



Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama

John Fuegi

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The result of twenty-five years of research on three continents, *Brecht and Company* is a revolutionary portrait of one of the world's greatest theater artists - and the people upon whom he built his reputation. Bertolt Brecht is regarded by many as the most influential figure in twentieth-century theater; the director Peter Brook has argued that "all theater work today at some point starts with or returns to his achievement." In this first full biography of the Brecht circle, John Fuegi confirms Brecht's rank as a world-class theater director, but also shows why much of the writing can no longer be attributed to Brecht alone. Brecht's first violent, homoerotic plays, though noisily provocative failures at the box office, brought him praise from adventurous critics. In Berlin in the 1920s, Brecht found someone who would change not only his life but world theater: Elisabeth Hauptmann, who wrote over 80 percent of *The Threepenny Opera* in exchange for time in Brecht's life and in his bed. Yet her name often disappeared from the printed text, as well as from other plays and poems. Disappointed and disaffected, Hauptmann was supplanted by the passionate, tubercular Margarete Steffin, who contributed crucially to such classics as *Mother Courage and The Good Woman of Setzuan*. With Steffin's death in 1941, Brecht's career as a playwright virtually ended, though other works, begun with her, were finished with the aid of the uninhibited and politically committed Danish director and author Ruth Berlau. Fuegi traces the evolution of Brecht's parasitic relationships and aggressive ambition through close analysis of diaries, letters, and drafts of the literary works, revealing a man who was personally dazzling, a genius at assembling and directing the plays created in his workshop, but ultimately lacking in literary stamina, for which he depended on his lovers. His need for control and fame led him to dominate - and betray nearly everyone who supported and loved him. The story

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