determination through foreign cultures and the possible loss of independence of Aboriginal theatre through collaboration in the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project. As a logical consequence, he demands an independent, genuine Aboriginal theatre.

The relationship between the two playwrights, their ideas and their texts have been assessed in various ways. It needs to be stressed that Müller never collaborated in the project directly. His contribution consisted of putting *Der Auftrag* at the disposal of the project.[2]

The director of The Performance Space, Angharad Wynne-Jones, called *The Aboriginal Protesters...* a "collision between Mudrooroo and Heiner Müller".[3] This metaphor, together with that of 'King' George avoiding dialogue with the German priest, suggests that *The Aboriginal Protesters...* has not resulted from an exchange in which Mudrooroo was open to Müller's influence.

This is confirmed by examining the above quote in which the image of avoiding eye contact can be interpreted on two levels. In the concrete sense, it refers to an Aboriginal code of behaviour; on an abstract level, it represents a metaphor for avoiding contact with the 'white' culture in general. Mudrooroo consciously implied both levels of understanding. A comparison of Mudrooroo's above account of the encounter with "Christian missionaries" as expressed by 'King' George with his description in *Writing from the Fringe* points to the fact that he used the sweeping condemnation of the missions in *The Aboriginal Protesters...* as a strategy which allowed him to give his characters a critical stance and to

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[1] Fischer (1993), 100. The correct name would be Albrecht. For information on F.W. Albrecht cf. Henson (1992).

[2] According to Werner Bloch, it was originally planned to incorporate a video of Müller reading extracts of *Der Auftrag* in the production, cf.: *Wochenpost*, 18.7.96.

[3] *The Performance Space Quarterly*, no 8, Summer 1995/96, 11. The Performance Space was the theatre where the première of *The Aborginal Protesters...* was staged.

distance themselves from Müller's and European influences in general.[1]

Moreover, just as Mudrooroo had 'King' George avoiding an exchange of glances, words and opinions with his interlocutor, Mudrooroo himself avoided a true exchange with Müller and (East) German culture. Although Mudrooroo's own term for his approach, the "Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller"[2], seems to suggest an appropriation and integration of Müller's text into his new play, my analysis has shown that the process of 'Aboriginalising' resulted in a play framing the original text which basically opposes *The Commission.* This interpretation of the encounter between the two playwrights is sustained by Mudrooroo explaining: "We were confronted by the Other and managed to contain the Otherness of that text."[3] Mudrooroo seems to deliberately use both meanings of the word "contain" in the sense that Müller's play is included in the new play, but that Müller's play is at the same time prevented from penetrating the new play.

In his article from 1995, Fischer judged the project's intercultural dimension differently. Here, he described the initial confrontation between Mudrooroo and Müller as subsiding gradually, finally resulting in a "a composite *Gesamtkunstwerk* by two authors merging into one".[4] Regarding the frame-structure of *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, he argued that "the border between the different layers [of texts] are not altogether closed".[5] According to him, Mudrooroo's approach has resulted in a "'writing over' of Müller's scenic-dramatic 'images'" with the end result that "the European discourse loses its dominance. The fringe [i.e. Mudrooroo] takes over."[6] It could be argued, though, that this is only the case when Mudrooroo's Aboriginal characters reject a future production of *The Commission* and start to do "better things"[7] towards the end of the last scene.

Fischer supported his view of a dynamic relationship between Mudrooroo's and Müller's text by pointing to the role-play, such as Peter's, and the related "politics of identity" within Mudrooroo's frame. Fischer indicated a number of Aboriginal concerns and conflicts which

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[1] Cf. Mudrooroo's more balanced assessment of "Christian missionaries" in *Writing from the fringe:* "(...) although they saw Aboriginal culture as intrinsically pagan and thus evil, [they] did bring with them a policy of education which in effect helped to foster the first Aboriginal writings in English. (...) Some missionaries, for example the Germans C.G Teichelmann and C.W. Schurmann in South Australia even used the native language" in: Narogin (1990), 9. The correct name would be Schürmann.
[2] Fischer (1993), 19-31.
[3] "World bilong tok-tok", 143, in: Fischer (1993), 135-144.
[4] Fischer (1995), 143.
[5] Fischer (1995), 147.
[6] Fischer (1995), 148.
[7] Fischer (1993), 120.

are triggered through Müller's text and concluded that in the end, when these have been solved, Müller's text can be left behind.[1] However, until this point is reached Mudrooroo's text continues to operate in form of an Aboriginal comment which accompanies and interrupts the rehearsal of *The Commission*. This structural link to a primary text restricts the space and time to explore Aboriginal issues in the frame. It would be possible to examine these concerns in more depth only in an independent Aboriginal play which would be free from these formal limitations.[2] Once Müller's play has been rejected in Mudrooroo's frame there is space and time only for a final political demonstration on stage.

Therefore the last sentence of Fischer's explanation of 'twoccing' as a metaphor for Mudrooroo's use of Müller's text seems to be the crucial one. After having explained 'twoccing' as "stealing [a car] for use not for possession"[3] Fischer acknowledged that "eventually there comes a point when you need to part company to go your own way."[4]

Noel Tovey directs *The Aboriginal Protesters*...

After a rehearsed reading of the play at Belvoir Street Theatre in October 1991 the project was developed further for a full production at the Sydney Festival in 1996. In the same year, this production also travelled to the *Kunstfest Weimar* and the *Festival der Kulturen* in Munich. Aboriginal director Noel Tovey, who directed all of these productions, contributed to the project his expertise in acting, dancing, directing and choreography. Also, he was well suited for this task because, having spent 29 years in Europe, he could serve as a mediator between Müller and Mudrooroo and between European and Aboriginal culture. Or, as phrased in the programme notes:

> His years in European theatre have given him an understanding and appreciation of texts such as *The Commission* whilst his commitment and involvement with the Aboriginal community place him in a unique position to direct his premier Aboriginal work.[5]

As a result of his time in Europe, Tovey considered it important to "experience other cultures".[6] Consequently, his attitude towards Müller and his play was more open than

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[1] Fischer (1995), 153.

[2] A general move away from the exploration of 'black'-'white' relations would also allow to differentiate between indigenous communities like in Ningali Lawford's and Phil Thomson's recent play *Solid*, cf. *The Australian*, 4.2.00.

[3] "In West Australian police jargon, twoc-cing (for 'Taking With Out Consent') refers to a juvenile car crime committed by (mainly) Aboriginal youths who steal motor vehicles for pleasure rides.", Fischer (1995), 161.

[4] Fischer (1995), 161.

[5] Programme notes.

[6] "Interview with Noel Tovey", in: Jonathan Parsons, Aangharad Wynne-Jones (ed.), *The Performance Space Quarterly Magazine*, isssue 8, Summer 1995/96 (Strawberry Hills).

Mudrooroo's. He took some of the friction out of the encounter between Mudrooroo and Müller by presenting the two most problematic scenes in *The Commission* before and at the very start of the production. Thus, the scene "Man in the Elevator"[1] was played from a tape before the actual performance while the audience entered the theatre. The performance started with the fictional female character Eve rehearsing another controversial passage, that is the scene in which the emissary Debuisson is seduced by Treason / Firstlove to betray the Revolution. Later, the scene itself was incorporated as a dance scene accompanied by didgeridoo and with Müller's text spoken by Eve as a voiceover. The repositioning of this scene at the very beginning of the fictive rehearsal allowed a critical stand to be taken towards *The Commission* from the start, by Eve expressing her strong reservations about the seduction scene. It was only after the Aborigines' basic problems with *The Commission* had been clarified that Bob, playing the director within the play, called for a rehearsal of the text and that the printed version of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* was used in the actual performance.

This clear standpoint of the Aborigines translated into the set also. Andrew Raymond built a white proscenium arch stage where the actors rehearsed Müller's play in white masks. This was connected to the actors' prop and change room where they discussed their plans at a big table. From there, Bob commented on the rehearsal or interrupted the performance. A long, mainly white bridge linked the two parts and also indicated where someone 'stood'. Changes between the fictive rehearsal and the discussions among actors as immediate reaction towards *The Commission* were underlined by a change in tempo, music and light. The white masks allowed a clear distinction between the actors' 'white' and Aboriginal roles and facilitated the Brechtian *Verfremdung* through interruptions.

Tovey reinforced the short moment of identification with *The Commission* when the black former slave, Sasportas, makes a revolutionary speech with the added line "AUSTRALIA THAT IS I"[1], by having the actor tearing the mask of his face when the revolutionary speech came to this sentence. Despite this momentary approval of Müller's text, Tovey, insisted on being "absolutely clear" about whose playwright's text was being

[1] "Soliloquy of a man riding in an elevator, suspended in time and space, on his way to keep an appointment with a man called Number One, who may have a task / commission for him. Stepping off the elevator, he finds himself on a village street in Peru: a barren plain, natives in front of an advertising billboard (...). The man is gripped by panic and fear, the natives approach but pass him without paying any attention. 'I keep walking into the landscape that has no other work but to wait for the disappearance of man.'"; in: Fischer, "Synopsis of Müller's play", 184, in: Fischer (1993), 181-184.

spoken on stage at any time[2] and on the fact that, ultimately, Müller's "language is not our language and to gain sovereignty we must find our own voice"[3].

The reception of the play's performances in Sydney, Weimar and Munich

As my analysis has shown, the political orientation of Müller's play and the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project resulted in its reception being determined by the participants' ideological, historical and personal background.

The next level of reception involves the responses, mainly by critics, towards the production of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* at the Sydney Festival, as well as at the *Kunstfest Weimar* and at the *Festival der Kulturen* in Munich. Most critics responded to both Mudrooroo's and Müller's contributions to *The Aboriginal Protesters....* The analysis of the Australian reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights opens a case study involving the intercultural relationships between Australia, its Aborigines and Germany. A number of Australian and German responses towards productions of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* reflect some of the preconceptions that underlie any cultural contact between the two countries.

Before looking at the play's reception in both countries it is necessary to point out that a considerable number of Australian and German reviews were restricted to explaining the play's underlying ideas, structure and genesis. These reviews will be neglected in favour of those which attempted a more thorough interpretation, thus offering an insight into the critics' expectations of the play and its productions. The study will explore how much the critics' responses have been marked by national politics, intercultural politics, history and ideology. A new factor to be considered, not apparent in this study so far, is the influence of the context of a production, such as the location or a festival.

The importance of the production's location is illustrated by German critics reacting to the productions in Australia differently to the productions in Germany. When *The Aboriginal Protesters...* premiered in Sydney, German critics seemed to be much more aware of the play's political message and its implications than when they were in Germany. Erhard Haubold, who wrote an article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*[4], went as far

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[1] Fischer (1993), 118.
[2] Personal interview, 23.5.95.
[3] Programme notes.
[4] *FAZ*, 10.1.96. Similarly, Peter Gerdes, who reviewed the production for the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (31.1.96) emphasised the role of this political play in the Aboriginal political struggle.

as devoting most of his report to informing his readers about the Aborigines' history and political struggle rather than commenting on the actual project and its performance.

Rolf Michaelis' review for *Die Zeit* is worth a closer look.[1] As it was published in a German newspaper of reputation and because its length allowed Michaelis to analyse the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project in depth, it is important for an understanding of the German reception of *The Aboriginal Protesters....* Michaelis' attempt to give a thorough explanation of the project and the production of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* exposed his underlying prejudices towards the project and Aborigines with more clarity than the great number of summaries provided in other German newspapers.

Michaelis was the only critic who examined the relationship between Mudrooroo's and Müller's plays, which he described as follows: "Er [Mudrooroo] verwandelt Müllers Stück fast völlig, ohne es im Kern anzutasten."[2] In this respect, Michaelis' assessment of Mudrooroo's approach corresponds roughly to the results of the analysis undertaken earlier in this study. However, Michaelis gave a reason for Mudrooroo's approach which needs further explanation. He wrote: "Mudrooroo ist fasziniert von Müllers 'Erinnerungen an eine Revolution', doch anders als der in Australien lebende Forscher [Gerhard Fischer] aus Deutschland. Mudrooroo reagiert als Opfer."[3]

One possible explanation for Michaelis' interpretation is that Mudrooroo did not succeed in his strategy to avoid cultural dependency. Another possible reason is that Michaelis reacted towards Müller's schematised presentation of 'black' identity more than towards Mudrooroo's more complex characterisation.[4] However, another sentence in Michaelis' review indicates that his perception of Mudrooroo as a victim is rooted in his own image of Aborigines in reality, rather than in his impression of the play's characters. The following remark about Mudrooroo's characters' use of language shows that Michaelis considered Aborigines as inferior, especially in a cultural sense:"[Sie sagen] Dies alles in hartem,

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[1] *Die Zeit*, 19.1.96.

