

“I Hate Musicals, but I Love to Sing”¹
Developments in Contemporary English Music Drama

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In British musical theatre the pendulum of artistic control has swung between writer and composer, with very different social effects depending on which of the creative duo dominates at any given point. In general it can be observed that where the text is the driving force, there are openings for politics, while when text is subordinated to music any political aspect tends to be limited to the subtext. Possibly the only example of an equal partnership is Gilbert and Sullivan’s late nineteenth-century operettas – where the political satire was subtle enough to be misunderstood (as when *The Mikado* was closed down during the state visit of the Japanese crown prince, because its satire of British class attitudes was interpreted by the authorities as referring specifically to Japan). Following the shifts of influence over the modern and into the contemporary period offers an illuminating perspective on recent developments, signalled by the latest works by playwrights such as the eminently well-established Tom Stoppard, or the major new voice of Simon Stephens. Both made their reputations for straight literary theatre, and each has turned to musical drama with the specific aim of reviving and changing the genre.

To establish the context for this it is necessary to consider the influence, which was indeed reciprocal, of continental types of musical performance: specifically Cabaret, and its extension in the work of Bertolt Brecht who was reciprocally influenced by both the traditional British form of Ballad Opera, and by one of T. S. Eliot’s experimental pieces, combining these with Cabaret to create his form of Epic Theatre that in turn became a major influence on British theatre – and the British counter-culture musical – in the 1930s and later in the 1950s and after.

It is well-known that Brecht was impressed by Nigel Playfair’s 1920 revival of *The Beggar’s Opera*, which ran for an astounding run of just under five years, 1,463 performances at the Lyric Theatre in

Hammersmith – and it is worth noting that in this piece the writer was also the musical arranger, with John Gay borrowing standard folk-tunes for his biting satirical lyrics that were originally intended to be sung without accompaniment, while a composer, in the shape of Christoph Pepusch, was only brought in just before the opening by the theatre manager. Just as Gay opposed the Handellian Italian vogue of his time, Brecht's heavily politicized 1928 version (marking the 200th anniversary of Gay's premiere) also formed an attack on what he called “culinary opera” (Brecht “Notes”: 87). In his *Dreigroschen Oper* (*The Threepenny Opera*) – where Brecht's vision certainly determines Kurt Weill's music, even if it is the music by which most people know the work – Brecht formalized the techniques that were to mark his epic style: third-person acting, a montage of short scenes, and the use of a half-curtain, all of which came from Cabaret, in particular from the fairground “Bänkelgesang” performances in which he had appeared together with the Munich comedian Karl Valentin.



Munich Oktoberfest Bänkelgesang performance, 1920, with Brecht playing the clarinet, Valentin on Tuba, with Liesl Karlstadt as Compere. (Stadtsarchiv München)

This type of performance specialized in satiric ballads cataloguing grotesque and horrific events, of which Brecht's 1918 protest-ballad, “Legende von toten Soldat” (The Legend of the Dead Soldier) is a classic example. Even a short quotation gives a graphic picture of the tone typical for this type of Ballad. Since the war is still going on, the Kaiser needs his soldier who has “died a hero's death” so a military medical commission resurrects the body:

They came to that fallen soldier's grave
Said a little prayer to their maker.
Then the commission dug with a holy spade
That soldier from God's little acre

And when they had examined him,
Or what of him was left,
They announced this man is "A 1"
He's simply evading the draft...

They filled him up with brandy,
Though his flesh had putrified.
And kept two nurses handy,
And a half-naked woman at his side²

Indeed the links between theatre and cabaret were particularly close in Germany. Partly perhaps because of censorship: the Kaiser had famously declared that "Art is an arm of government." So in order to attack, or even criticize the governing system, writers were forced to find ways didn't count as art: "Kleinkünste" – clown show, circus or cabaret, with the result that in contrast to its French artistic roots, where artists' performances were for other artists, German Cabaret became distinguished by its ideologically aggressive tone with performances aimed at general public. As such, it also formed a cross-over between night-club burlesque and the artists of high, or serious drama. So, Max Reinhardt, the defining director for German theatre from the early years of the century right through the 1930s, performed with the "Schall und Rauch" (Sound and Smoke) cabaret in the cellars of his "Theatre of the 5,000" (created, in a reverse merger, out of the Berlin Circus Schuman). Similarly, Frank Wedekind – a forerunner of Expressionism and one of the influences on the development of Brecht's Epic Theatre, whose first major play *Spring's Awakening* has itself been recently turned into a Musical and was one of the plays that influenced Simon Stephens' "musical turn" – accompanied cabaret songs, which he composed himself, on his mandolin; and performed as one of the iconic Munich cabaret, "Die Elf Schafrichter" (The Eleven Executioners, founded in 1901). Following explicitly in Wedekind's footsteps, and imitating his distinctive singing style (which he had praised in an obituary after Wedekind's early death in 1918, acknowledging Wedekind's influence³) Brecht also took up cabaret performance, singing his "Legend of the

