

DalTheatre Season 2013-14

# The Good Soul of Szechuan

By Bertolt Brecht

February 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm  
February 8<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm & 8 pm

David MacK. Murray Theatre, Dalhousie Arts  
Centre, 6101 University Avenue, Halifax, NS

Directed by Ann-Marie Kerr  
(appears with the permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association)

**\$14 regular, \$7 students/seniors**

Tickets available at the Arts Centre Box Office 494-3820  
or on-line visit [www.artscentre.dal.ca](http://www.artscentre.dal.ca)

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## Director's Note

Brecht wanted to offer his audience something to debate, to consider, to provoke change in them, to make them re-think behavior they wrote off as simply human nature. Like much of Brecht's work *The Good Soul of Szechuan* was written in reaction to the horrific inhumanity he felt the world had too easily grown used to. In this play he asks – Do we all need to be just a bit bad to survive? How can we be good and survive in economic systems that produce such low moral standards? Written as a kind of parable, the play is set in semi-industrialized China in a few characters. Because it is elsewhere of the theatre. Except of course he wanted them to feel empathy; he wanted them to feel the characters and the material conditions. Doing Brecht is not a dry academic exercise. I believe Brecht wanted us to feel. The, the “good soul”, falls in love. The bets are off when you're in love. The destructive, driven by self-pres-

What a pleasure it's been to work with these actors. My greatest hope was to have a show that engaged all involved. I'm pleased to have done one – in Brecht's spirit the production was from actors to designers contrived to be a success. All design elements were in the spirit of the work in costumes, with props, and set design. Thomas Hoy has brought a creative and beautiful. With him came the equally talented musicians. them performing music tonight.

I want the show to be a success. I want the hard questions Brecht poses to be answered. the delights and provocations of the play. Ann-Marie Kerr

Ann-Marie is a director, actor and teacher. She is a graduate of Ecole Jacques Lecoq and is the recipient of the inaugural Gina Wilkinson Prize for Emerging Female Director. Select directing includes the Globe Theatre's *I, Claudia*, Mulgrave Road's *As Ever*, 2b theatre company's *Invisible Atom* that continues to tour, Zuppa Theatre's *The Debacle*, Daniel MacIvor's *Confession*, Daltheatre's *Comedy of Errors*. Select acting includes DMV's *White Rabbit*, *Red Rabbit*, Festival Antigonish's *Funny Money* (Merritt Award for Outstanding Performance), 2b theatre's *Soul Alone* and *Homage*, Souleppper/This is a Bird's *Stories by Steinbeck*, Theatre Smith Gilmour's *Chekhov Longs: In the Ravine*, and *Ward 6*.



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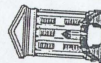
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Joe O'Brien  
Ian Thomson  
J. Philip Welch



### Dalhousie University Club

Before the curtain rises, join us in the University Club Pub for a bite and drink, cozy atmosphere, lots of parking and less than a five minute walk to the Rebecca Cohn. Please redeem your \$5.00 coupon before March 31 2014

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## Director's Note

Brecht wanted to offer his audience something to debate, to consider, to provoke change in them, to make them re-think behavior they wrote off as simply human nature. Like much of Brecht's work *The Good Soul of Szechuan* was written in reaction to the horrific inhumanity he felt the world had too easily grown used to. In this play he asks – Do we all need to be just a bit bad to survive? How can we be good and survive in economic systems that produce such low moral standards? Written as a kind of parable, the play is set “somewhere else”, somewhere far from us: a semi-industrialized China in a non-specific era with a diverse cast of characters. Because it is elsewhere the story isn't about people in the seats of the theatre. Except of course it is. Brecht didn't want the audience to feel empathy; he wanted them to be critical, to analyze the behaviors of the characters and the material conditions that cause those behaviors. But doing Brecht is not a dry academic exercise, nor should watching it be. I believe Brecht wanted us to feel and he made his characters human. Shen Te, the “good soul”, falls in love with a bad man – and as we all know, all bets are off when you're in love. In the name of love we are blind, destructive, driven by self-preservation and self-fulfillment.

