

**The Actors' Gang**  
**Study Guide**  
**for**

***Drums in The Night***

**Written by Bertolt Brecht**  
**West Coast Premiere of a new translation**  
**by Finegan Kruckmeyer**

**Directed by Jon Kellam**

**Study Guide**

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**THE ACTORS' GANG**

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

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### **THE ACTORS' GANG**

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

### ***Drums In The Night* – Program Notes**

Postwar social commentary, pre-noir, lyrical poem, love triangle, family drama, cabaret piece: *Drums In The Night* is powerfully invested with many facets and many identities, which all contribute to create the rich and complex tapestry of this engaging ENSEMBLE PIECE.

Written in 1922, the play brought fame to a young Bertolt Brecht, whose idealism transpires in every line of dialogue. When the playwright later embraced Marxist politics, “*Drums in the Night*” always remained a thorn in his side, as it resolves the conflict between the individual and the social by asserting the priority of love. “Drunkenness and kid stuff! That’s all it is”: these are the last words uttered by Kragler, as he decides to leave his militant comrades in order to be with Anna. Beware, though, NO ROMANTIC GAPING! Anna is pregnant with someone else’s child. Every romantic dream, Brecht seems to say, needs to be faced with the acceptance of a less-than-perfect reality.

*Drums in the Night* takes place in 1918. The daunting anguish of the World War I veterans (Kragler) is exacerbated in the contrast with a flourishing bourgeoisie (The Balickes, Murk), who greatly profited from the conflict. The play portrays Germany as a ‘factory’ in continuous motion, struggling to resurrect from its ruins.

Set against the backdrop of the Spartacist Revolution, *Drums In the Night* points to a tense climate of political upheaval. Named after Spartacus, the leader of the largest slave rebellion of the Roman Republic, the left-wing league embraced the proletarian cause of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Much like the returning soldiers, Spartacist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Lieknecht felt that, in World War I, many Germans had fought for nothing, losing everything they had. The unorganized, armed Spartacist riot featured in this play was immediately and brutally repressed by the German army, heightening the country's turmoil and painful social differences.

## THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

### *Drums In The Night* Synopsis

#### ACT 1 AFRICA

We meet the Balicke's, Karl & Amelie, parents of Anna. Karl and his family are war profiteers. Anna has waited four years for her true love, Andreas Kragler to return from fighting in the war. The Balicke parents urge Anna to forget Kragler and accept the impending marriage proposal of Frederick Murk. Murk and Anna have had a passionate affair resulting in pregnancy. Family friend Babusch joins the parental celebration and as the family heads off to the Piccadilly bar, Andreas Kragler returns. Karl & Amelie preempt Kragler's approach of Anna, who has gone ahead with Murk and Babusch. The Balicke's threaten Kragler and leave him in the living room to be discovered by the Maid who reveals Anna's destination to Kragler. As he chases after Anna, the maid laments her outcast state among the family, revealing her disenfranchisement as a result of being a worker amidst a wealthy family.

#### ACT 2 PEPPER

At the Piccadilly Bar the celebration continues around Anna, who is hesitant about Murk because of her love and devotion Kragler who she believes may be dead. Babusch manages to warn Murk that Kragler has returned and is looking for Anna. When Kragler enters and Anna is tolerant, Murk leaves in a fit of rage. The Balicke's try to talk Anna out of her feelings for the

impoverished soldier Kragler, and she is conflicted, torn between love and class. When Murk returns dancing with Marie, a prostitute, Kragler throws down the gauntlet, proposing marriage to Anna. Murk interrupts reminding Anna of her obligation to their unborn child, only to discover she has been filling her drinks with pepper. In 1920s Germany, abortion was neither safe nor legal and pepper was believed to be a homeopathic remedy to unwanted pregnancy (FYI: The only safe abortion is one performed by a doctor). Babusch tries to act as diplomat between the opposing parties but upon discovering the pepper, Murk breaks down and leaves, as do the Balicke's, leaving Anna to Kragler. But she rejects him and Kragler is escorted to the streets, where disturbances have broken out, due to the Spartacist uprising.

### ACT 3 RIDE OF THE VALKERIES

As Kragler leaves, he is followed by Marie who urges him to fight for love. Murk, Anna, Babusch and the waiter from the Piccadilly Bar follow shortly after. A debate ensues between murk and the waiter over what Anna should do. Again Babusch does his best to act as diplomat and ensure Anna's happiness. Anna leaves drunken Murk on the pavement and is off into the thick of it to find Kragler. But the revolution is bigger than all of this. Can love find love within it?