[2] "He transforms Müller's play nearly completely without touching its centre."

[3] "Mudrooroo is fascinated by Müller's "Memories of a Revolution", but in a different way than the scholar from Germany, now living in Australia. Mudrooroo reacts as a victim."

[4] Fischer points out that the only character who seems to represent the "familiar cliché of an Aborigine as a victim" is the goomee, 'King' George, in: Fischer (1995), 145; for Müller's characterisation of the Aborigines cf. also: Fischer (1995), 156. In his text-based analysis, Bill Dunstone shows Mudrooroo's "subversion of a dominant stage sign system that represent blacks in terms of the passive 'body' and Anglo-Celts in terms of the active 'mind'", resulting in a "displacement of the role of 'victim'", cf. Dunstone (1999), 90-91.

ungehobeltem Australisch, wie die Aborigines es sich zurechtkauen."[1] Although there is clearly a difference between the use of language by the Aboriginal characters in Mudrooroo's play and what Mudrooroo called Müller's "hyperventilated" and "Gothic" style[2], the Aboriginal characters in Mudrooroo's play are presented as educated, middle-class professionals.

So, the question arises as to why Michaelis attributed the role of the victim to the Aborigines. The paragraph in his article which follows the above quote contains an explanation. Here, Michaelis quoted Bob, the fictional director of the rehearsal, reminding his cast: "You know that in Germany, they got whole rooms filled with the skulls and bones of our people..."[3] Instead of applying this incorrect claim to the Aborigines' ancestors, Michaelis referred it back to the Holocaust. He noted: "Da zeigt sich die neue politische Kraft der aboriginen Bewegung: Sie fühlt sich als Teil aller unterdrückten Völker und Minderheiten. Ihnen ist alles 'schwarz'."[4] Thus, Michaelis drew an unqualified parallel between Aboriginal history and that of any other oppressed people or minority, including the victims of the Holocaust. For Michaelis, "black" has become an abstract label for anybody disadvantaged and has lost its precise meaning in the Aboriginal struggle for maintaining a specific identity and obtaining sovereignty. As Michaelis did not take the Aboriginal struggle in its own right seriously, he indirectly endorsed the historical role of the Aborigines as inferior to Europeans and unworthy of a separate identity.

However, the German critic was not alone in relating the killing of Aborigines during 'white' settlement to the Holocaust. Whereas most Australian critics presented the ideas and message of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* in a detached way, Angela Bennie took the following passionate stand when reviewing the production for the *Sydney Morning Herald* under the heading "Call to arms on eve of the republic"[5]:

> There are occasions, all too rare, when, as a member of the audience, one is privileged to have witnessed what took place. There are also moments when one wants to stand up and bear witness. This is one of those occasions.

After describing the various layers of the text as "mirroring", Bennie concluded:

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[1] "[They say] all this in the hard, unsophisticated Australian English as Aborigines chew it over".
[2] "The Aboriginalising of Heiner Müller", 24, in: Fischer (1993), 19-31.
[3] Fischer (1993), 87; "(...) daß 'die in Deutschland ganze Räume haben, angefüllt mit Schädeln und Knochen von unseren Leuten."
[4] "Here the new political power of the Aboriginal movement can be seen; they feel a part of the oppressed people and minorities. Everything is 'black' to them.", *Die Zeit*, 19.1.96.
[5] *SMH*, 15.1.96.

> For 1789 was also the time of European settlement in this country, the time of the Aboriginal dispossession, (....) in some cases genocide. That they are rehearsing a German playwright is the most disturbing and painful mirroring of all.[1]

While this statement is rooted in Bennie's personal world view as much as Michaelis' was, at the same time it shows the important role of history as an influence on reception. In this case, it points to the fact that the Nazi past and World War II have imprinted on the mind of Australians an image of Germany up to the present day.[2]

This mode of reception was reinforced by a geographical factor when the production was shown in Weimar. Werner Bloch, reviewing the production for the *Wochenpost*, reported the following comment by Mudrooroo: "Erst in Weimar habe er verstanden, wie Müllers Text funktioniert, sagt Mudrooroo: 'Buchenwald liegt ganz in der Nähe, aber auch Goethe und Schiller sind präsent."[3]

While Mudrooroo's remark shows some complexity, Phillip Adams, in his radio programme, *Late Night Live*, reduced the comparison between the killing of Aborigines and the Nazis' concentration camps to the following formula: "Weimar, the centre of German Enlightenment - and from there to Buchenwald and another betrayal."[4] Despite Müller's use of betrayal both in a concrete and in an abstract sense in *Der Auftrag*, calling the Holocaust "another betrayal" represents a gross simplification of historical events.

This tendency to establish simplified analogies became reinforced when Bernd Kaussmann, the artistic director of *Kunstfest Weimar*, made the following comment:

> There are many analogies between the Aboriginal history and what has happened in our history. (...) There may be parts of it [*The Aboriginal Protesters*...] we won't understand, but we can understand very well on an emotional level, because of our history. It is our 'original sin', the Germans' and the whole world's. This play makes us face it.[5]

In his comment, Kaussmann shifted the attention from the Aborigines' production and its aims to the concerns of the recipients, that is of the Germans. As a result, the issues presented by the Aborigines lost their uniqueness and were reduced to a mirror for German

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[1] My analysis of the reception of *The Representative* has shown that, in the sixties, drawing these parallels was still unthinkable.

[2] The strong influence of World War II on the current Australian picture of Germany is illustrated by a heading in the *Herald-Sun* (15.8.95) for an article reporting about "Erlebnis Australien", which promoted Australia in Germany under the umbrella on the Australia Abroad Council and the Australian Embassy in Bonn. The heading read: "German invasion". In the context of Australia celebrating 50 years of peace in the Pacific and honouring its soldiers, the reader was clearly led to believe that the article was connected to aggressiveness from the German side. Cf. also my earlier analysis of reactions towards Nowra's production of *The Prince of Homburg*, reviewed by Radic under the title "Fascism and a Farce", *The Age*, 11.10.82.

[3] "[Mudrooroo said that] he only understood in Weimar how Müller's text works: Buchenwald is close by, but also Goethe and Schiller are present", in: *Wochenpost*, 18.7.96.

[4] *Late Night Live*, ABC, Radio National, 11.7.96.

[5] Reported by Angela Bennie, *SMH*, 15.7.96

problems, followed by a universalisation.

Moreover, Kaussmann's description of the Holocaust as an "original sin" gives the impression of an inevitable, fatal event outside the scope of reason. Thus he approved replacing attempts to analyse and understand the Holocaust and the killing of Aborigines during 'white' settlement with an emotional approach. Falling back on emotions instead of differentiating between Aboriginal and Holocaust victims clearly does not do justice to either of them. It also prevents any logical and systematic approach to solving current Aboriginal problems in Australia.[1]

These responses take into account neither the complex history of the Holocaust nor of Aboriginal history after white settlement. They also neglect the influence of Heiner Müller's experiences with East Germany and his sense of betrayal by its failed political ideals.

In summary, all of the above reactions demonstrate the strong influence of history on intercultural relationships and on the reception of foreign work.

The flip-side of the portrayal of Aborigines as victims was their being perceived in an exotic light. Similar to the *noble savage*, they were not only regarded as inferior to the people in power but also as superior when it came to finding solutions for problems which the exhausted 'civilised' countries felt they could not solve on their own any longer.

In this context, it is worthwhile returning to Michaelis' article. After considering the Aborigines' solidarity with oppressed people and minorities as part of the 'black' movement, he commented: "Das Wort ["schwarz"] aus ihrem Mund hat einen Glanz von Zuversicht."[2]

What Michaelis admired as "confidence" in relation to the Aboriginal struggle contrasts with Müller's pessimistic view of history, which Michaelis described earlier in his review. He noted: "Einen solchen Schrei nach Veränderung der Welt [wie den der Aborigines] haben Heiner Müllers von Fragen bedrängte, von Zweifeln an allen revolutionären Umtrieben kränkelnde Gestalten nie gewagt."[3]

The above quotes illustrate Michaelis' tendency to view the Aborigines through the lens

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[1] In his review of the Sydney production, Peter Gerdes' remarked about Aboriginal problems in Australia: "Emotion siegt über Intellekt, wie dies bei den meisten Diskussionen über Aboriginal-Probleme der Fall ist.", *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 31.1.96.

[2] "That word from their mouth has a sparkle of confidence.", *Die Zeit*, 19.1.96.

[3] "Heiner Müller's ailing characters, plagued by questions and racked by doubts about such revolutionary machinations never dared to utter such a cry for the changing of the world [as the Aborigines did]."

of exoticism. He idealised the Aboriginal political struggle, ignoring the defeats Aboriginal people experienced and continue to experience during the course of their fight for sovereignty, land rights and compensation. Neither did he take into account widespread problems in the Aboriginal community, such as alcoholism, which would have tainted the sparkling image he presented.[1] It seems his own view of history was closer to Müller's pessimistic outlook, and that he projected his own longing for a positive attitude to political change onto the Aborigines, thus following a common pattern of approaching the inhabitants of colonised nations.

Furthermore, Michaelis presented the Aborigines as a counterexample to environmental problems in Germany and Europe by calling their culture "eine sanfte Kultur, ohne Ausbeutung der Umwelt, ohne Zerstörung ihrer Lebensgrundlagen"[2]. Here, the image of the Aborigines corresponds to that of the *noble savage* who lives in harmony with nature, an image which contains an indirect criticism of contemporary European civilisation. In summary, Michaelis' picture of the Aborigines is characterised by mixed feelings of superiority and exoticism, combined with an indirect criticism of his own culture.

An exotic picture of the Aborigines was also present in many German articles reviewing the production of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* in Weimar and Munich. This attitude can be partly attributed to Australian foreign cultural policies in Germany, which tend to pay a degree of attention to Aboriginal culture which seems out of proportion to its presence in Australian mainstream 'white' culture.[3] For instance, in 1995, when Australia organised the event 'Experience Australia / *Erlebnis Australien*' in Germany in order to promote economic and cultural interest in Australia, all of the productions in Berlin listed under "Tanz, Theater" had an Aboriginal connection.[4] Apart from purely economic reasons for the series of promotions, the flyer which invited Australian companies to market themselves in the context of 'Experience Australia' listed "Germany as the largest source of tourists to

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[1] Furthermore, Michaelis seemed to lack factual information concerning the landing of Captain Phillip and the movement in favour of a Republic.

[2] "A gentle culture without exploitation of the environment, without destruction of its basic necessities."

[3] This refers to the number of productions as well as to the official recognition of Aboriginal culture in the context of the arts; critic Victoria Laurie noted for instance, that "for the first time in its 47-year history, several events at the Perth International Arts Festival [00] are being prefaced by a formal Aboriginal welcome. Interesting that it took a foreign director, Irishman Sean Doran, to insist on it.", *The Australian*, 4.2. 00.

[4] *Erlebnis Australien*, programme notes for Berlin and Brandenburg. The events listed consisted of *Woomera* by the Mornington Island Llardil Performers, a show by Ningali, and *Ochres* by Bangarra.

Australia".[1] This is a strong indication that Australia's foreign cultural policy in Germany builds on the German curiosity for the exotic, by stressing those aspects of Australian culture which are clearly different to European cultures. It may also build on a strong tradition of interest in Aboriginal culture by past German scholars and missionaries. In Munich, this German curiosity for the exotic was reinforced by the framework in which *The Aboriginal Protesters* ....was presented. Here, it was part of the *Festival der Kulturen* which presented productions originating from outside Germany in collaboration with corresponding Goethe-Institutes. According to a flyer, which had been produced by Ulrich Everding from the Goethe-Institute in Munich and Dietmar Lupfer from the Muffathalle, the series of events had the following aim:

> Durch die Partnerschaft zwischen dem Goethe-Institut München und der Muffathalle BetriebsGmbH wurde ein Stück weit realisierbar, was seit einiger Zeit in der Kulturdebatte mit Blick auf die Zukunft als Umdenken postuliert wird: durch den Blick auf andere Kulturen und Zivilisationen, die andere Wege und Entwicklungen gehen.[2]

What could be regarded as a vague appeal for greater openness towards other cultures and their way of coping with problems similar to the ones facing Germany[3], reinforced a German tendency to interpret Aboriginal cultural events in an exotic light. A range of German reactions confirm this to a varying degree. Johannes Härtel, reviewing *The Aboriginal Protesters*... for the *Abendzeitung*, called the production "exotic" in the sense of a rare theatrical event.[4] German scholar Bernhard Greiner reported reactions associated with the image of the *noble savage*, from the audience of a panel discussion entitled "Perspektiven interkultureller Theaterarbeit", which followed one of the performances.[5] Amongst its participants were Mudrooroo, Noel Tovey, some of the actors, the German directors and theatre-managers Stephan Suschke and Leander Haussmann as well as Christopher Balme from the Munich *Institut für Theaterwisssenschaften.*[6] When asked for a definition of Aboriginal theatre, some actors resorted to pointing out their close relationship to nature, saying that they listened "to the trees and the wind". This comment was reportedly welcomed with enthusiastic applause by the panel audience, who thought of the

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[1] Flyer for 'Experience Australia', Australian Embassy, Bonn.

