

In Search of New Authenticity in Staging Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*

By Julia Listengarten and Vandy Wood

Through an investigation of how Brecht's plays and theories operate across temporal and geographic borders, we question how we, as artists, take part in performative texts that both honor historical contexts and remain accessible and/or significant to contemporary audiences. By interrogating our own university production of Bertolt Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*, we seek to contextualize the notion of authenticity through an examination of cultural translation as it applies to theatrical practice.

As we examine our scenographic process for Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*, we will discuss the connections between the current complexity in the relationship between East and West and the necessity for achieving/determining/constructing a new authenticity on stage. Moreover, in studying contemporary aesthetics in relation to the play's thematic content, we become increasingly aware of the artists' responsibility to address postmodern thinking, particularly the instability of traditional boundaries, through the mixing of identities and blurring of borders on stage. To this end, we will analyze how we, through our scenographic practice, respond to the co-existence of multiple and sometimes contradictory truths pervasive in today's global consciousness.

Vandy Wood

Vandy has been designing professionally for theatre and video since 1986, and has held staff positions at Syracuse Stage/University and Clemson University. She received a design fellowship for the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference in 2001, and returned for the 2004 summer conferences. Recent design activities include lighting designer for the New Plays Festivals at Mill Mountain Theatre, Scenographer and Assistant Director for *A Body in Motion*, and set designer for *Once on This Island*, *Picnic*, *Three Sisters*, *The Visit*, and *Good Woman of Setzuan* for UCF Conservatory Theatre, where she is currently a member of the design faculty.

Julia Listengarten

Julia Listengarten is Associate Professor of Theatre at the University of Central Florida. Her translation of the Russian absurdist play *Christmas at the Ivanovs'* premiered Off-Broadway at Classic Stage Company and was included in the anthology *Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1890-1950*. She is the author of *Russian Tragifarce* (2000), and her recent articles include "Translating Politics and Performing Absurdity" and "Jewish Comedy and the Art of Affirmation." She is currently working on the collection *Theater of the Avant-Garde: 1950-2000* for Yale University Press.