### ACT 4 GIN DANCE

In Glubb's Gin Mill, the regulars take refuge from the winds of change. Skanke sings the song of a dead soldier to distract them from the loudening sounds of revolution outside. Anna & Babusch arrive looking for Kragler but he is not there. The regulars chase them out of the bar, mocking Anna's desperate plea for Kragler. But when Kragler shows up the regulars sing a different tune. They want to hear war stories and in the telling it becomes apparent that Kragler must lead them into the revolt outside.

### ACT 5 THE BED

Head first into the winds of change they dive with Kragler as their general. Anna and Babusch watch the revolution from their protected loft. But upon spotting Kragler, Anna goes for broke, literally, and heads outside to ask Kragler to stop. But others depend on Kragler now, he is the keystone of Glubb's Gang, and now he is torn between love and revolution. But Kragler breaks his ties to the movement as well as the artifice of the theater, and

hands revolutionary responsibility over to the audience, so he and Anna can live happily ever after.

# THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

## Character Breakdown

Anna Balicke - daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Balicke  
Andrew Kragler – WWI soldier who has been missing for four years, who is in love with Anna Balicke.  
Karl Balicke – Anna's father  
Emily Balicke – Anna's mother  
Frederick Murke – Anna's fiancé  
Babusch- a journalist  
Maid- Balicke's maid  
Waiter- waiter at Piccadilly Bar  
Marie- a prostitute  
Glubb- a bartender/ owner of Glubb's Gin Mill  
Bulltrotter- newspaper vendor  
Auguste - a prostitute  
Skanke- cabaret performer/ waiter at Glubb's Gin Mill  
Drunk- a drunk in Glubb's Gin Mill

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (LZW) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

## Glossary of Terms

abdication –	v. to give up formally ( a throne, etc)
abattoir-	n. a slaughterhouse
alienation effect-	(refer to Bertolt Brecht & Epic Theater section)
Algiers-	n. is the capital and largest city of Algeria in North Africa.
Bavaria-	n. a Free State that forms the southernmost state of today's Germany.
Berlin-	n. is the capital city and one of the sixteen federal states of Germany.
Bolsheviks-	n. were members of the Bolshevik faction of the Marxist Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) which split apart from the Menshevik faction at the Second Party Congress in 1903 and ultimately became the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks are best known for seizing power in Russia during the Russian Revolution of 1917, also known as the October Revolution, and for founding the Soviet Union, the world's first socialist state.
bourgeoisie-	n. the social class between the very wealthy and the working class; middle class
bureaucracy –	n. the collective officials

- capitalism – n. the economic system in which the means of production and distribution are privately owned and operated for profit.
- democracy- n. a government by the people, directly or through representatives.
- Jutland – is a peninsula in northern Europe that forms a part of Denmark and also the northernmost part of Germany. During World War I, the Battle of Jutland was one of the largest naval battles in history. In this pitched battle, the British Royal Navy engaged the German Navy leading to massive casualties and ship losses on both sides. Although the Royal Navy suffered greater immediate losses, its Grand Fleet remained battle-ready. Damage to several heavy vessels of the German High Seas Fleet would have prevented them from doing the same, and the German Navy never again challenged the United Kingdom's, resorting instead to covert submarine warfare.
- King Wilhelm II – was the last German Emperor and King of Prussia. He ruled from June 1888 until he abdicated his throne on November 9, 1918.
- Kirsch – n. a clear brandy.
- “liberte, egalite, fraternite”- “liberty, equality, and brotherhood”, which started as the motto of the French Revolution, and later became a rallying cry for activists to promote democracy and overthrow oppression.
- Lunare – n. in mythology, it is the god or goddess of the moon.
- Lycanthrope - n. in folklore, it is someone who has the ability to transform from a human being to a wolf.
- marks – n. German currency.
- provocateur - n. someone who provokes or incites
- Mensheviks - The Mensheviks were a faction of the Russian revolutionary movement that emerged in 1903 after a dispute between Vladimir Lenin and Julius Martov, both members of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. At the 2nd Congress of the RSDLP, Lenin argued for a small party of professional revolutionaries with a large fringe of non-party sympathizers and supporters. Martov disagreed, believing it was better to have a large party of activists with broad representation. A majority of