[2] Flyer for *Festival der Kulturen. Tanz, Theater, performance*, Muffathalle, 2.7.-25.7.96. "Through a collaboration between the Goethe-Institute in Munich and the Muffathalle, a process was to a certain extent achieved which, in the context of the recent cultural debate, has been postulated as a rethinking and reassessment (process) of ideas with a focus on the future: this was achieved through looking at other cultures which have taken different paths and courses of development."

[3] The flyer neither specified the object of the rethinking process nor the underlying problems.

[4] *Abendzeitung*, 23.7.96.

[5] Personal interview, 19.8.96.

[6] 25.7.96. The presenter was Bernd Sucher.

Aborigines in terms of the noble savage just as much as Michaelis did. Greiner reported similar reactions in a political context with the exotic focus "having shifted from South America to Australia". At the center of the Aborigines' exotic image he detected European problems like the "loss of new perspectives" and "the collapse of socialist expectations and hopes"[1], reminiscent of Michaelis' criticism of contemporary European civilisation.

In her review for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Marion Ammicht, referring to the aesthetic and formal aspects of the production, reported audience expectations which were equally influenced by exoticism. She wrote: "Das [Stück] erinnert eher an ein Lehrstück im Sinne Brechts als an mythisches Ureinwohner-Theater, das wohl eher erwartet hätte, wer den Aborigine-Autor Mudrooroo nicht kennt."[2]

Reception at an aesthetic level

Ammicht's comment indicates that aesthetic expectations also played a role in the reception of *The Aboriginal Protesters...*, although to a lesser degree than did politically orientated interpretations. Mudrooroo's collaboration in the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project led him to writing his first play. In his review for The Australian, John McCallum indirectly referred to Mudrooroo's experience as novelist and academic writer rather than as playwright, when he criticised the script's dialogue after the Sydney production. He wrote: "Mudrooroo's script has some very awkward dialogue in which the ideology sometimes sticks out like bones in a desecrated grave. He is no playwright but he is a very good ideas man."[3] McCallum's remark is closely connected to other critical remarks concerning the didactic nature of the play, that is those parts which resemble the Lehrstück and which use an agit-prop style. Angela Bennie, who felt compelled by the production to "stand up and bear witness"[4], was the only critic who responded positively to this. Others, like Jill Jones, reviewing the Sydney production for the Sydney Star Observer, were critical of the production's didactic presentation of its ideology. She noted: "Non-Aboriginal audience members may feel preached at (and may privately mutter about 'preaching to the

[1] Personal interview, 19.8.96.
[2] *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23.7.96. "This [play] reminds us rather of a *Lehrstück* in the Brechtian sense than of mythical Aboriginal theatre which those (spectators) would have expected who don't know the Aboriginal author Mudrooroo."
[3] *The Australian*, 16.1.96.
[4] *SMH*, 15.1.96.

converted')."[1] In his review for the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Ralph Hammerthaler assessed the German production in a similar way, writing: "Die Aufführung ist viel zu brav, viel zu didaktisch geraten, vor allem durch die klaren, durch Lichtwechsel markierten Schnitte (...). Die Idee vom Theater im Theater schafft hier keine Irritation."[2] However, there does not seem to be an easy alternative to what Hammerthaler regarded as the production's weakness. My analysis has shown that the clear cuts were considered necessary to distinguish between Müller's and Mudrooroo's text.

On the other hand, a number of critics agreed on the dance scenes' strong impact on the spectators. Jones noted that the dance scene with Sue Anne Williams and Jason Moore "enhances and counterpoints the political statements"[3] and Hammerthaler suggested:

> Der Zuschauer muß zum Protest ebenso verführt werden wie der Müllersche Revolutionär zum Verrat an der Revolution. Was bedeutet schon ein Sprechchor angesichts der erotischen Tänze von Sue Anne Williams und Jason Moore?[4]

The dances accompanied by didgeridoo had such a strong effect because, as analysed above, Mudrooroo not only managed to create a parallel to Müller's 'dialogue with the dead', but because he did so effectively by using a mode of expression which has strong roots in the Aboriginal tradition. As Fischer noted, the combination of dance and *djangara* constructs "a link between twentieth century Aboriginal culture, more specifically contemporary Aboriginal dance theatre and the age-old traditions of the *dreamtime*".[5] In contrast, Aboriginal performance history shows that the *Lehrstück* is a mode of expression without an Aboriginal tradition.[6]

It needs to be taken into account, though, that a much more extensive use of dance in the production would have changed the role of Mudrooroo's frame. On the one hand, dance would have been a mode of expression in line with Müller's associative, sometimes non-referential use of language in some of his collaborations with Robert Wilson. On the other hand, Mudrooroo's frame-play would have lost its clarity as a tool for opposing Müller's world view and politics, and for promoting the Aboriginal views as an opposition.

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[1] *Sydney Star Observer*, 18.1.96; Similarly, Paul McGillick called it "a species of political theatre which went out with Zhdanov", *The Australian Financial Review*, 19.1.96.

[2] "The performance turned out to be far too nice, far too didactic, especially because of the obvious cuts which were marked through lighting changes. (...) The idea of theatre within theatre [a play within a play] does not irritate at all.", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16.7.96.

[3] *Sydney Star Observer*, 18.1.96

[4] *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16.7.96.

[5] Fischer (1995), 146.

[6] The agit-prop style of parts of the play could be considered as developing the idea of Aboriginal political protest, such as the demonstrations related to the tent embassies.

***The Aboriginal Protesters'*... role in the history of Australian theatre**

The production of *The Aboriginal Protesters*... was the first major all-Aboriginal theatre. As Brian Syron, the "father figure of Aboriginal theatre in Sydney", explained in his article entitled "The Problem is Seduction: Reflections on Black Theatre and Film"[1], there had been a number of initiatives beforehand, but no continuous development due to the lack of funding and finding trained people.[2] Noel Tovey noted in an interview with Phillip Adams that there had "not been any play with an all-Aboriginal cast to that scale yet."[3] In this respect, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project offered the opportunity to a group of Aboriginal theatre practitioners to workshop and rehearse a play over a longer period and also to explore a play by a foreign playwright. On the level of Aboriginal playwriting, it bears repeating that the Aboriginal characters "represent a new departure in Black Australian theatre" because they are well educated Aborigines and urban, middle-class professionals.[4] It is wrong, however, to call the production of *The Aboriginal Protesters*... "the birth of 'black theatre' in Australia" as it was announced in the flyer for the Weimar production: "Die Aufführung des Stückes beim Theaterfestival in Sidney im Januar 1996, die vom dortigen Goethe-Institut gefördert wurde, galt als die Geburtsstunde des 'schwarzen Theaters' in Australien."[5] This description of the project and the resulting production sounds patronising, especially when read in the context of the current postcolonial debate which has been marked by "recent critical attempts to postulate the colonial encounter primarily as a textual contest (...) between oppressive and subversive books"[6]. In this context, any impression that a former colonial country has enabled a former colonised people to produce their first play would detract considerably from its value and would easily lead to the perception of a new cultural dependence of the financial kind.

It was probably this ambiguous presentation of *The Aboriginal Protesters*... which led Stephan Suschke, the director and theatre-manager of the Berliner Ensemble at the time, to explore in the panel discussion mentioned above whether the Aborigines would have also chosen to workshop *Der Auftrag* even without the financial assistance of the Goethe-

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[1] "The Problem is Seduction: Reflections on Black Theatre and Film", in: Fischer (1993), 161-171.
[2] "The Problem is Seduction: Reflections on Black Theatre and Film", 165, in: Fischer (1993), 161-171.
[3] *Late Night Live*, ABC, Radio National, 11.7.96.
[4] Fischer (1995), 145.
[5] "The production of the play at the Sydney Festival in January 1996, which had been sponsored by the local Goethe-Institute, was considered the birth of 'black theatre' in Australia.", Flyer advertising *The Aboriginal Protesters*..., no name given.
[6] Gandhi (1998), 141; cf. also: "Colonialism and Literature", in: Loomba (1998), 69-94.

Institute.[1] His question challenged the participants in the discussion to examine the suspicion of cultural dependence which Mudrooroo had attempted to avoid.

As both the financial sponsor and the dramaturge of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project were German, it is tempting to interpret the role allocation in the project as recreating colonial patterns of Aboriginal dependence in a cultural sense. For instance, Helen Gilbert regarded the Aborigines as being used in the project to enliven mainstream, 'white' theatre. In her book *Sightlines. Race, Gender and Nation in Contemporary Australian Theatre*, she commented:

> (...) the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project (...) was initiated by Gerhard Fischer with the stated aim of mobilizing the 'innovative and dynamic force' of Aboriginal performance aesthetics to rescue a 'moribund if not dead' mainstream Australian theatre.[2]

Although Gilbert went on to say that "the Aborigines seem to have appropriated the performance text in the rehearsal / workshopping process"[3] the above quote is misleading. Apart from misreading Fischer's text, Gilbert failed to mention that Fischer put the above ideas into questions in order to indicate that he was looking critically at his own role in the project. Fischer wrote:

> And is it my job to suggest that Aboriginal Theatre has the potential to move ahead to become the avant-garde of Australian theatre (...)? The mainstream theatre of white Australia, at least in Sydney, is moribund if not dead already (...).[4]

This study has shown that it was neither the primary role of the project nor of the production to use an Aboriginal performance as a means to enliven mainstream, i.e. 'white', Australian theatre, and that it was not intended to be a form of colonial cultural influence.

Consequently, the suspicions that *The Aboriginal Protesters*... was the mere result of a new form of cultural dependence are wrong. This is confirmed by the participants, who considered the project a positive experience for various reasons. Brian Syron described it as a learning process for all involved[5]; Justine Saunders regarded it as a useful vehicle for creating awareness of Aboriginal issues, including in Germany[6], and Noel Tovey clearly expressed an ownership of the production when he said: "What pleases me more than

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[1] Bernhard Greiner reported the question in a personal Interview, 19.8.96.
[2] Gilbert (1998), 10. She referred to G. Fischer, "Genesis of a Theatre Project", 15, in: Fischer (1993), 3-17.
[3] Gilbert (1998), 10.
[4] G. Fischer, "Genesis of a Theatre Project", 15, in: Fischer (1993), 3-17.
[5] Cf. "We could only scratch the surface", Interview with Brian Syron, 132, in: Fischer (1993), 131-134.
[6] In an interview with Malve Gradinger (*Münchener Merkur*, 23.7.96) Justine Saunders commented on the political function of their performances: "Dadurch, daß wir jetzt mit unserem Stück herumreisen, tragen wir doch unsere Probleme nach außen."; "By taking our play on tour, we make our problems known to the outside world." Saunders also acknowledged the support of the Goethe-Institute and the Aboriginal Writers and Playwright Congress in Canberra and Sydney.

anything is that the success of this play here will have far-reaching consequences, a special resonance for the Aboriginal people back home. They will be able to say: 'Look, we can do it.'"[1]

For an intercultural collaboration, which can be easily misjudged against the background of (post) colonial cultural history, the only way to avoid any misleading impressions would be to eliminate any inaccuracies when it comes to describing the role of each participant. Thus, Mudrooroo's and Tovey's demand to be absolutely clear about the authorship of texts in the performance should be applied to all levels of the production as well as to its critical analysis.

In this light, it would have been useful if Fischer had added his own role to the metaphor of "twoccing" which he used to describe Mudrooroo's treatment of Müller's text. Although he noted that "Mudrooroo's appropriation of *Der Auftrag* might be seen as a case of commissioned literary twoccing"[2] he did not add to the metaphor that he was not only the one who introduced the 'car', that is the original text, but that he also had a considerable influence on the initial understanding and handling of it.[3]

Similarly, Shoemaker's criticism in a review of *The Mudrooroo/ Müller Project*, that Fischer's "presence in the text is a disproportionally large one"[4] points in the wrong direction, because a detailed description of the workshopping process helps to clarify everybody's contribution to the project. When Shoemaker equates the amount of text each participant contributed to the book with their role in a collaboration between Aborigines and 'whites', he simplifies a complex workshop situation and rehearsal process.

