



West Bridgford Dramatic Society

# Mother Courage and Her Children

by *Bertolt Brecht* Translated by John Willett

Directed by **Barbara Seymour**



One of the greatest plays of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**23 – 26 November 2022**

This amateur production of "Mother Courage and Her Children (Willett, trans.);" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd.  
[www.concordtheatricals.co.uk](http://www.concordtheatricals.co.uk)



Welcome to the Studio Theatre for the first production of the 2022-23 season. This season we have a varied selection of plays - war drama, comedy, thriller and Greek tragedy. Our production today of *Mother Courage and her Children* is the first time we have performed Brecht - and I can confirm that we are doing all the Brechtian techniques. You will be entertained, and engaged and challenged.

Whether you are a regular or first time visitor to the Studio Theatre, I wish you all a happy Christmas and we all look forward to welcoming you back in the new year. To bring our productions to life a lot of hard work has been put in by a committed bunch of enthusiasts. If you are interested in joining this vibrant group of people passionate about drama, please drop in on a Tuesday club night. There is a vast array of roles available on and off the stage. For more information visit our website [www.wbds.co.uk](http://www.wbds.co.uk) or speak to a member of the Front of House team. We have been fortunate that this year we have a bunch of new members, some already involved in this production, doing front of house, props and costumes and lighting/sound operation. Welcome to them, and use this as the inspiration to join our happy band.

**Rob Dixon/Chair**

## **The DIRECTOR speaks!**

In *Mother Courage and her Children*, Brecht is shouting out a plea for us to consider the folly of war.

At the start of the play we hear a sergeant and recruiter extolling the virtues of war as a way to control and purify the populace. These were beliefs of Brecht at the onset of WWI when he was being paid to write pro-war propaganda. When he was a stretcher bearer his ideology changed. The play is cited as being one of the greatest anti-war plays ever written, but we can't be certain that this was Brecht's intent. We can be certain that he mocks a religious war and the dubious role of 'hero'. He is clear on how people profit from war, especially those 'at the top' who are most removed from it. He presents us with characters who are formed by war and who believe that they can profit from war. Brecht developed theatrical techniques to secure engagement from the audience. He wanted to move an audience away from relating to the emotions of the characters and draw them into the ideas behind each speech.

Continued

These techniques are not new to the Society. Director Ali Bakewell exploited them fully when directing *Top Girls* (Caryl Churchill) and I had the good luck to be part of that production.

Today we have 20 roles played by eleven players – the norm for this play. The actors sit on the stage, as themselves, and make their entrances from their seats. This is so that the audience cannot be lulled into believing that the actors become real people, on the contrary some of them resemble cartoon characters and stereotypes. The actors often break the ‘fourth wall’ talking directly to the audience. Songs are used to emphasise messages and cynicism lends itself to dark humour. The set is littered with props that have been adopted by the cast during the rehearsals as substitutes e.g. a piece of beef is represented by a red tea towel. Our lighting is harsh and does not shift.

Brecht placed the play in the 17th century. We are presenting the play during modern times although our props are timeless. The play was chosen before the invasion of Ukraine, however we decided to represent some of the images that are now familiar to us. Our two Ukrainian members, who fled the war, have added their stories to the play and so we see actors arriving on stage with bags which hold their basic needs for taking shelter or fleeing. An empty buggy is used in the Ukraine as a symbol of war. Brecht believed that the further humans moved away from nature, the more dis-functional they become. Our tree is composed of leaves made from the pages of discarded books.

Despite the earnest themes of the play, we have had an amazingly amusing time playing with the characters and creating a set to sustain 30 years of events and endless scenarios in different locations along the way. Be prepared to use your imagination!

Stephen Parker’s biography of Brecht (2014) describes him as a sadist. You may spot this unpleasant character trait being played out by one of our characters. This same character is played by an actor who is three handshakes away from the great Brecht himself. A great uncle met him when they were teenagers, he performed in his plays and reflected on his relationship in his extensive published memoirs. It is possible that our Society’s actor and their great uncle played the same part in this play. I hope this actor becomes clear to you as the play meanders through Mother Courage’s terrible journeys.

# Cast

Narrator	Dom Gaskell
Recruiter & other roles	Rob Dixon
Sergeant & other roles	Adrian Bacon
Mother Courage	Lynn Burges
Eilif & other roles	Calum Sharp
Swiss Cheese & other roles	James Wallace
Katrin	Margarita Papadopoulou
Cook	Malcolm Todd
Chaplain	Stephen Herring
Yvette & other roles	Amanda Pearce
Colonel & other roles	Tim Farrow

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The action takes place in Europe during the Thirty Years War, but it could be taking place here in West Bridgford. Suspend your disbelief!

There will be an interval of 20 minutes. We have a range of alcoholic drinks, soft drinks and ice creams available to buy.

A donation of 50p per ticket will be made to Red Cross - who have been very helpful to our Ukrainian friends who have come to make temporary homes in West Bridgford.