Dead Soldier" at Trudy Hesterberg's Berlin cabaret, "The Wild Stage," in 1922. And the crossover becomes explicit in Wedekind's most famous play, *Lulu*, which features a cabaret dancer as its title figure, while the "Legend of the Dead Soldier" also appears in Brecht's early expressionist play, *Drums in the Night* (written in 1919-20, first performed in 1922), and the recording approved by Brecht is sung by Ernst Busch: well-known as a political singer in the 1920s Berlin cabaret, who became one of Brecht's lead actors, from *The Threepenny Opera* to the 1948 Berliner Ensemble production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

The influence of Brecht's work – spread in Britain among others by Christopher Isherwood, whose biography of life in Berlin was to become the Kander and Ebb Musical *Cabaret*, and who collaborated with W.H. Auden on several plays⁴ – brought cabaret to political drama in England in the 1930s: a truly ideological period when politics permeated poetry to the extent that high modernist poets like Auden and Eliot turned to theatre to reach a working-class public. Perhaps for the obvious reason that music is an emotional intensifier, both wrote poetic pieces with music, which were produced by Rupert Doone's Group Theatre (founded with the designer Robert Medley in 1932). Auden, for instance, created a *Dance of Death*, a piece with music by Herbert Murrill and staged by Tyrone Guthrie, which shared the short episodic scenes of Brechtian epic theatre with cabaret-like up-front songs, and balletic sequences, even if to contemporaries it corresponded to the form of a theatrical revue. Similarly, his major play with Isherwood, *The Ascent of F6* (1937), included a satiric eulogy for a politician, "Stop All the Clocks": the first version of "Funeral Blues", which Auden had first rewritten as "Cabaret Song" for Heidli Anderson (who had herself studied in Berlin up to 1934 and became the lead singer for the Group Theatre during the 1930s) and performed it in cabaret.

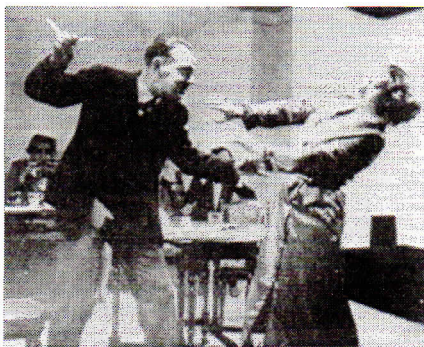
Still more central is the 1934 play by Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, which was performed by the Group Theatre together with Auden's *Dance of Death*. Fragmentary and episodic, with jazz representing the spiritual wasteland of modern life, *Sweeney Agonistes* is a disjointed, experimental musical, that had a great impact at the time and has since been recorded by the jazz musicians Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Lane in 1965, together with actors, including Nicol Williamson, who gives a memorably hysteric

rendition of Sweeney's outburst when Doris, one of the two prostitutes who are the only female characters, cuts cards to tell fortunes and draws the coffin:

I knew a man once did a girl in
Any man might do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime, do a girl in. (ELIOT: 124)

As one art critic, Johnathan Russell, has commented, discussing the "Sweeney Agonistes Triptych" by the contemporary painter, Roger Bacon, the piece conjures up

an amoral, drifting, entirely erratic milieu in which favours are bought and sold, murder is taken for granted, and people come and go in the night. It happens nowhere and everywhere. Its characters, commonplace on one level, are far beyond normal size on another. (RUSSELL: 222)



The 1934 Group Theatre production of *Sweeney Agonistes*: the climactic scene: Sweeney & Doris (John Moody and Isobel Scaife)

The play (as the involvement of jazz musicians indicates) is structured by music, using drumbeats to condition the pulse of the audience, as well as songs such as "Under the Bamboo, Bamboo, Under the Bamboo Tree": a parodistic variation on the standard 1930s lyrical trope of the South Seas. Using half masks (which Brecht had reintroduced in plays like the 1927 *Man is Man*) and a montage of scenes divided by sudden blackouts, as well as clearly two-dimensional, almost Agitprop characters, the play clearly borrows from Cabaret.