Despite the problems and criticisms outlined above, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project appears to have been an enriching collaboration for all sides, albeit one which needs to lead ultimately to independent Aboriginal dramatic and theatrical work.

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[1] Reported by Angela Bennie, *SMH*, 15.7.96.

[2] Fischer (1995), 161.

[3] Fischer's role is presented more clearly in his "Workshop Notes: The Dramaturg's View", 127. He wrote: "Mudrooroo and I sit down together in front of his computer to work out the final draft. I have made a list of cuts to the Müller portion of the text; Mudrooroo makes new changes and additions to his characters and the plot.", in: Fischer (1993), 124-130. Most studies, such as Bill Dunstone's article on "Mudrooroo: The Politics of Aboriginal Performance and Aboriginal Sovereignty", seem to ignore the information on Fischer's role contained in the "theatrical casebook", *The Mudrooroo/ Müller Project*. Dunstone, for instance, mentioned Fischer only as the translator, in: Dunstone (1999).

[4] Shoemaker (1994 (April)), 204; Gale MacLachlan puts this issue in a neutral context when noting: "(...) each ingredient [of the published version of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project] poses in its own way the political question, Who controls the framing?", in: MacLachlan (1994), 111.

In the context of the overall reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights in Australia, the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project has demonstrated important influences in two areas. Firstly, it pointed to the important role of the context in which a production takes place, in this case the location and the framework of festivals. It has been illustrated that even if it was possible to produce identical performances in different locations or for different festivals, the reception would differ because the expectations of a production are marked by the context in which the production takes place.

Secondly, the project served to illustrate the fact that theatre which emphasises a political message and productions which take up controversial political issues are, primarily, interpreted according to that background. When a 'hot' topic involving issues of Aboriginal rights and (post) colonialism is concerned, emotional reactions and pigeon-holing the production seem almost unavoidable. It has been suggested that clarifying the exact contributions of each participant and sponsor as well as the positions in the discussions would be helpful.

On the larger scale of foreign cultural politics, the analysis of the Mudrooroo/Müller - Project and of its reception has illustrated that an increased awareness of the history and current socio-political climate of the countries involved in any kind of cultural collaboration is necessary. Both the over-representation of Aboriginal culture in Germany when representing Australian culture in general, as it often has, as well as the simplification of historical facts in connection with the Holocaust and Aboriginal history since 'white' settlement, have shown a strong tendency in the recipient culture to receive these aspects in an equally generalised way. The country receiving these simplifications accepts them generally. This neither does justice to the project nor to its participants. Moreover, in the current climate of cuts to foreign cultural activities, the collaboration in the Mudrooroo/ Müller - Project and the reception of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* illustrate that cultural policies are crucial in shaping the image of foreign countries as well as the image of one's own culture in foreign countries and are thus an important part of foreign policy.

CONCLUSION

My study of the reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights, in production and in the press, set out to answer the following questions.

Which plays by German-speaking playwrights have been performed in Australia? When and where did these productions take place?

What was the influence of plays by German-speaking playwrights on the Australian theatre scene? How did it evolve in time?

How did Australian approaches towards these plays develop during the history of reception?

My study has shown that the influence of Austrian, German and Swiss plays between 1945 and 1996 never ceased. While the number of productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights other than Brecht were waxing and waning in intensity, Brecht's influence was consistent and his plays continued to be performed during the entire reception period. My research has also ascertained that the influence of German-speaking playwrights during the 20th century in Australia exceeded the number of plays performed. Thus, Brecht's theories have pervaded Australian theatre; they have been integrated to such an extent that often their impact is no longer clearly visible. Similarly, the effects of early productions in German at universities and by amateur groups like the *Kleines Wiener Theater* outshone the actual presentation of plays, through fostering an interest in theatre and through building a regular audience.[1] In short, it can be concluded that German-speaking playwrights and their work have affected the Australian theatre scene frequently, directly and overtly, and often in a subtle and thus not immediately obvious way. All in all, they have made a notable contribution to the development of the Australian theatre scene, acknowledged by directors, actors and critics alike.

Apart from recording the performance history of Austrian, German and Swiss plays, my chronological case studies have provided a history of Australian theatre and, to some extent, of general developments in Australian theatre culture, from the specific angle of Australian-German intercultural relationships. The historical overview has traced the

[1] Another area of subtle effects, which I shall study in future, is the influence of German-speaking playwrights upon Australian playwrights and their work.

developments of a country marked by cultural adherence and devotion to European and American imperatives to a nation whose self-confident theatre directors, such as Kosky, feel free to use as bold an approach towards drama texts, including the respected classics, as any director in Europe.[1]

In the productions marked by cultural cringe, the blind acceptance of unmodified foreign plays on the Australian stage went relatively unchallenged. Since the early seventies, Australians increasingly demanded plays and productions relevant to Australians without turning to cultural nationalism. Finally, bold approaches aim at productions which allow local theatre practitioners and audiences to assume ownership of culturally, historically or geographically unfamiliar texts.

The Australian reception of Brecht began in 1959 with Wal Cherry's production of *The Threepenny Opera*. During this initial period, Australian directors were concerned mainly with building a new Australian theatre culture. Its aesthetic norms and performance style were and continued to be strongly marked by Australian naturalism, whose legacy can still be detected in the Australian theatre scene. A great number of case studies on Brecht's plays, as well as Dürrenmatt's, have shown that directors have tended to adapt their plays to local norms and values. However, when, at the beginning of their reception, directors naturalised Brecht's plays repeatedly with the approval of many critics, this naturalisation cannot be interpreted as a sign of confidence or indifference to the plays' aesthetics as, in most cases, it was done without reflection. The majority of directors and critics still regarded their primary aim to be the reproduction of Brecht's and other playwrights' dramas in a way which they perceived as faithful and appealing to an Australian audience. At the time, explicitly defying the 'untouchable' status of a drama text was generally inconceivable. This respect has been described by some critics as being due to the local cultural cringe phenomenon resulting in an exaggerated reverence towards culture coming from overseas and to the world-wide opinion of literary and drama studies. However, in Melbourne, John Ellis' and Elijah Moshinsky's productions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Mother Courage* anticipated productions which would take a liberal approach towards the form of Brecht's plays while presenting their content as relevant to Australian spectators.

[1] It is no coincidence that, in her article "Towards a bold country", Susan Mitchell used the expression "bold" in the sense of opposing the 'cultural cringe', *The Australian*, 29.4.00.

My study has shown that the first widespread shift in paradigms and horizons of expectation occurred in the late 1960s and was clearly visible in productions such as Brian Davies' *The Exception and the Rule* for La Mama in 1969. The socio-political changes of the youth and protest movement strongly affected the reception of plays by German-speaking playwrights until the mid 1970s and lingered on until the end of the decade. This period saw bold approaches towards staging Brecht's plays which reflected the *Zeitgeist* and were strongly connected to the Australian New Wave. The APG's 1975 production of *The Mother* illustrated that a non-reverential approach was applied to the play's aesthetics but not to content and text, which were regarded as relevant for contemporary audiences. This was the first and only time when Brecht's ideology was perceived as valid without modifications.[1]

The 1975 collaboration between Wal Cherry and John Willett on *The Threepenny Opera* demonstrated that Cherry's views had shifted from producing a play in the Brechtian style towards staging a locally relevant production. His new priorities represented general changes to expectations. In this climate, Joachim Tenschert's 1973 production of *Mother Courage* - finally presenting a performance which followed the Brechtian model closely - came too late to have any practical consequences for the Australian production of Brecht's plays, although its 'authenticity' still influenced some reviewers.

A production's relevance for Australian audiences became a progressively important criterion for judging the performance of any play. The reception of Handke's plays has indicated the inherent dangers of valuing relevance, which could be used against experimental theatre if interpreted in the sense of relevance to the majority of theatre patrons. For some Australians, relevance was based on a play being set in Australia and containing local references, leading to the rejection of foreign plays. Others, however, regarded plays by German-speaking playwrights, such as Brecht and Handke, as enriching for the Australian theatre scene.

Handke's reception also foreshadowed the funding cuts to come which, together with socio-political and cultural changes, led to the demise of the New Wave of Australian theatre and thus to the end of the first attempts at bold approaches towards plays by German-speaking playwrights.

However, this decline was preceded by a height in production of Brecht's plays in the late

[1] I have pointed out Brecht's continuous relevance for New Theatre in chapters 2.4, 4.2 and 7.

1970s. In spite of containing many conservative productions, this boom was outstanding as it exposed Australians to the greatest number of productions of German plays in the reception history. Moreover, a widely read specialist journal, *Theatre Australia*, dedicated an entire section to Brecht, which marked the only time in the history of Australian theatre magazines that the focus was on a German-speaking playwright. It not only contained a list of many past performances but also contributions by Australian playwrights, directors and by John Willett. Regarding the Australian attitude towards foreign plays, it was significant that Roger Pulvers contributed an article demanding an "irreverent" approach towards Brecht.[1]

Between 1978 and 1982, Rainer Lübbren organised staged readings of German plays at the Goethe-Institute in Sydney. These demonstrated how the promotion of German culture in Australia could work effectively when based on collaboration with local partners and when local expectations were taken into account.

In the 1980s, the number of productions of Austrian, German and Swiss plays fell sharply. This decade occasioned no significant developments in the reception of Brecht, apart from his plays being the only German ones to be performed outside the major theatre capitals, thus reinforcing his special status amongst German-speaking playwrights in Australia. It was more important overall, though, that Australian playwrights translated and adapted plays by German playwrights so far neglected, which were performed on mainstream stages. These productions indicated that greater attention was paid to a play's translation and that the need to modify original texts was felt increasingly.

In addition, the 1980s saw the first and only report on Australian theatre in a German theatre magazine. *Theater Heute* provided a German perspective in this cultural encounter and covered a broader range of aspects than later German reactions to the Mudrooroo/Müller project. The article also pointed to the role of Australian theatre criticism and its problems, which had become also a concern within the Australian theatre scene.

In the 1990s, the second shift in approaches towards staging drama by German-speaking playwrights took place. Although some parallels can be drawn with the first shift in the 1970s[2], the second one was more comprehensive than the first one because it applied a bold

[1] Pulvers (1979).
[2] On an international scale, parallels between Barrie Kosky's approach and Peter Brook's can be drawn.

approach both to texts *and* performance styles. On the one hand, this change corresponded to international developments in the theatre, particularly concerning the move away from text-based productions. On the other hand, it reflected the specific evolution of Australian culture away from cultural cringe towards self-confidence. Instead of accepting the authority of a text and of a dominant performance style, a new generation of Australian directors took the liberty to experiment with text and style. The second wave of bold approaches also differed from the first in so far as it had become generally more acceptable that an Australian perspective did not necessarily translate into an Australian setting.

Kosky's production of Goethe's *Faust* as well as Kantor's productions of Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind* have marked out both the potential and the limits of a bold approach. From my study of the above productions, it has emerged that a production which takes great liberties in staging a play needs to constitute a new unified whole and needs to be able to stand alone without overt reliance on the original text. This expectation must be fulfilled if audiences are to feel that they own the production. My analysis has also shown that Brecht's most frequently performed plays are the only plays by German-speaking playwrights which can be considered as classics, in the sense of being known to audiences through performance tradition. Consequently, the production of other plays, such as *Faust*, cannot rely on the play being known, even if it is generally labelled a classic within literary history. Moreover, my analysis has shown that patrons of alternative theatre tend to react positively to innovative productions more readily. This has resulted in alternative theatres being the main venue for innovative theatre.

In spite of audiences needing to adjust their viewing and interpreting habits when attending experimental performances, they seem to be open to more productions based on this attitude, as Danny Katz confirmed recently in one of his weekly columns, entitled "Death of an audience".[1] Unlike the majority of audience-related articles, which closely associate audience reactions with box office results, Katz' column represented one of the rare articles genuinely concerned with audience expectations.[2] Katz satirised the urgent need to move away from "some crappy old theatre company producing a tired old play about boring middle-class values starring some washed-up old actors poncing around on stage in front of a sad old audience". He expressed the view that audiences could be seduced into

[1] *The Age*, 27.7.00.
[2] My study has shown that most articles dealing with audience expectations concentrate on the financial repercussions of audiences approving of or dismissing a production.

returning to the theatre or attending it for the first time if they shared his refreshing experience "to finally see a piece of theatre that actually reflected the times we live in". Thus, he endorsed, indirectly, Kantor's and Kosky's bold approaches. Within universities, the readiness to explore bold approaches has been illustrated by Varney's production of *The Good Person* and by the growing interest in plays by Heiner Müller. Moreover, my study has located the possibilities of exploration by liberally adapting Austrian, German and Swiss literature for the Australian stage.