- delegates agreed with Martov and formed the Mensheviks, while Lenin's faction became known as the Bolsheviks.
- Merseburg – is a city in the south of the German state of Saxony-Anhalt.
- Red Terror- Originally it was a campaign of mass arrests and deportations targeted against counterrevolutionaries in Russia during the Russian Civil War. In later years, the term came to refer to any acts of violence carried out by communist groups during a period of civil war.
- Rosa Luxemburg (Red Rosa) – a Polish born German Marxist and co-founder with Karl Liebknecht of the Spartacist League in Germany. She was killed by the monarchist army and now stands as a symbol for democratic socialists and Marxists.
- Social Democratic Party (SDP)- (refer to German Revolution section)
- Spartacists - a revolutionary group that later became the Communist Party of Germany. It took part in an unsuccessful revolution in Berlin in January 1919.
- talisman- n. a ring, stone, etc. bearing engraved figures thought to bring good luck, avert evil, etc.

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (LZW) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

## **Bertolt Brecht & Epic Theater**

As a playwright, director, and theoretician, Bertolt Brecht is considered one of the most influential theater practitioners in history. He changed the course of the modern European theater with his development of the Epic Theater and “alienation effects”. His plays and theories continue to challenge audiences and artists around the world to look at society as we know it with a new set of eyes and break the mirage that we take as reality.

Bertolt Brecht was born February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1898 in Augsburg, Germany as Eugene Bertolt Brecht. Born into a prosperous family, Brecht’s father was the chief clerk in a paper factory and his mother was the daughter of a civil servant, Brecht began his life with a weak heart. At the age of 12 he survived a heart attack and dove right back into his studies at a private school. At age 16, he had co-created a magazine at his school and was writing for a local newspaper.

At age 17 he enrolled in Munich University and began working his plays, one of the first being *BAAL* (1917). Although Brecht’s political point of

view was already well established, being drafted in military service in 1918 to fight in World War I, only added to his anti-war attitude. Brecht was stationed in a military hospital and after seeing what was going on in the war first hand he returned to school and wrote ferociously. It wasn't long after returning from the war, that Brecht turned his focus solely on theater. He wrote as a drama critic for a local newspaper, in addition to writing and directing. In 1922, his play *Drums in The Night* opened at the Kammerspiele Theater, of which he soon became the in house dramaturg. After staging his plays *Jungle of The Cities* and *Baal*.

Brecht then moved to Berlin and worked with famed directors Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator. It was through his work with these two influential directors, that Brecht began developing his alienation techniques. In addition, at this time Brecht was also reading a lot of Karl Marx, whose revolutionary theories he brought into the theater. In *Das Kapital*, Marx argues that with the modernization of technology and labor there now exists an "alienation" between the mankind and the world. Society sees a product and doesn't see the individual worker behind it, but accepts it as a given. Capitalist production dehumanizes the worker and creates a false idea of reality, which society accepts without question as reality. Marx believed that this false reality or "false view" is a vehicle of for capitalists and the ruling class to gain political power.

In relation, Brecht saw the theater of the 1920's also creating a false realism that the audiences were accepting as truth. Instead, Brecht worked to break this mirage and show the mechanics behind his theater. From the text to the actor to the design of the piece, Brecht created and "alienation" effect where the audience could see the strings behind their bourgeois reality and most importantly learn to question it. Brecht style of theater is mostly known as Epic Theater. Brecht's main goal of the Epic Theater is for the audience to see the dramatic illusion. In doing so, it calls for Brecht's text, which is often episodic, non-narrative, almost like a montage of scenes that are open-ended. The reason for this is that it forces the audience to think harder and be active in linking the scenes together, as opposed to having them sit back and be spoon fed a predictable narrative. In addition, the stage is bare, so the audience can see the exposed lights and the design behind creating the "mood" of the scene, i.e. the strings. Placards and films were often on stage that told of recent events to add to the fragmented reality on stage. In addition, Brecht challenged the actors to have a distance between themselves and the character in order to present the character in a way that allows the

audience to create their own point of view of their actions and circumstances. Overall, Brecht developed a style of theater that exposed its inner workings and forced the audience to be an active member of the theater and then in turn use the same critical techniques when looking at the bourgeois, reality, and capitalist government.

