

Book of writings by Indians

Touch the earth — voice of a people

"I am afraid that the white men are not speaking straight; that their children will not do right by our children; that they will not do what you have promised for them."

Chief Kamiaken, 1855.

By CARLA SULLIVAN

With those words the Yakima Indians signed a land treaty with the U.S. government, a treaty ratified by Congress four years later. Today their sons are in court defending the rights guaranteed by that treaty.

Touch the Earth: A Self-Portrait of Indian Existence, is more than a history and what it says passes anger or sorrow. A series of statements and writings by Indians throughout North America, Touch the Earth is the voice of a people whose way of life has been irreparably shattered in the name of a better way.

Their words span three centuries and range from bemusement at the ignorance of "the Hairy Man from the East" to despair at his greed and oppression. Interwoven throughout are the values dismissed as heathen by "the Great Father" — a profound belief in and reverence for life and the land, for "the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the Sunset."

The land was lost to the white men; just as inexorably, what civilization remained was crushed. For many, the two were inextricably linked — upon relinquishing his tribal land, Comanche Chief Ten Bears said, "The white man has the country we loved and we wish only to wander on the prairie until we die." Others, like Crazy Horse, fought the new ways: "We do not interfere with you, and again you say, why do you not become civilized? We do not want your civilization!" Most came to believe like the Sioux holy man Black Elk, "We are prisoners of war while we are waiting here. But there is another world."

In her preface, anthropologist T.L. McLuhan writes, "It is easy for all of us, not Indians, to feel a vicarious rage and misery on their behalf. The Indians, dead or alive, would justly receive such feelings with pity and contempt." It is too easy to wallow in guilt or to call for the overthrow of the oppressors from within the context of our own particular dogmas. The Indians do not want or need our self-flagellation or our strategies. Without benefit of our interpretation or advice, they have told their story — a story of anger, sadness, irony and dignity. Perhaps we are ready to listen.



Cheyenne

Brecht production not an epic—but good

By SANDRA SOUCHETTE

It seems especially appropriate that the University Alumnae Dramatic Club should have chosen to assemble a commemorative tribute to the contradictory spirit of Bert Brecht at this time. For those who saw *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* and *Galileo*, two uniquely dissimilar aspects of Brecht, the current production at the Coach House theatre called "Tonight: Bert Brecht" is a highly effective summation.

The production is an assemblage of songs, poems and plays of Brecht's which also allows for the personal intrusion of the man himself. It is a sympathetic but still objective viewpoint which traces the career and artistic creativity of Brecht from the early Bohemianism of Berlin, through the sardonic years of exile in Austria, Denmark, Finland and finally America, to the sanctuary and moral compromise of East Berlin, where the famous Berliner Ensemble

was able to create a theatre of its own with state subsidy.

The tightly-controlled, episodic production is able to sustain the theme of Brecht-the-man, seen against the scenario of Brecht-the-playwright, as it presents the contradictory and highly controversial alternatives which he introjected into his art-form throughout this career as iconoclast, communist, didactic socialist and deeply troubled, yet cynically optimistic and dedicated man of the theatre.

Incorporated into the presentation are many of the theatrical techniques which Brecht initiated: the use of masks, slides, a huge puppet and, in particular, music. These devices are used sparingly, however and what impresses the most is the artful simplicity of the method in which the diverse elements of a man's career are brought together. Simon Waegemakers, the musical director, puts together a clever balance of the

poignant and the didactic in the selection and placement of the songs and the company itself has a strong, cohesive talent. Judy Darragh, Michael Polley and Rod Beattie are particularly good in their singing parts; Patricia Carroll Brown does a masterful monologue from "The Jewish Wife."

Tonight: Bert Brecht, is not an epic production but it is a carefully constructed and tight synthesis of ideas seen through the empathetic understanding of director Anne Tait. She has been able to turn a perceptive intuition of the egocentric genius, the deliberately provocative peasantry and the personal insecurity of Brecht into a moving salute to his humanitarianism and brilliant, skeptical insights.

Since the play is running until Dec. 12th, you might just be able to catch it, if you hurry.

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