SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STATE COLLEGE

GALILEO

A THESIS PRODUCTION OF A PLAY
WRITTEN BY BERTOLT BRECHT

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL SATISFACTION
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF ARTS IN

DRAMA

BY

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THE ABSTRACT OF ALEX KLINER IS APPROVED:

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SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STATE COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

GALILEO

A THESIS PRODUCTION OF A PLAY
STAGED AND DIRECTED

BY
ALEX KLINER

MASTER OF ARTS IN DRAMA

JUNE, 1970

(1) INTRODUCTION

THIS THESIS PRODUCTION WAS THE INITIAL EVENT OF A
SEMESTER-LONG BRECHT FESTIVAL CONDUCTED BY THE DRAMA
DEPARTMENT OF SAN FERNANDO VALLEY STATE COLLEGE. ADDI­
TIONAL FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDED SYMPOSIUMS, A
GRADUATE SEMINAR ON BRECHT, A CONCERT OF MUSIC FROM
BRECHT'S PLAYS, AND OTHER PRODUCTIONS OF BRECHT'S
DRAMATIC WORKS. THE PURPOSE OF THE FESTIVAL WAS, OF
COURSE, TO ACQUAINT AUDIENCES AND STUDENTS WITH THE
SPECTRUM OF A MAN AND HIS WORK. THE PURPOSE OF MY
PRODUCTION WAS TWO-FOLD. ONE, TO OFFER ALL THOSE IN­
VOLVED WITH THE PLAY A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE
EXPLORATION OF AN IMPORTANT PLAYWRIGHT. SECOND, TO
PRESENT TO AUDIENCES BRECHT'S URGENT STATEMENT FOR A
PUBLIC CONSCIENCE AND A UNIVERSAL MORALITY IN THIS OUR SCIENTIFIC AGE.

(2) ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

In this day of total involvement, total theatre, ET AL, GALILEO can be termed a total history play. Its story involves the past, but its social involvement is imminently with the present; its characters are long dead, however the sort of men it characterizes still survive; its dreams and its dreads are those of seventeenth century people, yet its visions and vicissitudes belong to humanity in the twentieth century. Bertolt Brecht has alluded to an age gone by in GALILEO --- has brought its historical issues into dramatic focus --- and by doing so, has brought these same issues in our own age into acute focus.

The issues which Brecht considers are the need for a social awareness and a social conscience in our technological age as well as a sense of the dangers of capitulation to pressures of opportunism and authority in just such an age. Ingeniously, Brecht chose to dramatize his issues through incidents and events in Galileo's life, since it is in Galileo's concepts and research that much in our modern experimental science found its antecedents; and it is in attitudes and rationales similar to Galileo and his times that our
EPOCH FINDS ITS DISASTROUS INCLINATIONS.

Brecht's ultimate statement in *Galileo*, however, carries both elements of hope and despair. Unlike his Marxian allegiance, the playwright despair of the mass mentality. It will see only what it is capable of seeing or cares to see in spite of its teachers, in spite of the facts. "She is a witch, she is a witch", cries Paolo (the leader of a gang of youths) after being shown by Andrea that a shadow cast on a wall was, after all, that of a woman and not a witch. Paolo, like the majority, prefers the fancy of shadows to the responsibility of enlightenment. So there is little hope in the masses. Yet with allegiance to Man, Brecht trusts in the mind of the individual and in the continued efforts of the individual to teach the multitude. "You saw with your own eyes, think it over", urges Andrea, the pupil turned teacher, in the last line of the play. Again, Brecht's trust is evident as Galileo decries his own actions despite his acceptance by the "powers that be" and, eventually, even by Andrea, his student, who in the beginning was "the loudest voice" against Galileo's sin of capitulation. Still again, Brecht's unmistakable faith in the individual is Andrea's rejection of Galileo's self-deprecation as "the last word." Great men make great mistakes, but in their realization of those mistakes lies the potential for
CREATIVE CHANGE.

IN THE END, THEN, GALILEO IS A MAGNIFICENT STATEMENT ABOUT MAN. IT IS TRUE TO ITS MARK, FOR IT IS SO FULL OF AMBIVALENCE IN ITS EXASPERATION WITH AND EXHALTATION OF ITS SUBJECT.

(3) STATEMENT OF APPROACH AND OBJECTIVE

TO FORMULATE MY APPROACH TO GALILEO, I READ ON THE EPIC THEATRE AND BRETCH'S "ALIENATING" STYLE OF EPIC PLAY PRODUCTION. BASED ON THE READING, A CONSIDERATION OF THE TECHNICAL AND PHYSICAL PROBABILITIES, AND ON MY OWN DIRECTORIAL CONCEPTS, I ARRIVED AT A MODUS OPERANDI.

GALILEO IS A DRAMATIC STATEMENT OF A MAGNITUDE CONTEMPORARY TO ALL TIMES. ITS APPEAL FOR HUMANISM IS A VOICE FOR ALL AGES AND ITS REFLECTIONS UPON THE PAST A GUIDELINE TO A FUTURE. WITH THIS IN MIND, I ATTEMPTED TO MAINTAIN THE UNIVERSAL QUALITIES OF THE PLAY THROUGHOUT ALL THE ASPECTS OF THE PRODUCTION. THE DEVICES I THEREFORE EMPLOYED WERE A NON-DESCRIPT SET, INCOMPLETE COSTUMES, MONOCHROMATIC COLOR, SEVERITY OF LINE, AND AN INTERMINGLING OF HISTORICAL PERIODS THROUGH CHARACTER, COSTUME, AND MUSIC. BY THE APPARENT NEUTRALITY OF THIS APPROACH, I HOPED TO CONVEY THE UTTER TIMELESSNESS OF THIS PLAY.
ANALYSIS OF TECHNICAL AND PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