In the 1934 audience were the Bloomsbury group, including Virginia Woolf – who recognized Eliot’s allusion to the murderer, Dr. Crippen, notorious for dissolving his wife’s organs in acid in his bathtub – and Ottoline Morell; but also Brecht himself. Brecht was so impressed that he offered the Group Theatre his most difficult Lehrstück, *Die Maßnahme* (*The Measures Taken*). Auden, together with Isherwood, consciously drew from German cabaret and revue forms, while Brecht hailed Eliot’s play as a true realization of his epic theatre. The connecting lines are clear, and lead forward in Eliot’s case to the 1960s with the Dankforth recording, while Eliot’s 1930 collection of poems, *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* was to become the source of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s prize-winning 1981 Musical.

Another figure who carries the Brechtian cabaret tradition into the 1960s is Joan Littlewood. Active with the 1930s Manchester agitprop Theatre of Action – later to become Theatre Union, out of which the 1940s Theatre Workshop emerged – which she directed together with the folk singer and dramatist Ewan McColl, they staged the Erwin Piscator version of *War and Peace*, as well as a 1955 production of Brecht’s *Mother Courage* (with Littlewood in the title role); and in the early 1960s *Oh What a Lovely War*: a new form of musical theatre, again based on German cabaret, combined with the British equivalent of the old-time urban Music Hall and the traditional seaside clown show (costumes that Max Reinhardt and his company had used for their satiric 1920s Schall und Rauch cabaret). In this iconic piece of theatrical cabaret, the slaughter of WW I was presented in terms of “a pierrot show of fifty years ago with red, white, and blue fairy lights” (THEATRE WORKSHOP: 9).



Oh What a Lovely War, Directed by Joan Littlewood. Theatre Workshop, 1963 (Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenor Theatre Collection)

Using these popular – but recognizably antiquated – traditions had the effect of Brecht’s epic alienation acting-style, compounded by the contrast between the tragic mass destruction of human life and the comic clown figures (who are seen doing incongruous bayonet-drill and being mown down by machine-guns) while the generals and upper classes wear the army uniforms and ball dresses of the day. In the same way, the theme song of “Oh It’s a Lovely War” was juxtaposed with dates and statistics on a running news-panel, copied from Piscator’s version of epic theatre: “APRIL 22 ... BATTLE OF YPRES ... GERMANS USE POISON GAS ... BRITISH LOSS 59,275 MEN ... MAY 9 AUBERS RIDGE ... BRITISH LOSS 11,619 MEN IN 15 HOURS” (THEATRE WORKSHOP: 55).

In this revue-like performance, still familiar soldiers’ songs from the 1914-18 period – “Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kitbag”; “Belgium Put the Kibosh on the Kaiser”; “Fred Karno’s Army” / “The Ragtime Infantry” – symbolised working-class culture. And with the music all drawn from standard tunes (indeed like Gay’s music for *The Beggar’s Opera*) the controlling vision was that of the director/auteur, Joan Littlewood. Together with the short scenes of revue-like sketches, dance and mime, caricatured characters (all of which were drawn from Littlewood’s 1930s Brecht-influenced agitprop, now developed into a different kind of unity by the Music Hall frame), her 1963 *Oh What a Lovely War* offered a new dimension of musical theatre, in quintessentially British terms, capable of popularizing political drama. And while there were no immediate followers, in 1983 Peter Nichols’ musical *Poppy*, about the opium trade in the nineteenth-century British Empire, its corruption of India under British rule and its responsibility for the Western invasion of China, created a strikingly similar musical frame using the traditional Pantomime format: complete with juvenile male hero played by an actress in thigh-length tights and a pantomime horse (with two men inside) which – in doubly grotesque irony – gets killed and eaten during the siege of Shanghai.

Meanwhile the student revolutions of 1968 spawned a vogue for engaged musicals – in 1970 *Jesus Christ Superstar* (combining the ideals of the flower-power Woodstock generation with Rock Star commercialism) or the political hagiography of *Evita* in 1976, which together launched

the career of Lloyd Webber – and established the dominance of the composer over the British musical for the following thirty years. For the next development in political music theatre we have to wait, while Claude-Michel Schönberg's *Les Miz* ran on, and on... celebrating its 21st year on the London stage in 2006; when coincidentally this same year marked the start of the contemporary – and very different – phase of musical theatre.