In 1933, the Nazis revoked Brecht's German citizenship because his writings were too radical. Brecht spent most of the 1940's searching for a peaceful place in exile and moved from Germany, to Sweden, to Russia, and ended up in California. In Hollywood Brecht worked on the screenplay *Hangmen Also Die* for Fritz Lang and worked in theater with Charles Laughton. But once again Brecht's work got him noticed by the government and this time he was brought in front of the House of Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, which was investigating communism in the film industry. After the committee cleared him, he returned to Berlin and founded his company the Berliner Ensemble with his wife Helen Weigel. Ironically Brecht's work in Berlin conflicted with the East German Communist Party ideology of Social Realism. But despite a heavy government watch over his work, the Berliner Ensemble became the leading European Production Company in the 1950's. Brecht died in 1956, but his theatrical innovations and plays continue to live onstage and challenge contemporary audiences and artists alike.

# THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

## German Revolution Synopsis

A Political History of the German Revolution adapted by Rob Adler from an article by California Green Senate candidate Todd Cretien

In November of 1918, German workers and soldiers rebelled against their rulers and brought the First World War to an end through mass strikes and mutinies. But they did much more than end the war--they overthrew the German Kaiser (as King Wilhelm II was called), disbanded the regular army and shook German capitalism to its roots. Over the next five years, German workers and bosses fought a bloody battle to determine which class would rule Germany.

By 1912, 1 million German workers were active members of the class-conscious German Social Democratic Party (SPD), while another 4 million voted for it, sending over 100 socialist deputies to the German parliament.

But on August 4 1914, leaders of the SPD betrayed their class allegiances and voted in favor of the Kaiser's war budget and helped the German ruling class mobilize workers for the First World War, to kill French, Belgian, Russian and British workers, dividing the international working class against itself.

From the early days of the SPD, there had always been a fight between the right and left wings of the party. On the right, those who believed that

capitalism could be peacefully reformed, argued that workers could vote to gradually reduce the power of the capitalists by winning a majority in parliament. On the left, Rosa Luxemburg, a young revolutionary, argued in her book, *Reform or Revolution*, that capitalist economics created violent crisis, and she ridiculed the idea that ruling classes would simply hand over their wealth and power to the working class because they lost an election.

The First World War put the ideas of the left and the right to the test. Rosa Luxemburg was proven absolutely correct on her main points. The reformists either joined in the bloodshed of the war or were paralyzed by it, vainly hoping it would end quickly so that capitalism could return to normal.

By 1915, the first protests and strikes broke out in the countries fighting the war. In Germany, the revolutionaries cheered on these protests and even helped organize them, but only as scattered individuals. In Russia by comparison, the Bolsheviks implemented a unified policy of antiwar propaganda and agitation, and recruited hundreds and then thousands of workers and soldiers to their revolutionary party. By February 1917, Russian soldiers and workers rebelled against the war, overthrowing the Czar and just over a year later, German workers followed the example of their Russian counterparts. Strikes had intensified, sailors rebelled and appealed to port workers to support them. The spontaneous movement spread like wildfire across Germany. The German Kaiser was forced to abdicate, workers councils were organized in every major city.

Luxemburg and her partner Liebknecht threw themselves into the revolution, agitating for German workers to follow the examples of the Bolsheviks. By now, they recognized the need for a genuinely revolutionary party, distinct from the reformist Social Democratic Party, but they had waited too long to begin organizing it. Their revolutionary Spartacus League (named after the Roman slave rebel), numbered only a couple thousand or so members and when the revolutionary outburst came in November 1918, the centrists proved committed to opposing socialist revolution.

Unlike Lenin's Bolshevik Party, the Spartacus League waited until after the first phase of the revolution to hold the founding convention of the new, specifically revolutionary communist Party (KPD) in January 1919. The newborn KPD barely had time to finish its convention when the radical workers of Berlin rose up in a new general strike and semi-insurrection against the German government. Although the KPD was small in number, Luxemburg and Liebknecht's prestige was immense. They entered this battle

agreeing that it would take time for the KPD to grow, and that they must avoid the impulse to start the revolution before the majority of German workers supported them. However, in practice, Liebknecht got carried away by the Berlin strike and signed his name to a leaflet calling for the overthrow of the government. While many radical workers supported him, the majority still hoped that the government would make good on some of its promises. The revolutionaries were isolated, the strike was defeated, and the SPD used the confusion to counterattack.

The November Revolution dismantled the regular army and police, but the government created a paramilitary unit called the Free Corps. It was no more than 5,000 strong, but it was heavily armed, disciplined, well paid and ruthlessly anti-revolutionary. In the wake of the Berlin strike, the Free Corps killed hundreds of workers, and arrested and murdered both Luxemburg and Liebknecht. During the following months, the Free Corps marched up and down Germany, suppressing isolated and uncoordinated worker's strikes and rebellions, killing thousands.