# Crew

Director	Barbara Seymour
Assistant Director	Roxana Ciurean
Production Manager	Rosie Farrow
Stage Manager	Jo Sharpe/Rosie Farrow
Creative Team (sound, lights, set, costume design, costumes, props)	Jo Sharpe, Charlie Willcox, Jan Dizon, set Ritchie Sharpe, John Fletcher, Ali Bakewell, Arran Mackay, Candice Gush, Annie Haley, Sisi Burns
Ukrainian Artwork Underground idea	Sasha Izotova & Olena Kvach
Music and sounds	Lynn Burges, Ailbe Matthews, Roxana Ciurean
Sound Operation	Vanessa Banks
Assistant Stage Manager	Charlie Willcox
Rehearsal Prompt	Sue Scrimshaw
Box Office	Jacky Tivers
Front of House Manager	Caroline Todd
Publicity	Rob Dixon & Margarita Papadopoulou

# Cast



## Dom Gaskell

I've been a member of WBDS for 7 years and been involved in a number of ways. Everything has been equal parts fun and challenging. Some in the cast might say breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the audience is new to them but this has been done once before during my time in *Pyramus and Thisbe*. I would say my role as Narrator is new to me, setting the scene and conveying details to the audience.



## Rob Dixon

This is my first Brecht play - although I have performed and been involved at WBDS for 27 years.

It's the first time I have been on throughout, even when not acting on the stage. But not my first time singing, talking to the audience, being drunk or bawdy!



## **Adrian Bacon**

I have been a member of WBDS for over 15 years. During that time, I have enjoyed a few experiences playing multiple roles. These include five different waiters in *Time Of My Life* and Goya, Zola, security guard and University Dean in *Portrait of a Nude*. This is my first time working on Brecht since my A levels. My main challenge during this production has been being inconspicuous when not on stage...no easy feat for a man of my considerable height!



## **Lynn Burges**

This play marks a decade for me as a member of WBDS. After taking on Stage Manager responsibilities twice last season I've really enjoyed being back on the stage. It's a thrill to be playing such a complex character, all the time wondering what the audience will make of her. The enormous task of line learning has been a challenge, but I am consoled by having the best hat!



## **Calum Sharp**

I joined WBDS early in 2020, and this is my third stage appearance, as well as some online activity during the pandemic. The experience of this play is new for me - playing three different parts, and having to differentiate them with voice and physicality. Add to this Brecht's drive to agitate the audience rather than engage them in the usual fashion results in a need to bring the parts to life as caricatures more than characters, which has been really fun to get to grips with.



## **James Wallace**

*Mother Courage* is my second production at WBDS after performing in *Veronica's Room* earlier this year... (so I must have done something right)!

With the help of a great director and cast I have enjoyed the trial and error process of a Brechtian play. Particularly the detrimental research I needed to do in order to play a particular 'flower power hipster'.





## **Margarita Papadopoulou**

I've been involved in plays in Greece and since I've been in England, I've been a member of WBDS in plays like *Relatively Speaking* and directed *Music for Amelia*. This is the first time I'm in a Brecht play and working with Brechtian techniques. Kattrin is a victim of the brutalities of war. It's a fascinating role as it made me look at the world through the eyes of someone who could only use body language and sounds to express themselves. Kattrin is here to show that a person's actions can definitely speak louder than words..



## **Malcolm Todd**

Like Cookie, I want nothing more than a glass of brandy from a fair hand; or failing that, a round of applause from the hands of a fair audience. Like Brecht, I eschew direct comment on the relevance, importance or otherwise of what we do in theatre. At least, I think that's what Brecht liked. At any rate, it's how I've approached a steadily less countable number of appearances on this much loved stage. It's a small one, but we make a go of it.



## **Stephen Herring**

This is my first performance at West Bridgford, where I have been made very welcome. I have always wanted to try Brecht. Not having a boundary between cast and audience, which can only happen in a live performance, looks very challenging. Let's hope we can pull it off.



## **Amanda Pearce**

This is my fifth performance for WBDS (most recently *The Thrill of Love* and *Veronica's Room*) and a completely new challenge.

Just when I thought I was getting the hang of things, along comes Brecht! Now I am asked to embody examples of behaviour he observed in the social upheaval of war. Starting with that behaviour, the psychology of the characters emerges but in a different way to naturalistic acting. Yvette represents women adrift and alone in desperate times, the peasants all poor people threatened with losing everything they depend on for survival.



## **Tim Farrow**

Now in my 28th year with WBDS, I'm well into the 'veteran' category which is probably why I was cast as the dodderly old Colonel. My roles over the years have been very varied and this production is no different - from a Clerk 'on the make' to a sinister spy and an over aggressive Ensign. An identity crisis looms.

### **Interval Music**

My Son John – The Imagined Village

A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall – Bob Dylan

I Dreamed Saw Joe Hill Last Night – Paul Robeson

I'm With You – Joan Baez

Alabama Song – Bob Davenport

Here's the Tender Coming – The Unthanks

IDK – Phoebe Green

Police Patrol - Bob Davenport

Devil in the Woman – Eliza Carthy and the Wayward Band

The Drum – Bob Davenport

**Our next production**  
***A Bunch of Amateurs***

***By Nick Newman & Ian Hislop***

Directed by Rob Dixon

28th February to 4th March 2023, 7.30pm

What happens when a drama group is having difficulties - declining audiences, internal problems? Why not ask a famous Hollywood actor to revive their career and promise them the title role in *King Lear* at Stratford? What could go wrong?

Written by the original authors of *Spitting Image*, this has been popular with amateur groups across the UK.

**Cast and Crew - *Mother Courage***