What a pleasure it's been to tackle this play with these young actors. My greatest hope was to have a rehearsal room that implicated and engaged all involved. I'm pleased to say that it has been game-on since day one – in Brecht's spirit the process has been a collaboration, with everyone from actors to designers contributing profoundly to the making of the show. All design elements were in the room early in the process allowing us to work in costumes, with props, and on the set. Our composer and musician Thomas Hoy has brought a creative approach to sound and music design. With him came the equally talented Haig Ashod – you will hear both of them performing music tonight.

I want the show to be a funny and entertaining ride that digs into the hard questions Brecht poses for us, so sit up (not back) and grapple with the delights and provocations of this play.

Ann-Marie Kerr

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Young Brecht with Mask

## BERTOLT BRECHT

The audience in the dramatic theatre says:

*Yes, I have felt that too.-That's how I am.-That is only natural.-  
That will always be so.-This person's suffering shocks me because he  
has no way out.-This is great art: everything in it is self-evident.-  
I weep with the weeping, I laugh with the laughing.*

The audience in the epic theatre says:

*I wouldn't have thought that.-People shouldn't do things like  
that.-That's extremely odd, almost unbelievable.-This has to stop.-  
This person's suffering shocks me, because there might be a way out  
for him.-This is great art: nothing in it is self-evident.-I laugh over  
the weeping, I weep over the laughing.*

Source: Bertolt Brecht, *Theatre for Learning*



Erich Engel, Bertolt Brecht, Paul Dessau & Helene Weigel in rehearsal for  
*Mother Courage and her Children*



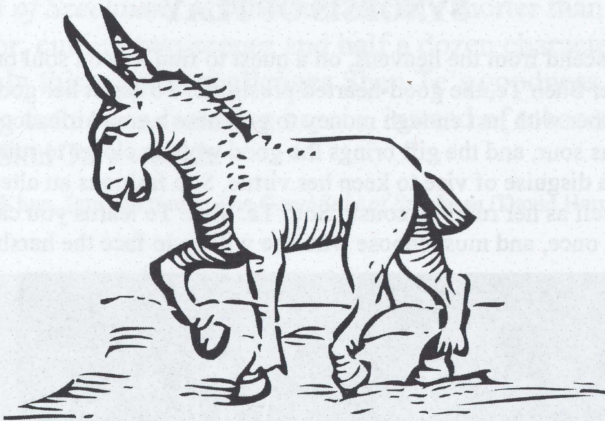
## Key Elements of Brecht's Theory

### *Verfremdungseffekt* (Estrangement Effect)

The Estrangement Effect in Brecht's writing creates theatre that announces its own artifice, and makes the audience self-aware. Brecht hoped to foster a double perspective through contradiction, allowing the audience to oscillate between submersion and estrangement. This perspective makes room for reflection and the possibility of social action.

### Gestus

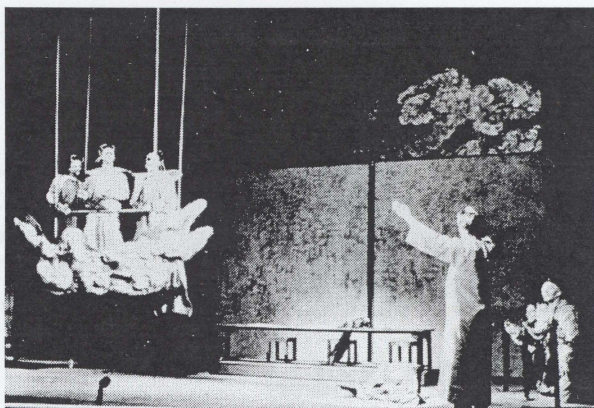
In Brechtian acting, the silent systems that govern our interactions are laid bare to be understood and criticized through gestus. For example, as the shopkeeper greets the client, the shopkeeper assumes the gestus of servitude. The shopkeeper in their movements is submitting to certain inherent assumptions about status and rules of social interaction.



### Brecht's Donkey

In Brecht's office, on a window ledge stood a small wooden donkey. A sign around its neck had written on it, "I too must understand it." This wooden figure highlights that Brecht intended his works to be practical and engaging.