Paul Levi, Luxemburg's close friend and lawyer, emerged as the leading figure in reorienting the KPD during these difficult days. In March 1919, the Bolsheviks in Russia founded the Communist International and Lenin argued that without aid from socialist Germany, Russia's revolution would starve. However, if the vast agricultural resources of Russia and Germany's industrial base could unite under revolutionary socialist governments, this could put an end to the profit system.

The central problem in forming a mass revolutionary party in Germany was how to convince the hundreds of thousands of rank-and-file socialists still inside the Democratic party that if they wanted to change the system, they had to break free from the centrist leaders who talked left, but acted right. Lenin spent 1919 and 1920 trying to win them over but the decisive event that finally convinced the (U)SPD left of the need to join the KPD was an attempted military coup in March 1920. In the so-called Kapp Putsch, military officers tried to institute a dictatorship, but they were defeated by a general strike of workers across the nation and their workers militias. This broke workers out of their demoralization and proved to the SPD rank and file that there was no hope of going back to the good old days of stable, prosperous German capitalism. In November 1920, 300,000 members of the SPD voted to join the KPD, creating a revolutionary party of some 350,000 members.

After five years of bloody trench warfare and two years of revolutionary struggle, the German working class finally had a revolutionary organization with the principles, the size and the desire to translate Marxist ideas into practice. Yet this potential was nearly squandered by repeating, on a much grander scale, the mistake that reformists made in January 1919. At the KPD convention in December 1920, the leadership pledged to follow the Bolshevik practice of opposing premature uprisings. A large and confident Communist Party is only one of the necessary ingredients for a successful revolution. Also necessary are a crisis that paralyzes the ruling class, and an upsurge in action and confidence on the part of the majority of workers.

The KPD's 350,000 members were very strong, but they could not make the revolution on behalf of Germany's 15 million workers, unless a majority of those workers wanted to participate. In March 1921, there was no such crisis in the ruling class and only the most fragmented signs that the mass of the workers (as opposed to the revolutionary minority) had yet recovered its confidence from the defeats of 1919. Despite this, the KPD leaders launched the so-called March Action, in which they attempted to provoke a revolution. Their tactics led to fistfights between KPD members and other reformist or even radical workers, dividing the working class. The March Action ended in disaster, with something like half of the KPD membership quitting, and millions of workers alienated from the revolutionaries.

GERMAN bosses benefited greatly from the KPD's disastrous tactics, but they still couldn't solve their own problems. In 1923, French troops seized the coal mining regions of Germany to extract war debts agreed to under the Versailles Treaty that ended the First World War. This touched off a political and economic crisis that gave German workers one last opportunity to settle accounts with the system. By the summer of 1923, hyperinflation caused the economy to grind to a halt. To make matters worse, the Nazis began to grow very powerful during this period. They recruited tens of thousands of armed supporters, and began attacking unions and leftist parties.

Faced with a total collapse of the economy and a crisis in the government in the fall of 1923, the KPD and their Bolshevik advisers tried to change tactics to prepare for a worker's revolution. There was even a debate about sending the Russian Revolutionary General and Theorist Leon Trotsky to Berlin to direct the insurrection. Russian leaders Joseph Stalin and Gregory Zinoviev

were opposed to revolutionary action in Germany. Trotsky eventually overcame their resistance, but the delay was crucial. The constituent elements for a revolutionary upsurge existed, but the KPD did not know how to lead events, only to react. In the end, they blinked--and called off the revolution without a fight. Trotsky called it the worst defeat in the history of the worker's movement.

The German defeat led to the final isolation of the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Stalin's counter-revolution crippled the international working class movement's struggle against fascism, eventually allowing Hitler to come to power.

# THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

## Elements of The Story

In creating a theatrical production, the first element is usually the book, or spoken word. The book contains the plot, characters, thoughts, dialogue, placement of songs and dances, and some stage direction.

Since this theatrical production began with a book, let's examine the elements of the text.

### A. Plot

The plot is the structure of the play. It is the actions/ events which make up the story. The plot has five parts:

**Exposition:** The presentation of information that the audience needs to enter the play's action.

**Rising Action:** Central part of the story during which various problems and complications arise, which cause the characters to take action.

**Climax:** The highest point or turning point in the action, which pits protagonist and antagonist against each other in a final confrontation that settles all their difficulties.