In new millennium, something new. Stoppard's 2006 *Rock 'n' Roll* was hailed as “astonishing”, “remarkable”, “fascinating” (BILLINGTON: *Guardian Review*). It opens with a mythical figure: “*The Piper ... high up on a garden wall, his wild dark hair catching some light, as though giving off some light*” (STOPPARD: 3), perched on a high wall and singing “Golden Hair” (the theme-song of the play) to a teenage girl lying in a garden below – a “Pan” figure, later described as “a beautiful boy as old as music, half-goat and half-god”(STOPPARD: 55). The music, which runs throughout the play, making this a complete departure from Stoppard's other works, goes together, in a characteristic Stoppardian series of parallels, with the fall of Communism and the liberation of Czechoslovakia (Stoppard's own country of origin), with spirituality and the nature of love, with Sappho's poetry (taught during the play to a series of female students by the classicist wife of a Cambridge philosophy professor) that unites liberation, love and spirit. The overarching argument of the play is that the Marxist mass class revolution has been superseded by a revolution in individual consciousness – and an ironic comment is offered by the music that fills the cut to the next scene: “*Welcome to the Machine*’ by Pink Floyd” (STOPPARD: 51).

Covering the period from 1968, the year when the “Prague Spring” under Dubcek was ended by the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, as well as the year of Woodstock and cultural revolution, *Rock 'n' Roll* ends with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia in 1990, and the landmark concert by the Rolling Stones. And the whole action is framed by music: beginning with Steve Barrett's “Golden Hair” (sung to a young girl in a garden); and closing with the same girl twenty-two years later listening to the first guitar chord of the Rolling Stones live album ‘No Security.’ And between each scene a piece of music is interjected: ‘I'm Waiting for the Man’ by Velvet

Underground; 'Jugband Blues' and 'Welcome to the Machine' by Pink Floyd; 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For' by U2; 'Don't Cry' by Guns n Roses. All these pieces also indirectly comment on the serious political discussions: between a Cambridge Marxist philosopher, based on Eric Hobshawn;⁵ and his wife Eleanor, dying of breast cancer, who stands up for the existence of the spirit, together with a Czech student, Jan (banned from teaching at Charles University in Prague, interrogated by the Czech secret police, and a signatory of Charter 77) who overlaps with another, older and far more famous signatory: Jan Patocka.

These conventional dramatic characters are set against true-life rock 'n' roll musicians: in particular Syd Barrett – whose drug-fuelled break-up with Pink Floyd is chronicled in the play, as well as a Czech band rejoicing in the unlikely name of "The Plastic People of the Universe." (The group, now white-haired but just as non-conforming as in their days of oppression under the Communists, appeared on a London tour in January 2007, while the play was still running; and adverts for the UK visit of the Plastic People of the Universe urged, "See a real piece of history".)



The Plastics in concert, Prague, 1969

(<http://www.furious.com/perfect/pulnoc.html>)

As the play points out, it was the arrest of this Rock group by the Communist government of Czechoslovakia that led directly to Charter 77, the human rights petition that fuelled the Velvet Revolution of 1989, in which Vaclav Havel was swept to power. Havel, photographed at a 1978 concert of the Plastics, bridges these two worlds; and Stoppard,

dedicating his play to Havel, chronicles this whole political process (*thelondonpaper*).⁶

The movement of the play is towards a liberation from political ideology, in which Rock music is literally the spirit of freedom.⁷ Named iconically after the title of a 1967 Pink Floyd record, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, the apparently mythological and pagan Pan figure of the opening turns out to be Syd Barrett. The Plastic People of the Universe embody the same principle as Barrett, but in a political context where their challenge to social norms becomes a catalyst for liberation because they exist completely outside any system. In terms of the State (as with the Inquisition), dissidents (like heretics) are playing by the official rules, and so perpetuate the status quo. As Jan declares, in an affirmation that is underlined by the choice of music that follows:

But the plastics don't care at all. They're unbribable. They're coming from somewhere else, from where the Muses come from. They're not heretics. They're pagans. (STOPPARD: 87).