Source: Walter Benjamin, *Conversations with Brecht*

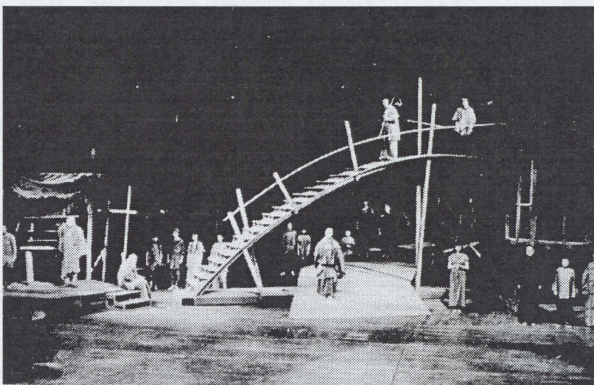


*To this windy world of chill distress  
You all came in utter nakedness  
Cold you lay and destitute of all  
Till a woman wrapped you in a shawl.*

*Bertolt Brecht*

### SYNOPSIS OF PLAY

The Gods descend from the heavens, on a quest to find a good soul on earth. They discover Shen Te, the good-hearted prostitute. To assist her goodness, the gods present her with just enough money to purchase a small tobacco shop. But the story turns sour, and the gift brings the good woman closer to ruin. Shen Te must put on a disguise of vice to keep her virtue. She fashions an alter ego, dressing herself as her ruthless cousin Shui Ta. Shen Te learns you cannot be two things at once, and must choose who she will be to face the harsh world.



Images of *Good Soul of Szechuan*, 1940s German production





### The Santa Monica Version

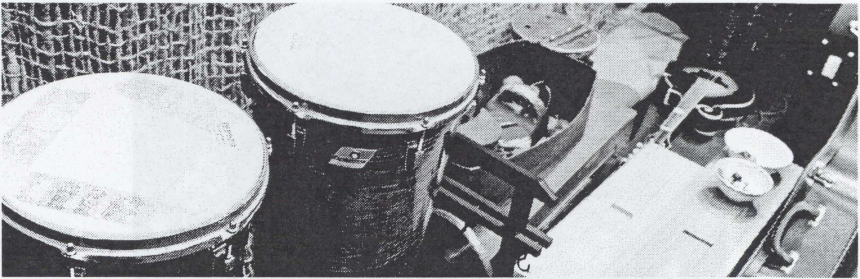
Brecht rarely thought of his plays as finished. Instead they were constantly evolving, each production picking up new scenes and losing others. This production is based on a later version of *The Good Soul of Szechuan*, which was radically shorter than its predecessor, cutting two scenes and half a dozen characters. Interestingly this version challenges Shen Te's goodness in a devastating fashion in featuring heroin, instead of tobacco, as source of Shui Ta's wealth.

Source: Tom Khun, Introduction to *The Good Soul of Szechuan* (David Harrower translation)



*The Good Soul of Szechuan*, Zurich Schauspielhaus





### A Note from the Composer

In *The Good Soul of Szechuan*, Brecht presents a very black and white view of morality – good and evil stand a world apart. I decided to create two musical worlds to mirror this polarity.

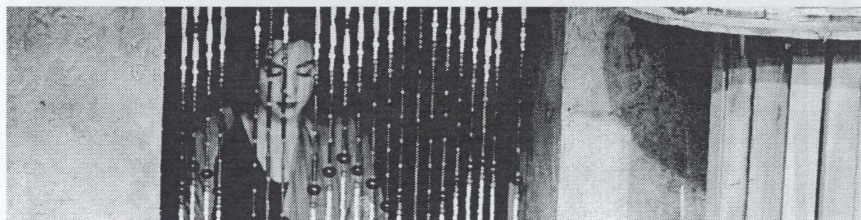
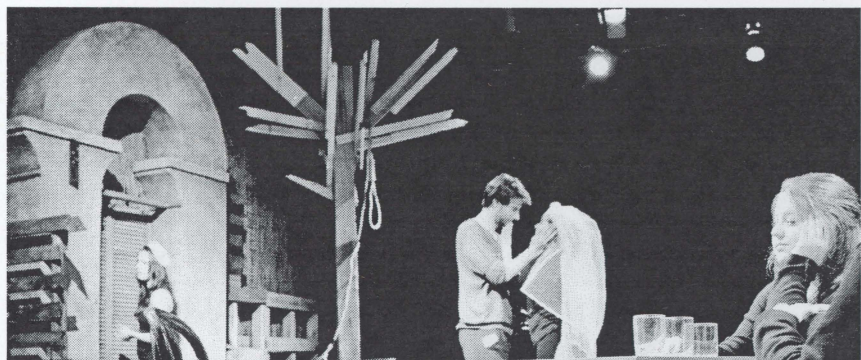
The world of the good is represented by “traditional” sounding Chinese music. (Note: I made no attempt at authenticity with this music. After a bit of research, it was clear that this is a world of music which would take years to truly understand, and that conceptually, it was actually stronger not to make any attempt at authenticity.) This music is introduced by the Gods. They teach it to Wang, who carries it with him. These sonorities are further developed and explored in Shui Ta’s song. It seems to belong to a bygone era, a time before the computer-perfect thump of modern life. However, as the simplistic and inadequate morality of the Gods is challenged, the “traditional” music is stretched beyond its capacity. Tritone related pentatonic collections are combined to create dissonant whole-tone and octotonic collections, and the famed “Petrushka” chord punctuates key moments in the songs. Through this transformation, the “traditional” music is exposed first as laughable kitsch, and finally as terrifying, raw emptiness, as we see our belief in traditional morality shattered.

