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Measures Taken And Other Lehrstucke (Modern Plays)



Synopsis

The Lehrstücke (or 'learning-plays') lie at the heart of Brechtian theatre. Written during 1929 and 1930, years of far-reaching political and economic upheaval in Germany and the period of Brecht's most sharply Communist works, these short plays show an abrupt rejection of most of the trappings of conventional theatre. The Lehrstücke are spare and highly formalized pieces intended for performance by amateurs, on the principle that the moral and political lessons contained in them can best be taught by participation in an actual production. There is nothing in the drama of the twentieth century to match the precision of their language and the economy of their theatrical technique.

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Customer Reviews

"The Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke," by Bertolt Brecht, brings together four theater pieces by this important German playwright. The book is edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim. Included is an introductory note entitled "The Lehrstück or Learning-Play," which is excerpted from an essay by Brecht. The pieces in this book, all of which were written from 1929 to 1930, are as follows: "The Measures Taken," translated by Carl R. Mueller, is the story of a group of Communist

agitators from Moscow who go to spread ... in China. It's a compelling story about the conflict between idealism and doctrinal orthodoxy. "The Exception and the Rule," translated by Ralph Manheim, is about an expedition headed by an exploitative merchant. It's a story of greed, violence, and law. "He Who says Yes" and "He Who Says No," both translated by Wolfgang Sauerlander, are a linked pair of plays; each one tells the story of a young man's quest to get medicine for his ailing mother. Overall, the plays have a very ritualized quality; three of them make use of a chorus. The stories told in these plays have the flavor of parables. Overall, I found these pieces very intriguing, particularly in a post-Cold war context.

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