Although the growing interest and range of possibilities for productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights appear to create a solid base for future productions using bold approaches, such exploration is potentially jeopardised by what is perceived by many as the threat of "global cultural homogenization"[1] through rapid globalisation. Many Australian theatre practitioners feel that highly commercially orientated productions, which are heavily promoted all over the world, could endanger cultural diversity.

Even when it comes to increased mobility, which is commonly presented as an advantage of globalisation, theatre does not profit from it to the same extent as other art forms. Unlike a visual arts exhibition or film, a theatre production still requires a great number of people to travel, leading to high costs of travel even if the set, lighting and sound equipment remain in the country of origin. Although videos of productions are a valuable source they can by no means replace a live performance.[2] While the bigger companies examined in the Nugent report might be able to obtain extra funding for international performances, the small alternative companies, many of which have presented plays by German-speaking playwrights in the past, would miss out on this positive effect of globalisation.

Local artists and administrators have reacted to the economic implications of globalisation for the Australian performing arts by, on the one hand, endorsing international standards and embracing the opportunities to present Australian work globally[3] and, on the other hand, protecting the local market against an increase in international artists performing

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[1] Maude Barlow, speech at the conference "Globalisation and the Live Performing Arts", Melbourne, 23., 24.6.00 (organised by Circus Oz and Monash University). Cf. also Derek Wilding, *The Australian*, 23.6.00 and Nugent (1999); this report emphasises the effects of globalisation in economic terms.

[2] Michael Merschmeier compares a video to a live theatre production and explains why a video cannot replace the live event, cf. Merschmeier (1990), 9. Rachel Fensham and Denise Varney have contributed to the ongoing discussion in *NTQ* about the relationship between live theatre performances and video, pointing out the advantages of video recording as documentation, in: Fensham (2000 (February)).

[3] Cf. Nugent (1999), s.2.1 and 3.3.4.

in Australia.[1] When considered in the context of tensions between the local and the international and the familiar and the unfamiliar, even Kosky's approach is not free from contradictions. In his suggestions for a bold approach, he proposed to do away with the notion that any playwright's work belongs to his or her country of origin, thus discarding the concept of local ownership, while stressing the importance of the 'local' by asking Australian directors to treat foreign plays in a bold way so that local audiences can assume ownership of the resulting productions.[2] Consequently, the debate concerning globalisation and the Australian performing arts is yet another variation of the fundamental question of how to approach and deal with the unfamiliar.[3]

In a climate marked by the concern for Australia's national culture, including the culture of Australia's indigenous population, the production of plays by German-speaking playwrights could be perceived as yet another unwanted influence from a foreign culture, similar to how some Australians considered that the production of such plays hindered the creation and consolidation of a new Australian theatre in the 1970s.

Yet, this possible threat to national cultures could represent, also, an opportunity for Australian and German artists to recognise the search and preservation of national identity as a shared past and present concern.[4] Australians continue to attribute a great importance to the role of the performing arts helping "define what it means to be an Australian", as confirmed by the recent Nugent report, which resulted from a government inquiry into the sustainability of Australia's thirty-one major subsidised performing arts companies with the aim of "Securing the Future" of this arts sector.[5] Re-phrasing a sentence of Heibert's and

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[1] Cf. Nugent (1999), Recommendation 10.2.3. One of the critics of this recommendation was the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's Federal policy officer, Ms Lyn Gailey, in: *SMH*, 17.12.99. In his speech for the conference "Globalisation and the Live Performing Arts". Mike Finch, artistic director of Circus Oz, illustrated the problems arising from his company attempting to balance out these extreme positions. Thus he reported the pressures on Circus Oz, having been labelled a "global company" in the Nugent report, to strictly regulate the number of performances, performance times and performance length and even to use less spoken language in their performances. (Unpublished)

[2] I have pointed out in my introduction that an understanding of a play's local and historical background enhances understanding of it.

[3] This debate has been carried out on a theoretical level by scholars of the "interkulturelle Germanistik". The corresponding publications can be found in publications such as *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* and in publications edited by Alois Wierlacher, such as Wierlacher (1985), Iwasaki (1991) and critical views published in Zimmermann (1991).

[4] Austrian and Swiss artists could make contributions to this discussion from different angles.

[5] Nugent (1999), s.2.1. According to the recent Saatchi & Saatchi report, "75 per cent [of Australians interviewed] say the arts help them define and express their cultural identity.", *The Australian*, 22.6.00. Cf. also Paul Jackson's and Paul Monaghan's observations about the question "of national identification" having "a force and urgency that seems to gather each day ", in: *RealTime*, no. 37, June /July 00.

Merschmeier's article for *Theater Heute*, culture could become a medium of preserving and developing further national identity.[1] As I have pointed out, so far, this aspect of Australian-German intercultural relationships has been identified in *Theater Heute* only and, in an academic context, by Walter Veit and Leslie Bodi. This shared question of national identity remains to be explored by theatre practitioners and could point to an excellent way of balancing out the image of Australia in Germany, which still is marked strongly by an exotic image of Aboriginal culture.[2] Australian and German-speaking theatre practitioners working on a common problem would shift the German focus from the exotic 'Other' towards a partnership built on common interests and problems. Kantor's production of *Excavation* has shown how a play by a German-speaking playwright can serve as a basis for an Australian exploration of new ideas. Ideally, in an intercultural exchange, artists could participate in a project and develop a performance, providing artists and audiences from both cultures with the opportunity to assume ownership of fresh ideas. Moreover, the German performance of *The Aboriginal Protesters...* proves that it can be a very enriching experience if German audiences are exposed to the work of a German playwright through Australian eyes.[3] It would be equally interesting to show Kantor's and Kosky's productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights in their country of origin because it would include the "interesting perspective" of "looking back at something".[4] The analysis of Kantor's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* has shown that successful bold productions of German classics not only take a fresh look at the Australian performance tradition, but they also add new aspects to a play's traditional German interpretations. David Malouf even went so far as defining the "peculiar freshness and originality in the way we take what is classic and remake it as our own" as one of the assets of Australian approaches towards cultural tradition and as a characteristic of Australian cultural identity.[5] Through this new perspective Australian productions, such as Kantor's *Chalk Circle*, illustrate the 'surplus' of meaning, which a

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[1] Cf. Heibert and Merschmeier (1986), 13: "That culture can be a medium to create national identity [is] not a new insight for members of the German 'cultural nation'".

[2] Cf. my analysis of the Mudrooroo / Müller project. Similarly, Malouf would like to shift the perception of Australia towards "a place that belongs not to some bucolic and more innocent world, but to the international present.", David Malouf, "Foreword", in: Nugent (1999), 21.

[3] As *The Aboriginal Protesters...* constitutes a new, independent play, which brought some German prejudices towards Aborigines to the surface, it could only convey the advantages to a limited degree.

[4] Cf. Kosky's comment on his drawing on European or Eastern cultures and comments: "We're looking back at something which gives Australians an interesting perspective on things.", in: Michael Shmith, *The Age*, 20.3.93.

[5] David Malouf, "Foreword", in: Nugent (1999), 21.

familiar play can obtain through its interpretation and production in a foreign country.[1] Consequently, in an intercultural exchange between theatre cultures, companies or artists an approach which stresses cultural differences seems to be preferable over an attempt to create a world theatre, in the sense of a theatre which reduces textual and stylistic diversity in order to reach a common theatre language which could be understood all over the world.[2]

Yet, some basic requirements regarding the status and financial situation of the performing arts have to be met in order that Australian theatre practitioners are able to participate in an intercultural exchange, may continue to produce foreign drama in a bold way and have the opportunity to maintain any innovative kind of theatre at all. Australian people and their government institutions at various levels need to respect Australian theatre as a vital cultural force and nurture it accordingly. This was acknowledged by the Nugent report also, which made recommendations to theatre practitioners and governments "to ensure that Australia has a financially healthy, artistically vibrant" performing arts sector.[3]

However, recent inquiries and debates regarding the performing arts have painted the picture of a scene in crisis concerning status and finances. In the 1999 Sir Frank Callaway Lecture[4], Katharine Brisbane evoked the return of the "Deadly Theatre" crisis, which Peter Brook had described in 1968. In addition, the Nugent report portrayed the major performing arts sector as "not financially stable and the viability of many companies [as] threatened".[5] However, the Nugent report has excluded the alternative theatres[6], which have stood out as the main source of innovative and vital work in my study, through its emphasis

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[1] This could represent an incentive for cultural institutes, such as the Goethe-Institute, to aim at greater intercultural collaboration and to increasingly support intercultural projects. In the case of Australia, this is made difficult, though, because no 'Australia-Institute' as such exists. Walter Veit elaborates on the concept of the 'surplus' of meaning, in German-speaking literature which can obtain, through Australian eyes, "einen in den Heimatländern unbekannten und unbegriffenen Sinn- und Bedeutungszuwachs, einen Sinn-Mehrwert" in: Veit (1999), 260-261.

[2] This is also the opinion expressed by German director Dieter Dorn in an interview with Klaus Vetter: "Ich glaube nicht an ein Welttheaterkonzept. Überhaupt nicht. Ich glaube nur daran, daß die Brasilianer zum Beispiel versuchen müßten, ihre Geschichten auf eine ganz eigene Art und Weise zu erzählen.", in: Vetter (1990), 50.

[3] Cf. Nugent (1999), Introduction. Unlike my thesis, the Nugent report placed emphasis on ensuring the future on a "broadly accessible major performing arts sector".

[4] Brisbane (1999 (October)).

[5] Cf. Nugent (1999), s.3.3 and Discussion papers. Australian economist David Throsby points out that the financial crisis is partly due to the lively arts finding it "very difficult to improve labour productivity. In the 1790s it took four workers 30 minutes to play a Mozart string quartet; two hundred years later, exactly the same labour is required.", *SMH*, 9.8.99.

[6] A second review has been proposed by a number of people. This would include "the entire performing arts industry", Ben Holgate, *The Australian*, 11.8.00.

on re-invigorating major companies with an annual turnover of more than $1 million.[1]

Yet the Nugent report can easily be applied to alternative theatres in so far as their companies need long-term, predictable funding as much as any other theatre company.[2] There is a strong tendency in Australia to measure the performing arts as a commodity that is subject to market forces or as a vehicle for building "Australia's image abroad as a clever and innovative country, which helps attract tourists and enhances Australia's ability to sell high quality goods and services overseas."[3] This leads to a vulnerable status of the performing arts as they are dependent on factors beyond their control, thereby threatening artistic freedom and the survival of companies which take high artistic risks. However, there is also an emerging awareness that culture conveys different values than do commodities. This view has been expressed by Australian economist David Throsby as follows:

> (...) there is something which is different from the notion of an economic calculus, which should be used to assess the value of culture. If we were able to accept that, it might be possible to envisage a paradigm shift in the national agenda away from the notion that ultimately everything can be reduced to economic value. In terms of cultural policy, of course we have to acknowledge that it has an economic dimension, but we have also to recognise that there are other dimensions as well which are just as important in serving the needs of society.[4]

David Malouf, in his foreword for the Nugent report, began his evaluation of the arts in Australia by noting that the arts and live are intrinsically linked and depend on each other. Consequently, "to see them [the arts] as something 'added' that might also be taken away is to miss the extent to which they may be the source, as well as the product, of what we are."[5]

Ultimately, this re-evaluation of the arts could lead to much needed changes in funding. Consistent financial support for alternative theatre companies would provide them with some sense of security and raise the quality of production and reception. On the one hand, it

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[1] Nugent (1999), Introduction.

[2] S.7 of the Nugent report stresses the role of ongoing and transparent funding. Similarly, Brisbane reports the exclusion of amateur theatres from the funding policies of the early Australia Council. She considers the Australia Council's "pursuit of 'professionalism'" as central to the demise of the "healthy amateur culture", which represented the early "avant-garde" in Australian theatre, cf. Brisbane (1999 (October)), cf. also Rubin (1998), 41.

[3] Nugent (1999), s.2.1. Cf. also the promotion of Australian culture in Germany in 1995 under the title "Erlebnis Australien", which strongly emphasised performances by Aborigines. Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter remarked about the marketing strategies applied to the performing arts in the Saatchi & Saatchi report: "The wine industry was offered [in the report] as an instructive example, but the arts aren't an industry, they are many (and is industry the right word?). Not everyone has something to sell.", in: *RealTime*, 34, 1999.