**Falling Action:** Contains the action or dialogue necessary to lead the story to a resolution or ending.

**Resolution:** The end of the story in which the problems are solved and the story is finished.

Discussion Section:

The function of the exposition is to acquaint the audience with the characters in such a way that the audience becomes concerned with what happens to them. In The Actors' Gang production of *Drums In The Night*, the audience learns about all the major characters through exposition revealed both in dialogue and action. Identify the following moments of exposition in the play.

- An action that showed the power of Mr. Balicke
- An action that showed Kragler's strength and point of view
- Dialogue that revealed Anna's struggle
- Movement that expressed Murke's point of view and subtext

## **B. Structure**

**Definition:** The way the story is organized and presented. The order of the action and the placement of the characters within it.

- How is the play structured?
- Would you add or take away different technical elements of the production that aided the storytelling?
- How did the actors encompass all the characters in the play? How did they physically or vocally transform themselves for each character, if they played multiple characters?

## **C. Setting**

**Definition:** The time and place of the story. Geography, social eras and political events are all influential to a story's setting.

The Actors' Gang production of *Drums In The Night* was set in Berlin during World War I. How did the design elements of the production create this time period?

- How did the setting of the production affect the storytelling?
- How did the costumes affect the story?
- How was the lighting used to tell the story?
- How did the sound design help tell the story?

## THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

### Discussion & Essay Questions

- I. Music contains significant parts of a dramatists' message. How does the sound design in this production aid in telling Brecht's story?
- II. How does this production implement Brecht's alienation effect technique?
- III. Compare and contrast the differences between Brecht's Epic Theater and Realistic Theater. Compare this production of *Drums In The Night* with another theatrical performance you have recently seen.
- IV. The text of this play deals a lot with the theme of class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working class. How does this theme relate to contemporary issues?
- V. The symbol of the red moon is very present in the text and production of this play. What does it represent?
- VI. How is the theme of returning soldiers from war relevant to today's world? Research and discuss different stories of war veterans.

- VII. Discuss how the theme of war and peace is prevalent throughout the play. How does this theme relate to the debates and theories revolving around our current war?
- VIII. In *Drums In The Night*, Mr. Balicke is a war profiteer. Discuss what this means and your feelings about it. Are there any war profiteers in today's world?
- IX. Throughout Brecht's text, Andreas Kragler is referred to as a ghost. Why?
- X. Discuss the theme of love in this production and how it is personified for each character. Is Babusch's love for apricots and cigars the same as Kragler's love for Anna? Is Auguste's idea of love different than Murk's? What is your definition of love?

# THE ACTORS' GANG

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## Classroom Activities

### I. Creating Political Theater

#### A. Journal Exercise

- Write a powerful quote on the board from *Drums In The Night*. For example, Murke's line "Death is a job we work hard at" or Mr. Balicke's line "The war was my big win...you can't make a democracy without toppling a few statues". Or a powerful quote from history or current news, like Frederick Douglas' "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has, it never will".
- Give students 2 minutes to continuously write in their notebooks after reading the quote. They must never pick up their pen from the page or stop writing until the time is complete. Let them know that they won't have to read this in front of their classmates.
- The instructor should ask students to yell out any words they remember from their writing and then write them on the board.
- Sculpting Exercise: Instructor pairs up students and chooses one word from the list on the board for everyone to work with. One student in each pair is the sculptor and the other is the clay. The sculptor creates a sculpture from their piece of clay with this word in mind. Challenge the students to be very specific with their detailing. Also remind the clay partners to give over to the sculptor and stay still. All of the

sculptors should look at all the sculptures after 1 minute of working and then they switch roles with their partners.

### B. Composition Work (45 minutes)

- Divide students into groups of 6 and give them composition guidelines (refer to index)
- Allow 10 minutes of rehearsal time.
- If time allows, instructor can give notes on making the stage pictures more dynamic or clear and have the students perform them again.

### C. Evaluation

- Discuss exercises and answer any questions. What were some of the obstacles for each group in the composition exercise? What images do people remember?
- Discuss commitment.

## II. Sound Effects Exercise (Sensory Awareness & Improvisation)

**Objective:** The objective of this exercise is to familiarize students with the play *Drums In The Night* and work on developing their storytelling skills. Through this exercise students will learn how to create a story with a beginning, middle/ conflict, and end.

**Motivation:** Discuss how music was used in *Drums In The Night*. How did the sound effects help in storytelling? What are the basic story elements of this play?