Blackout and It's only Rock 'n' Roll' by the Rolling Stones. (STOPPARD: 37)

These musical phrases that mark each scene break might be taken to mark the passing years – but in fact few correspond to the time frame. For instance, Jan is shown playing a recording of “Break On Through” by the Doors (first recorded in 1965) in a 1969 scene, and this song forms the break to 1971 – while “Golden Hair”, heard first in a 1968 scene, was in fact only recorded over a year later. Similarly, songs in the last scenes, all set in 1990, alternate between future and past: “Don't Cry” only recorded by Guns ‘n’ Roses in 1991 – Vera by Pink Floyd from 1979 – and (in the first production, though not in the text) “You Got Me Rocking”, which the Rolling Stones first performed in their live Voodoo Room recording in 1994. Rather, the titles or lyrics form a thematic commentary to the action, from the Velvet Underground’s “I’m Waiting For the Man” which accompanies a Czech idealist’s quixotic return to his country immediately after the Russian tanks rolled in, through “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For” by U2, to “Rock ‘n’ Roll” and, as a last curtain-line, the finale of “You Got Me Rocking” that is (anachronistically) played at the Rolling Stones 1990 Prague concert.

This combination of music and drama – to some extent equivalent to the cabaret mix of styles: song and dance, stand-up comedy and social commentary, marks a distinct new form of theatre (in direct comparison to Lloyd Webber or Schönberg: one in which drama and music have equal weight in dynamic relationship). The same combination is found in several younger contemporary British playwrights. In particular, Simon Stephens, who is himself a musician. As a teenager, he started a band called the “Country Teasers” influenced by New York rock musicians like Alex Chilton, or Jonathan Richman who founded the first proto-punk garage rock band – and music has been central to all Stephens’ plays. Indeed his most recently produced play, *Marine Parade*, is co-written with a rock musician Stephens admired when running his band: Mark Eitzel. And it is explicitly intended to be the prototype for reviving musical theatre in terms very comparable to Stoppard: “synthesizing ...without bastardizing the theatrical element or the musical element” (STEPHENS, Interview 2010).

So the text offers a series of short episodic scenes of contrasting lovers – from a youth with an underage fourteen-year-old girl, to a middle-aged couple, who had an adulterous fling in the same hotel 20 years earlier and are now breaking up because of the man’s guilt over leaving his first wife – which is indeed almost cabaret like in structure. And the presentation in the German performance this year (2010) underlined this by having the characters “present” their songs, with microphones directly to the front of the stage – and to the audience – instead of remaining within the frame of dramatic illusion, as in the standard West End Musical.



Marine Parade: German premiere: Matthias Fontheims (AllgemeineZeitung.de)

These scenes are interspersed with musical themes from the songs and lyrics that (1) reveal deeper emotions of the characters singing, and (2) generalize his or her situation. The lyrics – like the theme-song “Every Falling Star” – both comment on action from outside, and are picked up by characters within the scenes.

I’ve gone as far as I can go

I’ll lose myself if I stay

...

I am the fire that burns

In every falling star

In every falling star (STEPHENS, *Marine Parade*: 14)

In earlier plays by Stephens, music forms the inspiration and the structure – but without actually including any songs, as in his play about crime and punishment, first performed in a prison: *Country Music* (2004). Referring to the title, Stephens has commented that this style of song is

prisoners’ music. It’s traditionally white man’s blues. And if you hear the songs of Johnny Cash or Hank Williams ... their songs are about working people’s lives and often about violence ... I mean the amount of songs Johnny Cash wrote about killing people and going to prison for it – the play and those songs operate absolutely in the same territory.

(STEPHENS, Interview 2010)

As signalled in the title, country music also provided the structure of the play, which has extremely simple scenes – echoing the stripped-down stories of the musical genre – and the final scene is a flashback: a prequel showing the possibility of happiness that the criminal actions have made impossible – clearly mirroring the way country music ends with a refrain of the opening verse.

However, one of Stephens’ recent plays is directly modelled on Stoppard’s *Rock ‘n’ Roll* – and takes exactly the same structural approach – indeed *Punk Rock* (performed to acclaim in 2009) is also a reply to Stoppard. Just as in *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, in Stephens’ play, the music is also a form of punctuation between the scenes. But here the connection to the action is even more direct. *Punk Rock*, exploring the lead-up to a schoolroom shooting, is not only based on the iconically infamous 1999 Columbine Massacre, but also acknowledged as being inspired by Ferdinand Bruckner’s 1923 play about teenage sexual awakening, *Pains of*

Youth, as well as Wedekind's earlier *Spring's Awakening* – though in this case Stephens was writing against the 2007 rock musical with its sentimentalization of Wedekind's 1891 ending. (Instead of ending up in a House of Correction, as in Wedekind's original, Melchior is comforted by Moritz's and Wendla's spirits, who rise from their graves; and the whole cast assembles onstage to sing "The Song of Purple Summer" about life and hope.) *Punk Rock* is set in a Manchester grammar school – reflecting Stephens' family background – and the musical style is anything but mainstream. Indeed, it is intended as a deliberate contrast to the classic rock music in Stoppard.