[4] Throsby (1998 (28.11.)). Throsby's speech was referring to the visual arts. The fact that the above quote can be easily applied to the performing arts is confirmed by Throsby reiterating the above remarks at the conference "Globalisation and the Live Performing Arts", 23., 24.6.00).

[5] David Malouf, "Foreword", in: Nugent (1999), 20.

would allow them to program on a long term basis, with the possibility of productions relating to each other through a theme, a playwright or a style. On the other hand, it would enable artists to develop their talents over time.[1] Concerning a director's and company's style and performance language, this consistency would provide a core of performers with the opportunity to learn and contribute to a director's particular language. This, in turn, would result in a relatively consistent company language and style, facilitating audiences' understanding. Also, secure funding would ensure increased longevity of these companies, a condition for building an ongoing relationship with a regular audience. In the case of productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights, audiences' familiarity with a company's style might compensate for their being unable to rely on a play's or playwright's performance tradition.

These propositions would not necessarily lead to overwhelming funding costs if mainstream and alternative theatre companies were prepared to make the barriers between them more penetrable. One possible, admittedly controversial[2], approach would be for State theatre companies to offer some of their resources, such as the smaller studio theatres, for joint productions. This might result in overcoming the current inclination of some audience members to favour "alternative shows in alternative venues that use[d] new kinds of art-forms and appeal[e]d to young people who [aren't] interested in all that mainstream stuff", as Katz expressed it.[3] This move would have financial advantages for alternative companies and would provide mainstream companies with a new group of spectators ensuring mutual survival.

Therefore, the solution to some of the current problems in Australian theatre would not be Hibberd's proposed "five year funding moratorium"[4] but a different funding policy.

In one respect, though, Hibberd's observations confirm some of my findings. They partly attribute the moribund state of Australian theatre to it not having moved on towards

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[1] At the conference on "Globalisation and the Live Performing Arts", Australian playwright Hannie Rayson stressed the importance of artists being able to develop their talents over time instead of them working under the expectation that they deliver instant results (Unpublished).

[2] Fotheringham describes the interests of the 'flagship' companies as being "against diversity; they seek to destroy alternatives, not to assist or lead them; not to sail proudly garding a fleet of smaller ships, but to blow them out of the water.", "Boundary Riders and Claim Jumpers", 28, in: Kelly (1998), 20-37.

[3] Danny Katz, *The Age*, 27.7.00.

[4] In his submission for the Nugent report, entitled "A Grand Denial" Hibberd proposed to put aside "80 per cent of projected monies" for five years with the aim to make Australian theatre less grandiose and more vital, in: Hibberd (1999 (December)).

innovative ways of staging.[1] In 1996, Kosky had already explained the "current malaise in theatre" through an overall lack of ideas at "the centre of cultural life" and a lack of artistic and cultural debate, resulting in "a culture of passivity and silence", "a culture in paralysis".[2] Although in different ways, both artists have pointed to Australian theatre urgently requiring change and innovation both on the level of content and form, thus going beyond the basic concerns over funding.

My study has illustrated how a bold approach can successfully re-invigorate the national theatre scene by staging plays from non-English countries and, at the same time, re-interpret the content and aesthetics of plays by German-speaking playwrights. It has also emerged that the bold approach is versatile enough to be transferred to a great number of Australian plays with the aim of making them meaningful for contemporary audiences.[3] This might point to one way of solving part of the current crisis in Australian theatre.

Apart from its relevance for current Australian performance practice, my research points to two other areas which need attention.

Firstly, my study has shown the important role of academics in Australia for initiating, encouraging and reflecting, increasingly as reviewers, on innovative approaches in theatre theory and practice. Thus academics, despite the perceived "barriers of suspicion between the profession and the theatre"[4], make a valuable contribution to the Australian theatre scene. Moreover, academia is also important because universities train part of the next generation of theatre practitioners and audience members.[5] For these reasons, the severe financial cuts which have been imposed on the Arts faculties will, ultimately, affect the performing arts scene.

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[1] "My submission argues that most funded theatre in Australia today exists as a child of the 19th century, and its playthings are stylistically and existentially anachronistic. (...) Events, individuals and organisations have conspired to deny Australian audiences the rich fruits of 20th century theatrical modernism." Interestingly, Hibberd praised the following productions: Kosky's *The Dybbuk*, Kantor's *Excavation* and Justus Neumann's *The Last Days of Mankind*.Hibberd (1999 (December)) Brisbane ascribes the staleness of Australian theatre to the "climate of dependence" created by the Australia Council's funding regulations, cf. Brisbane (1999 (October)).

[2] *The Age*, 11.11.96. Kosky spoke on the occasion of the fifth birthday of Sydney's Museum for Contemporary Art.

[3] Kantor has recently illustrated how a bold approach can be applied to an Australian play when he staged Patrick White's *The Ham Funeral*. Cf. John McCallum's review in *The Australian*, 4.8.00.

[4] Brisbane (1999 (October)).

[5] In their report for *RealTime* (no 4, 1999), Virginia Baxter and Keith Gallasch extend the importance of education for appreciation of the performing arts to school, asking "How can the arts be regarded as anything but alien and elitist when they play so insignificant a role in the everyday lives of Australian children?".

Finally, my research has pointed to the danger that Australians might not only jeopardise the future of their innovative theatre companies, but imperil also their relatively young theatre history. Applying Gadamer's observations on the role of history to Australian theatre, every current production needs to be considered as embedded in Australian performance history and its traditions. [1] Therefore, it is necessary to provide adequate facilities for preserving the records of past performances. For the purpose of my research, it remained possible to make up for the sporadic nature of theatre magazines and the lack of continuing documentation of theatre reviews, such as in the *ANZTR*, through personal interviews. However, there will come a time when these witnesses will no longer be able to impart their knowledge, and when artists and researchers have to rely solely on the written word, and to some extent on taped interviews and videos, to access past experiences in Australian theatre. Therefore, it is critical that existing collections of material related to theatre productions are kept in excellent conditions.[2]

In summary, many findings in my thesis have implications for Australian theatre which are considerably wider than the historical and contemporary reception of drama by German-speaking playwrights. For this reason, it would be important to complement this research by studying in detail the teaching of foreign literatures in schools and universities, and their impact on the production of drama by German-speaking playwrights, as well as examining the reception of operas and of films of Austrian, German and Swiss origin. At the same time, it would be valuable to examine the reception of other European drama in Australia, such as French drama, with the purpose of bringing out the specific character of those reception histories and how they contrast with each other.

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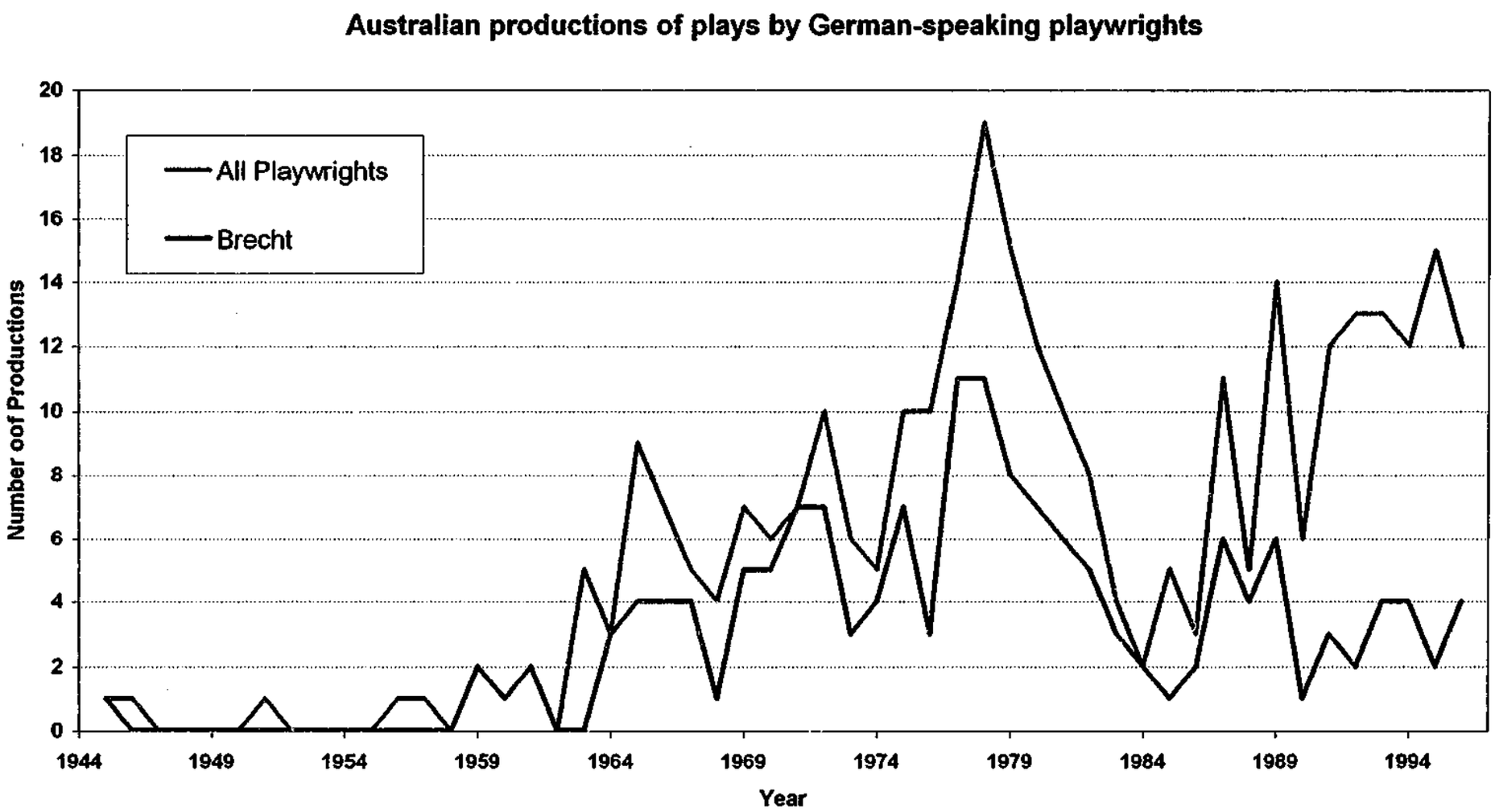
[1] Cf. Gadamer (1990), 270-312; Gadamer (1975): 235-274.

[2] Against this background, the move of the Dennis Wolanski library of the Performing Arts from the Sydney Opera House to the University of NSW seems regrettable. This comprehensive archival collection requires a specially assigned librarian to maintain the material and to keep collecting reviews.

Appendix I


Australian productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights
All Playwrights
Brecht
Number oof Productions
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
18
20
1944
1949
1954
1959
1964
1969
1974
1979
1984
1989
1994
Year

Appendix II

Australian productions of plays by German-speaking playwrights (1945-1996)*

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1945	Brecht	*The Private Life of the Master Race*		New Theatre, Sydney
1946	Schiller	*Maria Stuart*	Raoul Cardamatis	Independent Theatre
1951	Goethe	*Faust*	Raoul Cardamatis	Independent Theatre
1956	Goethe	*Faust*	Derek van Abbe	Adelaide Theatre Group
1957	Schiller	*Maria Stuart*	Derek van Abbe	Adelaide University Theatre Guild
1959	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	David Race	Marlowe Society, Melbourne University
1959	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Wal Cherry	UTCR
1960	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Jean Stuart	Independent Theatre
1961	Brecht	*Galileo*	Doris Fitton	Independent Theatre
1961	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Graeme Hughes	Ormond Women's College
1963	Dürrenmatt	*The Physicists*		Kleines Wiener Theater
1963	Dürrenmatt	*The Physicists*	George Fairfax	St. Martin's Theatre
1963	Dürrenmatt	*The Visit*	Peter Summerton	Independent Theatre
1963	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*	John Clark	Old Tote

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1963	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*	Wal Cherry	Emerald Hill
1964	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	John Clark	Old Tote, UNSW
1964	Brecht	*The Good Person*	John Tasker	State Theatre Company, SA
1964	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Richard Campion	Old Tote
1965	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*		Student production for University Drama Festival
1965	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1965	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Jeana Bradley	Graduate Society & University Dramatic Society, The Festival of Perth
1965	Brecht	*Brecht on Brecht*	Wal Cherry	Emerald Hill
1965	Dürrenmatt	*The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*	Ken Hannam	Independent Theatre
1965	Frisch	*Andorra*		New Theatre, Sydney
1965	Hochhuth	*The Representative*	Edgar Metcalfe	National Theatre, WA
1965	Hochhuth	*The Representative*	John Clark	Old Tote
1965	Hochhuth	*The Representative*	John Tasker	South Australian Theatre Company
1966	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Eddie Allison	New Theatre, Sydney
1966	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	John Broome	University Theatre Guild