HAVING NO STAGE IN THE STUDIO THEATRE, I DIVIDED THE ACTING AREA INTO PLATFORMS OF VARYING LEVELS. SEEKING A NEUTRAL STAGE ENVIRONMENT DESCRIPTIVE OF NEITHER TIME NOR PLACE, I STROVE FOR ARCHITECTONIC ELEMENTS OF AN INDEFINABLE STARKNESS AND A TIMELESS ATTITUDE OF SIMPLICITY IN SET, SETTING, AND COLOR. TO ACHIEVE THIS UNIVERSAL FEEL, THE STRUCTURAL LINES OF THE PLATFORMS WERE KEPT ANGULAR, SINCE THE STRAIGHT LINE IS NOT ONLY INFINITE IN ITS NATURE, BUT ALSO SEEMS UBQUITOUS IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF ALMOST ALL CULTURES; THE PLATFORM LEVELS I LEFT BARE, FREE FROM THE POSSIBLE LOCALIZING EFFECTS OF SCENERY. THE FURNITURE WAS SIMPLY GEOMETRIC SHAPES (SQUARES AND RECTANGLES), SPARSE, FUNCTIONAL, AND REMINISCENT OF NO ACTUAL FURNITURE.

ED FURNITURE WAS THE CHIAROSCURO VARIANT IN THE BLACKNESS OF MY INDEFINITIVE ENVIRONMENT.

For the most part, suggestions of costumes were used rather than the full costume. Fragments were worn over gray leotards and tights. The bareness of the costumes not only added to the overall feeling of starkness and simplicity, but also enabled actors to make the quick changes that were often necessary.

Consistent with the "white light" orthodoxy of Brecht, the lighting instruments were left ungelled; but contrary to Epic technique, I used degrees of light intensity and lighting effects to emphasize idea, mood, and atmosphere. Sound was also similarly used.

Originally, Galileo called for a minimum of fifty-one actors (not including supernumeraries) to play approximately sixty parts. However, I was forced to pare my cast to twenty-seven actors playing fifty-eight parts, including supernumeraries. The combination of a small theatre with virtually no backstage area, a paucity of actors to fill all of the roles, and a scarcity of time to sew the great number of costumes originally required necessitated the above cutting and consolidating. A revised cast, actually still too large for the extremely limited backstage area of the Studio Theatre, posed further problems in organizing the impeccable traffic demanded during per-
FORMANCES WHEN SPACE IS TIGHT.

CASTING WAS DIFFICULT AND A TEDIOUS PROCESS IN VIEW OF ALL THE CUTS AND CONSOLIDATIONS. IN ADDITION TO A GENERAL CASTING CALL, I HELD THREE SPECIFIC AUDITIONS FOR GALILEO. YET, I COULD NOT COMPLETE MY CASTING UNTIL SEVERAL DAYS INTO THE REHEARSAL. THE DOUBLE, TRIPLE, AND, IN SOME INSTANCES, QUADRUPLE CASTING REQUIRED TOOK MUCH PLANNING AFTER I HAD MY BASIC CAST. A GREAT DEAL OF TIME WAS CONSUMED IN THE INTRICATE JUGGLING OF ACTORS INVOLVED IN PLAYING MULTIPLE PARTS. I HAD TO BE ABSOLUTELY SURE THAT EACH OF THOSE ACTORS HAD ENOUGH TIME FOR COSTUME AND/OR MAKEUP CHANGES. THEREFORE, I HAD TO BE MOST CAREFUL NOT TO ASSIGN ROLES TO AN ACTOR WHICH CONFLICTED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

ANOTHER PROBLEM I HAD TO FACE WAS A HAZARDOUSLY INADEQUATE THREE AND A HALF WEEK REHEARSAL SCHEDULE. IT WAS TOO SHORT A TIME IN WHICH TO MOUNT A PLAY OF GALILEO'S ENORMITY AND SCOPE. THIS FACTOR COMPOUNDED THE NORMAL PRESSURES (BOTH TECHNICAL AND CREATIVE) OF PLAY PRODUCTION AND TOOK ITS TOLL IN THE FRUSTRATIONS OF A CREATIVE EFFORT NOT FULLY REALIZED AND AN ARTISTIC END PRODUCT NOT WHOLLY COMPLETE. NEVERTHELESS, THE COMMITMENT TO GET A JOB DONE WAS FULFILLED. THE PLAY AS PRESENTED WAS GENERALLY WELL RECEIVED. NEWSPAPER REVIEWS WERE BOTH FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE.
Most audiences were warm and wholehearted in their responses. Brechtian authorities who attended were most pleased with the production. Two such authorities were Madame Lion Feuchtwanger and Serge Hovey, the musical director of the Charles Laughton production of Galileo at which Bertolt Brecht himself supervised.

(5) CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Perfection is, indeed, a rare state of affairs, especially in art. Yet within the circumstances of this production, a sense of perfection was reached by everyone in the complex art of people working together. It is in this factor of time creatively and constructively used that cast and crews alike have cause to feel triumphant, for it was mainly because of this factor that the production took shape so quickly. Handling physical (environmental), technical, and creative obstacles with equanimity and adapting to demanding time schedules with understanding, everyone worked as tirelessly and as concertedly as he or she could in order that a stage-worthy production be offered the audiences of this play.

And thus, if all those involved in this project learned anything, it was that putting on a play takes an effort of unity, and that theatre means respect,
RESPONSIBILITY, DISCIPLINE, AND DEDICATION NOT ONLY TO ONESELF, BUT TO A COMMUNITY — A LESSON INTRINSIC TO THE THEME OF GALILEO ITSELF.