The other world, the world of the evil, of cold modernity, is represented by a Szechuanified electronic dance music (EDM). To me, EDM, in particular club music, has always seemed more modern than any other genre. Its force, its insistence, its mechanical exactitude – all these elements make me think of the steady march of human industry and of the concurrent explosion in human population. Of course, in an overcrowded, quickly diminishing world, respect for human life wanes. But what does EDM sound like in poor, little Szechuan? Certainly, it is not a dance club, for Szechuan could not afford such a venue. Instead, I imagine the organizing principles of EDM seeping into the cultural lifeblood of Szechuan, and becoming manifested using whatever is available – old instruments, found objects, an old sewer pipe...

I’d like to thank the cast, who’ve been an absolute joy, the crew, whose expertise could always be depended on, and Ann-Marie, from whom I’ve learned so much in such a short time.

Thomas Hoy



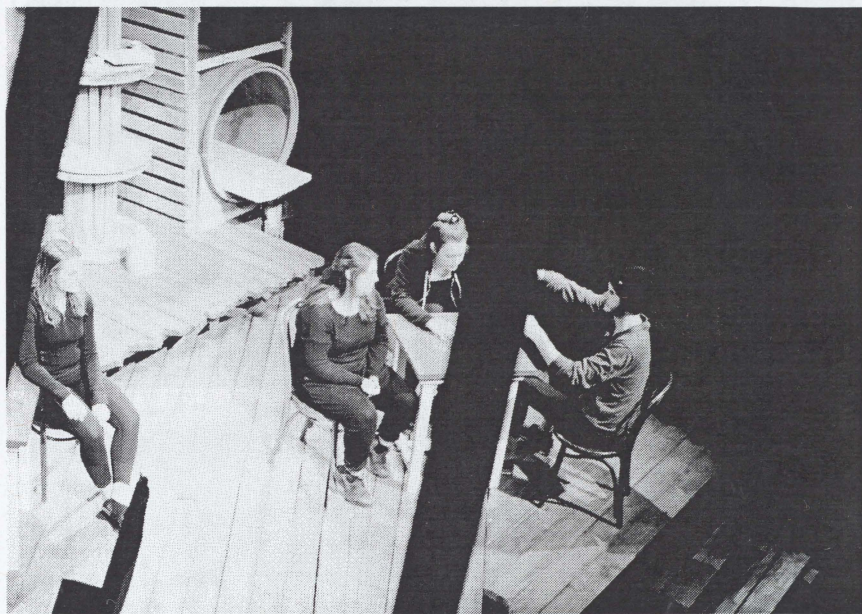






From the first it has been the theatre's business to entertain people, as it also has of all the arts. It is this business which always gives it its particular dignity; it needs no other passport than fun.