**Activity:** Have the class sit in a circle facing each other. The instructor begins the story, while holding some sort of talking stick to indicate he/she is designated to speak. After a few lines, the instructor passes the stick to their right and it continues around the circle with each student adding a few lines each. An important note to make is that the group should be aware that they need to create a beginning, middle, and end and to use the whole circle wisely so as to not leave the whole ending to the last person in the circle. In addition, each person needs to have some

sort of sound effect in their part of the story and when it comes up, all the students should make the sound together. The instructor can first do this activity with retelling the story of *Drums In The Night* before creating an original story.

**Evaluation:** How clear do you think the story came out? Why? How could it have been improved? How did the sounds affect the storytelling? How was the environment set up? Would it have been easier if the characters were named, so they could easily be referred to? Was it difficult to remember the details of the story as it continued?

**Materials:** Talking stick.

### III. Snapshot Exercise (Sensory Awareness)

**Objective:** This exercise familiarizes students with Brecht's *Drums In The Night*. This exercise requires the students to work together to create a visual story. Students also learn to visualize and recreate sensations.

**Motivation:** Show the class a comic strip. Discuss how each cell/ block tells a story visually with emotion and relationship. Also discuss how in the production students were able to tell how each character felt about the others. How did they hold themselves physically? How did they tell the story of their character in just their movement? How did the director do this in the creation of his stage pictures?

**Activity:** Divide the class into groups of five. The instructor should assign each group a well-known fairytale (ex Cinderella, The Three Little Pigs, etc.) Explain that each groups is to tell the story of their fairytale with just five still pictures/ snapshots. Each group must create the five snapshots that they think will help tell the story. There can be no movement or sound in each still picture. When it is time for the Snapshot presentations, the instructor should say "lights out", so the audience can close their eyes, while the group is getting into their first snapshot, and then say "lights up" when they are done, so the audience can see their first image. The instructor repeats these orders until all five snapshots are seen and the class can guess what fairytale they just saw.

Then the instructor can break up the class again into groups of five and they need to tell the story of *Drums In The Night* with seven snapshots each.

**Evaluation:** What visual cues in the snapshots were the most helpful in the retelling of the fairytale and play? What was confusing about some of the snapshots and why? Was it difficult to decide on the specific snapshots in your group? Why? What role did you play in the group dynamic? Was it difficult to rely only on your visual sense? What it difficult to remain still?

**Materials:** Comic Strip.

## Bertolt Brecht's List of Works

- BAAL, 1918 (published 1922) - trans. in 1964
- THE PETITBOURGEOIS WEDDING, 1919
- THE BEGGAR, OR THE DEAD DOG, 1919
- HE EXERCISES A DEVIL, 1919 (published 1953)
- DRUMS IN THE NIGHT, written 1919 (produced in 1922)
- LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS, 1919 (published 1953)
- JUNGLE OF CITIES; IN THE SWAMP, 1921/1923 (published 1927)
- EDWARD II, 1923/1924 (with Lion Feuchtwanger, based on [Christopher Marlowe's \*Edward II\*](#) from 1594 )
- A MANUAL OF PIETY, 1927
- A MAN'S A MAN, 1927
- THE ELEPHANT CALF, 1927
- THE THREEPENNY OPERA, 1928 (music by Kurt Weil)- *film 1931, dir. by G.W. Pabst; film 1963, dir. by Wolfgang Staudte*
- HAPPY END, 1929 (with Elisabeth Hauptmann)
- LINDBERG'S FLIGHT, 1929
- RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY MAHAGONNY, 1929
- SAINT JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS, 1929-30
- THE DIDACTIC PLAY OF BADEN, 1930
- HE WHO SAYS YES, 1931
- HE WHO SAYS NO, 1931
- THE MEASURES TAKEN, 1931
- THE MOTHER LIFE OF REVOLUTIONARY PELEGEA VLASSOVA FROM TVER, 1932
- THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS / ANNA-ANNA, ca.1933 (published 1959)