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1966	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	John Ellis	Melbourne Youth Theatre, St. Martin's Theatre
1966	Brecht	*Brecht on Brecht*	Wal Cherry	Emerald Hill; Adelaide Festival
1966	Frisch	*Andorra*		National Theatre, InterstateTheatre Season
1966	Hochhuth	*The Representative*	John Sumner	UTCR, Russell St.
1966	Schnitzler	*La Ronde*	Wal Cherry	Theatre 60
1967	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	John Ellis	Melbourne Youth Theatre
1967	Brecht	*The Elephant Calf*	Max Gillies	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1967	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Wal Cherry	Flinders University
1967	Brecht	*Galileo*	Wal Cherry	Flinders University Drama Group
1967	Dürrenmatt	*Romulus*	Colin Ballantyne	The Sheridan, SA
1968	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	Brian Hogan	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1968	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1968	Weiss	*Marat Sade*	John Ellis	Alexander Theatre, Monash University
1968	Weiss	*The Investigation*	Robert Levis	Independent Theatre
1969	Brecht	*In the Jungle*	Brian Davies	La Mama
1969	Brecht	*The Elephant Calf*	Brian Davies	La Mama / Melbourne University
1969	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	Brian Davies	La Mama

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1969	Brecht	*Baal*	Max Gillies	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1969	Brecht	*Man is Man*	Max Gillies	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1969	Hochhuth	*Soldiers*	John Sumner	MTC
1969	Schnitzler	*The Affairs of Anatol*	Stephan Beinl	Independent Theatre
1970	Brecht	*Brecht on Brecht*	Arne Neeme	The Octagon Theatre Company
1970	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	John Sumner	MTC
1970	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Laurence Hayes	Canberra Repertory Society
1970	Brecht	*Puntila*	Oliver Fiala	New Theatre, Sydney
1970	Brecht	*Mahagonny*	Ralph Wilson	Canberra Experimental Theatre
1970	Dürrenmatt	*The Physicists*		New Theatre, Sydney
1971	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Bill Pepper	Twelfth Night Theatre
1971	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*	Bill Pepper	Twelfth Night Theatre
1971	Brecht	*Galileo*	John Sumner	MTC
1971	Brecht	*Trumpets and Drums*	Nolan Gandon	New Theatre, Sydney
1971	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Pauline Beville-Anderson	Henry Lawson Theatre, Sydney
1971	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Richard Wherrett	Old Tote
1971	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Sue Nevile	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1972	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1972	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1972	Brecht	*Trumpets and Drums*	Bill Pepper	Twelfth Night Theatre
1972	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Edgar Metcalfe	Playhouse, Festival of Perth
1972	Brecht	*The Good Person*	John Bell	Old Tote
1972	Brecht	*Galileo*	John Sumner	MTC
1972	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	John Wregg	Alexander Theatre, Monash University
1972	Büchner	*Danton's Death*	Rick Billinghurst	MTC
1972	Handke	*My Foot My Tutor*	Alan Robertson	La Mama
1972	Handke	*Offending the Audience*	Bruce Widdop	NIDA
1973	Bauer	*Film and Female*	Keith Salvat	La Mama
1973	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Jim Sharman	Old Tote Company, UNSW Drama Foundation
1973	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Joachim Tenschert	MTC at the Princess
1973	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	Ralph Wilson	Canberra Evening College
1973	Handke	*The Ride Across Lake Constance*		Tribe at the Pram Factory
1973	Handke	*Kaspar*	Richard Wherrett	Nimrod

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1974	Brecht	*Man is Man*	Charles Edelman	Adelaide University Theatre Guild
1974	Brecht	*Mahagonny*	Chris Winzar	New Opera at Theatre 62
1974	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Ralph Wilson	Canberra Evening College
1974	Brecht	*The Seven Deadly Sins*	Wal Cherry	Space Festival Centre, SA
1974	Handke	*My Foot My Tutor*	Richard Wherrett	Nimrod
1975	Brecht	*Man is Man*	Arne Neeme	Hayman WAIT
1975	Brecht	*The Elephant Calf*	Lindzee Smith	APG
1975	Brecht	*The Mother*	Lindzee Smith	APG
1975	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Mary Gage	The Darlington Players
1975	Brecht	*Mahagonny*	Sam Besekow	Australian Opera Company, NSW
1975	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Wal Cherry	New Opera at Playhouse'75
1975	Handke	*The Ride Across Lake Constance*		D: Richard Wherrett
1975	Handke	*My Foot My Tutor*	Bob Thorneycroft, Joe Bolz	Pram Factory
1975	Handke	*The Ride Across Lake Constance*	Lindy Davies	State College, Vic
1976	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*		SUDS
1976	Brecht	*Puntila*	Ralph Wilson	Australian Theatre Workshop

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1976	Brecht, Kipling, Willett	*Never the Twain*	Wal Cherry	Playhouse; Flinders University
1976	Dürrenmatt	*Play Strindberg: The Dance of Death*		Fringe Theatre Group at La Mama
1976	Handke	*The Ride Across Lake Constance*	Sally Holmes	Hole in the Wall
1976	Handke	*My Foot My Tutor*	Susan Parker	Queensland Arts Theatre
1976	Schnitzler	*La Ronde*	Christopher Ross-Smith	NIDA
1976	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*		Seymour Student Theatre
1976	Weiss	*Marat Sade*	Fred Wessely	La Boite
1976	Weiss	*Marat Sade*	Lindy Davies	State College, VIC
1977	Brecht	*Survival*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1977	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Bailey	Toorak Players, Melbourne
1977	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	David Cisek	New Theatre
1977	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	David Cisek	New Theatre, Sydney
1977	Brecht	*Baal*	James McCaughey	Pram Factory, Back Theatre
1977	Brecht	*Happy End*	John Milson	
1977	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Keith Hudson	Brisbane Repertory Theatre
1977	Brecht	*Don Juan*	Rex Cramphorn	NIDA

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1977	Brecht	*The Seven Deadly Sins*	Wal Cherry	New Opera, SA
1977	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Wal Cherry	State Opera, SA
1977	Brecht, Kipling, Willett	*Never the Twain*		Australian Stage Company
1977	Handke	*Kaspar*	Lindzee Smith	La Mama
1977	Kroetz	*Michi's Blood*	Lindzee Smith	APG
1977	Zuckmayer	*The Captain of Kopenick*		New Theatre, Sydney
1978	Brecht	*Mother Courage*		
1978	Brecht	*Readings & Songs of Man is a Man and The Threepenny Opera*		APG
1978	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Aubrey Mellor	NIDA/Jane St.
1978	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Bruce Myles	MTC at AT
1978	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Fred Wessely	Brisbane Repertory Theatre
1978	Brecht	*The Good Person*	George Whaley	NIDA
1978	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	George Whaley	NIDA
1978	Brecht	*Man is Man*	Ken Boucher	SUDS
1978	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	Prof. Wolfgang von Stas	University of NSW

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1978	Brecht	*The Private Life of the Master Race*	Wal Cherry	Flinders UDC
1978	Dürrenmatt	*The Physicists*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1978	Fassbinder	*Pre-Paradise, Sorry Now*		APG
1978	Fassbinder	*Bremen Coffee*	Malcolm Blaylock	Brisbane Repertory Theatre / La Boite
1978	Horváth	*Tales from the Vienna Woods*	Rod Wissler	La Boite
1978	Kafka	*Metamorphosis*	Steven Berkoff	Nimrod Theatre at the MTC
1978	Kroetz	*Men's Business*	Robert Menzies	La Mama
1978	Schiller	*Maria Stuart*	Ken Campbell-Dobble	Western Australian Theatre Company
1978	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*	Rodney Delaney	NIDA
1979	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*		
1979	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Edward Talbot	Hobart Repertory Theatre Society
1979	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	James McCaughey	Mill Theatre, Geelong
1979	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	John Clark	NIDA at Jane Street
1979	Brecht	*Happy End*	John Milson	TN Company, Twelfth Night Theatre
1979	Brecht	*Galileo*	Ken Horler	Nimrod Theatre
1979	Brecht	*Concerning Poor B.B.*	Michael Brindley	Pram Factory

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1979	Brecht, Schall	*From Laughing about the World to Living with the World*	Ekkehard Schall	Nimrod Downstairs
1979	Dürrenmatt	*Play Strindberg: The Dance of Death*	Brian Debnam	Stage Company
1979	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*	Gary Stonehouse	NIDA
1979	Handke	*Kaspar*		Theatre 62
1979	Handke	*Self-Accusation*		Skelta at La Mama
1979	Handke	*Calling for Help*	Lindy Davies	La Mama
1979	Horváth	*Tales from the Vienna Woods*		STC
1979	Wedekind	*Lulu*	Allan Kingsford Smith	Rocks Players
1980	Bauer	*Shakespeare the Sadist*	Bruce Myles	MTC, Atheneum 2
1980	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*		Ars Nova, Melbourne
1980	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Daryl Wilkinson	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1980	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	George Whaley	NIDA
1980	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	John Milson	Twelfth Night Theatre
1980	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	John Tasker	Canberra Opera
1980	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	John Tasker	Canberra Opera

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1980	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Sue Nevile	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC
1980	Fassbinder	*Bremen Coffee*	Bruce Myles	Atheneum 2
1980	Kafka	*The Hunger Artist*		VCA / La Mama
1980	Kafka	*The Hunger Artist*	Martin Christmas	La Mama, VCA
1980	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*	John Clark	NIDA
1981	Brecht	*Concerning Poor B.B.*		Nimrod
1981	Brecht	*In the Jungle*		Guild Theatre, Melbourne University
1981	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Bruce Myles	MTC, Athenaeum
1981	Brecht	*Mahagonny*	Geoff Hook	The Church, Performance Centre, Zoo Theatre
1981	Brecht	*Happy End*	Leone Sharp	Q Theatre, Sydney
1981	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Mick Rodger	DDIAE
1981	Horváth	*Tales from the Vienna Woods*	Aubrey Mellor	Nimrod
1981	Kafka	*The Hunger Artist*	Jean Pierre Mignon	Anthill Theatre
1981	Kroetz	*Concert a la Carte*		Masque Ensemble
1981	Wedekind	*Lulu*	Jim Sharman	Sydney Theatre Company, Adelaide Playhouse
1982	Brecht	*The Elephant Calf*		Canberra Theatre, lunchtime series

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1982	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	George Whaley	Theatre ACT, Playhouse
1982	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Jim Sharman	STC
1982	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*	Tony Watts	MTC
1982	Brecht, Schall	*Brecht Program*	Ekkehard Schall	Melbourne, Universal Theatre; Adelaide
1982	Kleist	*The Prince of Homburg*	Louis Nowra	Playhouse, Adelaide
1982	Lessing	*Minna von Barnhelm*	Ray Lawler	MTC, Atheneum
1982	Müller, Heiner	*Hamletmachine*	Jean Pierre Mignon	Anthill Theatre
1983	Brecht	*The Mother*	Bill Pepper	NIDA
1983	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	James McCaughey	Mill Theatre, Geelong
1983	Brecht	*Galileo*	Mick Rodger	QTC
1983	Handke	*The Ride Across Lake Constance*	Tanya Uren	La Mama
1984	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Graeme Blundell	MTC, Playhouse
1984	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*	R.G. Davis	Flinders University
1985	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Richard Wherrett, John Bell	Nimrod
1985	Goethe	*Torquato Tasso*	Phillip Keir	STC
1985	Horváth	*Don Juan Comes Back from the War*	Daryl Wilkinson	Secondary Teachers' College / MSC

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1985	Kroetz	*Farmyard*		Canberra Theatre
1985	Strauss	*Big and Little*	Jenny Kemp	STC, The Playhouse
1986	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*	Bill Dunstone	University of Western Australia
1986	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Malcom Keith	Seymour Centre
1986	Fassbinder	*The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*	Mark Gaal	STC, Wharf Theatre
1987	Brecht	*Meeting Mother Courage. Introducing Brecht's Classical to schools*		Arena Theatre, Melbourne
1987	Brecht	*Red Weather augment Gay and Brecht*		Sydney Gap Theatre at Trades Union Club
1987	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*		Spellbound Productions at Open Stage, Melbourne
1987	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*	Angela Chaplin	Arena Theatre, Melbourne
1987	Brecht	*Round Heads and Pointed Heads*	Kim Durban	Guild Theatre, Melbourne University
1987	Brecht	*Kurt. Brecht & Jan*	Lois Ellis, with Jan Friedl	MTC, Athenaeum 2
1987	Büchner	*Woyzeck*	Phillip Keir	Seymour Centre, University of Sydney
1987	Horváth	*Don Juan Comes Back from the War*	Aubrey Mellor	NIDA