Source: Bertolt Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre*





# The Good Soul of Szechuan

by Bertolt Brecht (translated by David Harrower)

## Cast

Katerina Bakolias .....	First God
Linden Campbell.....	Third God
Sarah Deller.....	Wife, Young Prostitute's Mother, Office Worker Addict, Mob
Kenzie Delo.....	Wang
Henri Gielis .....	Shu Fu, Husband, Mob
Sinclair Gwilliams .....	Second God
Marina Gwynne.....	Shen Te/Shui Ta
Hannah Harper .....	Young Prostitute/Niece, Addict, Worker, Mob
Ben Leger.....	Child, Brother, Hooker, Waiter, Mob
Sansom Marchand.....	Carpenter, Client, Man on Date, Addict, Mob
Flavia Martin.....	Old Prostitute, Nephew, Addict, Worker, Mob
Morgan Melnyk.....	Mrs. Shin, Mob
Tyler Messervey.....	Unemployed Man, Agent, Grandfather, Addict, Mob
Nick Perron .....	Yang Sun, Passing Gentleman
Paul Rossiter .....	Policeman, Priest, Gentleman, Mob
Celia Rossiter .....	Sister-in-Law, Worker, Addict, Mob
Katherine Webster.....	Mrs. Yang, Mi Tsu, Boy, Widow Su, Addict, Mob

**The show is 150 minutes long with one fifteen minute intermission**  
No open flames in use or allowed in theatre.

*"The Good Soul of Szechuan" is presented by special arrangement with  
SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.*

## Creative Team

Director .....	Ann-Marie Kerr
(Appears with the permission of Canadian Actors' Equity)	
Assistant Director .....	Alanna Griffin
Set and Prop Designer.....	John C. Dinning
Costume Designer .....	John Pennoyer
Lighting and Projection Designer .....	Brandon Randall
Voice & Text Coach .....	Laurel Thomson
Pre-show Choreographer.....	Veronique MacKenzie
Composer & Musical Director.....	Thomas Hoy
Assistant Musical Director & Coach .....	Haig Beylerian

## Production Team

Producer .....	Rob McClure
Publicity .....	Gini Cornell
Stage Manager .....	Wai Wan (Liesl) Low
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Virginia Iredale
Head Scenic Painter .....	Christian Niles
Scenic Painter.....	Cassandra Thorbjornsen
Head Stage Carpenter .....	Vekisha Drummond
Scenic Carpentry Crew.....	Qing Wang
	Charbil Jarmash
Head of Props .....	Carolena Charles
Props Crew.....	Elizabeth Wile
Head of Lighting .....	Brandon Randall
Lighting Crew .....	Mary Hartley
	Douglas Cox



## Costume Team

### Cutters and Stitches

Victoria Burrell  
Chelsea Conn  
Jessica Copp  
Breeze Dampsy  
Laura Delchiaro  
Naomi Froese  
Sara Harlow

Audrey Levesque  
Kim Milligan  
Jonathan Munro  
Shauna Murphy  
Audrey Sawyer  
Martha Schram  
Brooke Tascona



### Dressers

Head Dresser: Emma Wardell  
Samantha Lawrence  
Taylor Cotie-Mullenger  
Tianna Kira

Helen Brown  
Abigail Kennedy

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Professor, Theatre Studies  
Instructor, Costume Studies  
Lecturer, Technical Scenography  
Senior Instructor, Costume Studies  
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Lecturer, Costume Studies  
Professor Emeritus, Technical Scenography  
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Associate Professor, Costume Studies  
Associate Professor, Acting  
Associate Professor, Film Studies  
Canadian Research Chair in European  
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Natasha Conde-Jahnel  
Hilary Doda  
Veronique MacKenzie  
MJ MacLeod  
Katherine Ryan  
Laural Thomson  
Sue LeBlanc





## Teaching Assistants and Markers

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Luciana Fernandes  
Dorian Lang  
Myra Sloan  
Jake Willet

Karen Bennett  
Ryenne Chisholm  
Lindsey Hunnewell  
Darlene Nadeau  
Morgan Strug

### Rental Crew Chief

Sara May Thurber

### Front of House Manager

Deborah-Preeper

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Construction Workshop Assistant  
Prop Shop Assistant  
Lighting and Sound Assistant  
Stores Assistant

Rachel Hastings  
Wai Wan (Liesl) Low  
Jordan Hames  
Veronica Endicott-Blinkhom  
Audrey Sawyer



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D'Arcy Gray of Dal Music, Neptune Theatre Props Department,  
Sievert's Limited, Wire Rope Industries, Shakespeare by the Sea



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by Giovanni Boccaccio

March 25 - 29, 2014 at 8pm  
and March 29 at 2pm