- VERSUCHE, 1930-1933 (vols. 1-7)
- THE THREE-PENNY NOVEL, 1934 -
- LIEDER, GEDICHTE, CHÖRE, 1934
- ROUNHEADS AND PEAKHEADS, 1936
- SENORA CARRAR'S ROFLES, 1937 (free adaptation of J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* from 1904)
- THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE MASTER RACE, 1935/1938, published 1945
- THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE, 1937
- THE HORATIANS AND THE CURATIONS, 1938
- GESAMMELTE WERKE, 1938 (2 vols.)
- THE LIFE OF GALILEO, 1938-39 (published 1955)- *film Galileo 1974, dir. by Joseph Losey*
- THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN, 1938-39 (published 1953)
- SVENDBORGER GEDICHTE, 1939
- MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN, 1939 (published 1949) (based on Hans Jakob Grimmelshausen's novel *Simplicissimus* from 1669) - *film 1961, Berliner Ensemble, dir. by Peter Palitzsch & Manfred Wekwerth*
- THE TRIAL OF LUCULLUS 1940
- HERR PUNTILA AND HIS MAN MATTI, 1940 - *film 1957, dir. by Alberto Cavalcanti ; film 1979, dir. by Ralf Långbacka, starring Lasse Pöysti, Pekka Laiho, Arja Saijonmaa*
- THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI, 1941 (published 1957)
- THE VISIONS OF SIMONE MACHARD, 1941/43 (published 1956)
- SCHEWYK IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1941/43 (published 1956) (based on Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* from 1920-23)
- THE GINGER JAR, written before 1944 (published 1958)
- THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE, 1944-45 (published 1949) -(based on the Chinese play *The Circle of Chalk*)
- Selected Poems, 1947

- THE ANTIGONE OF SOPHOCLES, 1947/48 (published 1948) (based on Friedrich Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles' drama)
- TALES FROM THE CALENDER 1948
- A LITTLE ORGANUM FOR THE THEATRE, 1949
- VERSUCHE, 1949-1957 (vols. 7-15)
- THE DAYS OF THE COMMUNE, 1948/1949 (published 1957) (based on Nordahl Grieg's *The Defeat*)
- THE PRIVATE TUTOR, 1951 (adaptation of Jakob Lenz's *Der Hofmeister* from 1778)
- REPORT FROM HERRNBURGER, 1951
- THE TRIAL OF JOAN OF ARC AT ROUEN 1431, 1952 (published 1959), 1431 (from Anna Segher's version)
- DON JUAN, 1952 (published 1959, based on Moliere's *Don Juan* from 1665)
- CORIOLANUS, 1952/53 (published 1959),(adaptation of Shakespeare's Coriolianus)
- STÜCKE, 1953-1966 (13 vols.)
- TURANDOT, OR THE CONGRESS OF WHITEWASHERS, 1950-54
- TRUMPETS AND DRUMS, 1955 (with Elisabeth Hauptmann and Benne Besson), (adaptation of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* from 1706)
- STÜCKE, 1956-59 (12 vols.)
- GESCHICHTEN VOM HERRN KEUNER, 1958
- FLÜHTLINGSGESPRÄCHE, 1961 - Pakolaiskeskusteluja, suom. [Pentti Saarikoski](#)
- Poems of the Theatre, 1961
- BAAL and Other Plays, 1964
- Brecht on Theatre, 1964
- THE JEWISH WIFE and Other Short Plays, 1965
- GESAMMELTE WERKE, 1967 (20 vols.)
- Collected Plays, 1971
- ARBEITSJOURNAL, 1973
- Diaries 1920-1922, 1979
- Collected Poems 1913-1956, 1980

- Short Stories 1921-46, 1983
- Letters 1913-1956, 1990
- Poems and Songs from the Plays, 1990
- GROSSE KOMMENTIERTE BERLINER UND FRANKFURTER AUSGABE, BRIEFE 3, 1998
- ÜBER VERFÜHRUNG, EROTISCHE GEDICHTE MIT RADIERUNGEN VON PABLO PICASSO, 1998

## THE ACTORS' GANG

Tim Robbins, Artistic Director

### Bibliography

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<http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc15.htm>
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<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-mothercourage/>
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4. Chretien, Todd. "Revolution in Germany". California Green Senate candidate. *ISR*. 2006, October 27.
5. Tan, Michael. *SparkNote on Mother Courage*. 16 Nov. 2006  
<http://www.sparknotes.com/drama/mothercourage/>
6. Worthen, W.B.. The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama Texas: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993.

**Adaptation by Finegan Kruckmeyer:**

This particular adaptation of *Drums In The Night* was done by Australian

playwright, Finegan Kruckmeyer. For information on the playwright, please visit the Australian Council Arts webpage:  
[http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts\\_resources/publications/making\\_the\\_journey/](http://www.ozco.gov.au/arts_resources/publications/making_the_journey/)