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1987	Kafka	*A Report to an Academy. A Hunger Artist*		Belvoir Theatre
1987	Kafka	*Metamorphosis*		Red Shed
1987	Schwitters	*The Ur- Sonata*	Jean - Pierre Voos	Capricorn Line
1988	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1988	Brecht	*The Measures Taken*		New Theatre, Melbourne
1988	Brecht	*A Respectable Wedding*	Roger Hodgman	MTC
1988	Brecht	*Happy End*	Stephen Clark	La Boite
1988	Strauss	*Big and Little*	Harald Clemen	STC
1989	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	David Bell	La Boite
1989	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Des Davis	Theatre South, Wollongong
1989	Brecht	*Arturo Ui*	Douglas Horton	St Martin's Theatre
1989	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Geoff Hooke	Darwin Theatre Company
1989	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	John Milson	WA Academy of Performing Arts
1989	Brecht	*Galileo*	John Rado	New Theatre, Sydney
1989	Kafka	*The Ape Addresses the Academy*	Ralph Wilson	Rehearsal Room, Canberra Theatre

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1989	Karge	*The Conquest of the South Pole*	Jim Sharman	Belvoir Street
1989	Kroetz	*Farmyard*	Ariette Taylor	La Mama
1989	Kroetz	*Farmyard*	Ariette Taylor	La Mama
1989	Kroetz	*Farmyard*	David Ritchie	Harlos at Belvoir Street
1989	Kroetz	*Ghosttrain*	David Ritchie	Harlos at Belvoir Street
1989	Mueller, Harald	*Deathraft*	Beverley Blankenship	The Church
1989	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*	Mark Gaal	Rocks Theatre, Sydney
1990	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Des James	Riverina Playhouse
1990	Karge	*Man to Man*	Neil Gladwin	Belvoir Street
1990	Müller, Heiner	*Quartet*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Seymour Theatre
1990	Schnitzler	*La Ronde*		TH.A.T Ensemble at Princess Theatre, Brisbane
1990	Süskind	*Double Bass*	Sandra Bates	Ensemble Theatre, Sydney
1990	Weiss	*Marat Sade*	Simon Phillips	STCSA at Playhouse, AFC
1991	Brecht	*The Seven Deadly Sins*		Concert Hall, QPAC
1991	Brecht	*Galileo*	John Stephens	Canberra Repertory Society
1991	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Mark Gaal	ATYP at Performance Space, Sydney

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1991	Goethe	*Iphigenia in Tauris*	Florian Messner	Lookout Theatre, Sydney
1991	Kafka	*The Trial*	Gary Baxter	The Rep Theatre, Sydney
1991	Kafka	*The Trial*	Malcolm Keith	Theatre Nepean, Sydney
1991	Kroetz	*Request Programme*	Wendy Joseph	La Mama
1991	Mitterer	*Visiting Hours*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Belvoir Street
1991	Müller, Heiner	*Medeamaterial*	Renato Cuocolo	IRAA Theatre
1991	Süskind	*Double Bass*	Sandra Bates	Ensemble Theatre at MTC
1991	Süskind	*Double Bass*	Sandra Bates	Playhouse, Perth
1991	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*	Cath McKinnon	Playhouse, Adelaide
1992	Achternbusch	*Ella*	Phillip Keir	Anthill
1992	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Chris Edmund	WA Academy of Performing Arts
1992	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Fred Wessley	Brisbane Arts Theatre
1992	Dürrenmatt	*Conversations with a Man One Despises*		Tandanya Theatre
1992	Dürrenmatt	*The Visit*	Paul Galloway	Acronym at Cement Box Theatre
1992	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*	Glenn D'Cruz	Open Stage Theatre, Melbourne University
1992	Kafka	*The Trial*	Bohdan Borys Maciburko	Patch Theatre, Adelaide
1992	Müller, Heiner	*Quartet*	Ariette Taylor	Little Theatre, Adelaide

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1992	Müller, Heiner	*Quartet*	Ariette Taylor	Malthouse
1992	Strauss	*Big and Little*	Jenny Kemp	VCA, School of Drama
1992	Strauss	*Time and the Room*	Michael Gow	STC at the Wharf Studio
1992	Toller	*Machine Wreckers*	Paul Flanagan	Actors' Theatre at the Old Melbourne Goal
1992	Wedekind	*Lulu*	Peter Wilkins	Narrabundah College at Hawk Theatre, Canberra
1993	Baum	*Cold Hands*	David Ritchie, Udo Borgert	Lighthouse Theatre, Macquarie University
1993	Bernhard	*The Force of Habit*	Jean-Pierre Mignon	Anthill
1993	Brecht	*A Respectable Wedding*	Bogdan Koca	Crossroads Theatre
1993	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Denise Varney	Open Stage Theatre, University of Melbourne
1993	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Jean-Pierre Mignon	Anthill
1993	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Mark Radvan	QUT Academy of the Arts
1993	Dürrenmatt	*The Deadly Game*	Danny Mulheron	Bats Theatre
1993	Dürrenmatt	*The Visit*	Michael Gow	STC
1993	Dürrenmatt	*The Deadly Game*	Tony Millett	Brisbane Arts Theatre
1993	Fassbinder	*Blood on the Neck of the Cat*	Natasha Bolonkin	Canberra Youth Theatre
1993	Goethe	*Faust*	Barrie Kosky	MTC at Russell St.

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1993	Handke	*Offending the Audience*	David Sinclair	Canberra Repertory Theatre
1993	Süskind	*Double Bass*	Denny Lawrence	Ensemble Theatre Company
1994	Brecht	*Fatzer*		Performance Space
1994	Brecht	*He Who Says Yes - He Who Says No*		Great Chorus Theatre Company, Melbourne
1994	Brecht	*The Exception and the Rule*		Great Chorus Theatre Company, Melbourne
1994	Brecht	*The Threepenny Opera*	Simon Phillips	Sydney Theatre Company
1994	Büchner	*Woyzeck*	Renato Cuocolo	IRAA at CUB Malthouse, Melbourne
1994	Frisch	*The Fire Raisers*	Peter Hayes	Crossroads Theatre
1994	Kafka	*The Burrow*	Michael Kantor	Seymoure Centre
1994	Kafka	*The Trial*	Nicholas Harrington	Tarquin at Napier Street
1994	Kokoschka	*Job*	Eddy Knight, Andrew Garsden	Performance Studio, Adelaide University
1994	Kokoschka	*Murder, the Hope of Women*	Eddy Knight, Andrew Garsden	Performance Studio, Adelaide University
1994	Mitterer	*Siberia*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Lookout Theatre
1994	Schnitzler	*The Farewell Supper*		Odeon, Adelaide Fringe Festival
1995	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Alison Richards	VCA
1995	Brecht	*Mother Courage*	Fred Wessley	Arts Theatre
1995	Dorst	*I, Feuerbach*	Bogdan Koca	Stables Theatre

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1995	Handke	*The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*	Kim Henna	Melbourne University, Union Theatre
1995	Handke	*The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*	Michael Gow	Australian Theatre for Young People, Sydney Festival
1995	Horváth	*Tales from the Vienna Woods*	Marion Potts	NIDA
1995	Kraus	*The Last Days of Mankind*	Hanspeter Horner	Southern Most Cultural Affairs at Theatreworks
1995	Kraus	*The Last Days of Mankind*	Hanspeter Horner	Theatreworks
1995	Kroetz	*Ghosttrain*		Napier Street Theatre
1995	Kroetz	*Farmyard*	Ariette Taylor	MTC, Fairfax Studio
1995	Kroetz	*Farmyard*	Ariette Taylor	Napier Street Theatre
1995	Müller, Heiner	*Quartet*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Lookout Theatre
1995	Schnitzler	*La Ronde*	Tony Knight	NIDA
1995	Turrini	*Shakespeare in the Sex Shop*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Belvoir Street
1995	Wedekind	*Spring Awakening*	Lynne Ellis	RMIT Union Theatre, Melbourne
1996	Brecht	*Survival*	Chris Ryan	PACT Youth Theatre
1996	Brecht	*The Good Person*	Nick Livingston	Fabricated Theatre
1996	Brecht	*Galileo*	Richard Wherrett	STC

Year	Playwright	Play	Director	Ensemble/Venue
1996	Brecht	*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*	Ros Horin	NIDA
1996	Büchner	*Danton's Death*	Marcus Lovitt	Foray at Old Adelaide Goal
1996	Kraus	*Excavation. The Last Days of Mankind*	Michael Kantor	Vision Warehouse
1996	Kraus	*The Last Days of Mankind*	Michael Kantor,	Mene Mene Theatre & Centre for Performing Arts, Adelaide
1996	Müller, Heiner	*Quartet*	Gertraud Ingeborg	Harlos at Belvoir Street
1996	Strauss	*Big and Little*	Adam Cook	NIDA
1996	Unger	*Hiding Place in the 20th Century*	Christopher John Snow	Harlos Productions at Lookout Theatre
1996	Weiss	*Marat Sade*		Nomad Productions at Odeon Theatre
1996	Weiss	*Marat Sade*	Ernie Glass	Narrabundah College at Hawk Theatre

*This database lists productions in English translation which involved Australians. Only those productions have been included where information could be obtained about the ensemble or the venue. Productions at secondary schools have been omitted at this stage. Adaptations of other literary genres for the stage have been listed.

APPENDIX III

Rehearsed readings of plays by German-speaking playwrights at the Goethe-Institute in Sydney (1978-1982)[1]

Playwright	German Title	English Title	Director
1978			
Ödön von Horváth	*Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald*	*Tales from the Vienna Woods*	Michael Morley
Franz Xaver Kroetz	*Stallerhof*	*Farmyard*	Rainer Lübbren
Heiner Müller	*Zement*	*Cement*	Gerhard Fischer
Volker Ludwig	*Mannomann!*		Gerhard Fischer
1979			
Günter Grass	*Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand*	*The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*	Martin Esslin
Wolfgang Bauer	*Change*	*Change*	Martin Esslin
Heinrich Henke	*Eisenwichser*	*The Painters*	Peter Barclay
Friedrich Dürrenmatt	*Der Meteor*	*The Meteor*	Ken Horler
Georg Kaiser	*Von morgens bis mitternachts*	*From Morning Till Midnight*	John Willett
Bertolt Brecht	*Trommeln in der Nacht*	*Drums in the Night*	[2]
1980			
Martin Walser	*Der Abstecher*	*The Detour*	
Franz Xaver Kroetz	*Michis Blut*	*Michi's Blood*	
Botho Strauss	*Groß und Klein*	*Big and Little*	
Heiner Müller	*Leben Gundlings Friedrich von Preußen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei*	*Gundling's Life Frederick of Prussia Lessing's Sleep, Dream, Scream*	Gerhard Fischer
Heiner Müller	*Hamletmaschine*	*Hamletmachine*	Gerhard Fischer

[1] Announced as "Monday Workshops on German Drama at the Nimrod Theatre". These were readings by professional actors under the direction of Australian, British and German directors followed by open discussions.

[2] The director could not be established. This also applies to the following gaps where the programme notes were not available.

1981

Volker Ludwig, Detlef Michel	*Die schönste Zeit im Leben*	*The Best Years of Your Life*	
Frank Wedekind	*Der Marquis von Keith*	*The Marquis of Keith*	Chris Westwood, Michael Morley
Jürgen Federspiel	*Brüderlichkeit*	*Brotherhood*	

1982

Hans Magnus Enzensberger	*Der Untergang der Titanic*	*The Sinking of the Titanic*	
Ernst Toller	*Hinkemann*	*Hinkemann*	Gerhard Fischer, Michael Morley
Max Frisch	*Triptychon*	*Triptych*	

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Brecht, Bertolt. 1989a. *Stücke 1*, Vol. 1, (*Die Bibel, Baal* (1919), *Baal* (1922), *Lebenslauf des Mannes Baal, Trommeln in der Nacht, Die Hochzeit, Der Bettler oder Der tote Hund, Er treibt einen Teufel aus, Lux in tenebris, Der Fischzug, Prärie, Im Dickicht, Im Dickicht der Städte*).

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Brecht, Bertolt. 1988c. Stücke 4, Vol. 4, (Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe, Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe, Die sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger, Die Horatier und die Kuratier, Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar, Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches).

[1] For reviews referring to specific productions see the footnotes.

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