For Stephens, "rock music's the music of dissent, of dissidence, of the alternative and the forbidden," (STEPHENS, Interview 2010) and the punk rock movement combined sexual craving for chaos with political alienation, in an art school tradition that – for all its proletarian icons – was the middle-class music of the 1970s and 80s: therefore, as Stephens has said, particularly "appropriate for the world of the play" (presented in a co-production by the Lyric, Hammersmith and the Royal Exchange, Manchester, 2009), (STEPHENS, Interview 2009). But, in contrast to Stoppard, the songs here also relate directly to the action. 'Kerosene' by Big Black – a song about a teenage arsonist burning down a town – introduces the nihilism and self-destructiveness of these elite sixth-form school kids, while 'Loose' by The Stooges offers a graphic description of the image they want to project, and 'Fell in Love with a Girl' by The White Stripes encapsulates the catalytic effect of the arrival of a newcomer: Lily, a sexually mature self-abuser, whose presence fosters the sexual jealousy and psychological insecurities that fuel the shooting. Still more clear in its relationship to the action, 'Touch Me I'm Sick' by Mudhoney introduces the climactic scene of violence, and Daniel Johnston's 'Desperate Man Blues' heads up the coda, set in a prison-hospital, where a psychiatrist tries – unsuccessfully – to find out what motivated the boy-killer.

These plays – by Stoppard and Stephens – are political, socially involved, and both in their own ways radical. Unlike Eliot and Auden in the 1930s, or Joan Littlewood in 1960s, this millennial musical drama does not evolve directly from Cabaret or Revue. It amalgamates a full dramatic script with the music, which provides context and cultural

setting as well as thematic commentary in a musical form, but exists side by side with the spoken text, rather than lyrics and songs or musical leitmotifs being the main carriers of any message. Like Littlewood, this new form of musical theatre uses pre-existing music, exploiting its established social connotations, although – as with *Marine Parade* – it embraces the Brecht/Weill working pattern. In doing so, it confronts the standard West End or Broadway musicals. And as Simon Stephens points out, this new form of musical theatre has become a fairly notable and broad-based movement:

David Greig's done the same thing with *Midsummer* ... Che Walker did it last year with *Been so Long*. It's interesting that this impulse to re-imagine musical theatre is coming not from musical theatre practitioners but from playwrights who love music. (STEPHENS, Interview 2010)

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Notes:

¹ With apologies to Bernstein.

² My translation.

³ My translation: *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten*, March 12, 1918.

⁴ Auden also spent a year in Berlin (1928-1929) but although he saw *Die Drei Gruschenoper*, Auden publicly rejected any Brechtian influence.

⁵ Hobsbawm, a professor of history at Birkbeck who joined the Communist Party in 1936 while at King's College, Cambridge, remained a card-carrying Communist until 1991. But even after he let his membership lapse (not long before the party's dissolution), he remained an unrepentant apologist and Marxist. His autobiography, *Interesting Times*, published in 1994, also reveals that, under the pseudonym Francis Newton, from the 1950s into the 1960s Hobsbawm was the *New Statesman's* jazz critic – but, significantly, despised the whole Rock 'n' Roll musical genre (attributing its appeal to 'infantilism'). According to Tony Judt (director of the Remarque Institute at New York University), Hobsbawm "clings to a pernicious illusion of the late Enlightenment: that if one can promise a benevolent outcome it would be worth the human cost. But one of the great lessons of the 20th century is that it's not true. For such a clear-headed writer, he appears blind to the sheer scale of the price paid." Cit, *The Guardian*, September 14, 2002.

⁶ For a photo of Vaclav Havel at the concert of the Plastic People of the Universe, see: www.kandl.cz/plasticpeople <http://www.kandl.cz/plasticpeople/>

⁷ Notably, in the figure of Max Stoppard gives his first sympathetic portrayal of a Communist: which could be read as his own liberation from the political system.