

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO**
EDUCATION

**VILLAIN
LEADER
DICTATOR** **MURDERER
GANGSTER
CHARMER
POPULIST**

**HUGO WEAVING AS
ARTURO UI**

ON CUE

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Compiled by Lisa Mumford.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Lisa Mumford is the Education Projects Officers for the Sydney Theatre Company. You can contact Lisa on lmumford@sydneytheatre.com.au

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ABOUT *ON CUE* AND STC

ABOUT ON CUE

STC Ed has a suite of resources located on our website to enrich and strengthen teaching and learning surrounding the plays in the STC season.

Each school show will be accompanied by an *On Cue* e-publication which will feature essential information for teachers and students, such as curriculum links, information about the playwright, synopsis, character analysis, thematic analysis and suggested learning experiences.

For more in-depth digital resources surrounding productions, please visit the STC Ed page on our website.

Such resources include:

- Director documentaries
- Design sketchbooks

ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

In 1980, STC's first Artistic Director Richard Wherrett defined STC's mission as to provide "first class theatrical entertainment for the people of Sydney – theatre that is grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun."

Almost 40 years later, that ethos still rings true.

STC offers a diverse program of distinctive theatre of vision and scale at its harbourside home venue, The Wharf; Roslyn Packer Theatre at Walsh Bay; and Sydney Opera House, as its resident theatre company.

STC has a proud heritage as a creative hub and incubator for Australian theatre and theatre makers, developing and producing eclectic Australian works, interpretations of classic repertoire and great international writing. STC strives to create theatre experiences that reflect Sydney's distinctive personality and engage audiences.

Strongly committed to engagement in the community, STC's Education and Communities programs aim to inspire theatre appreciation and participation not only in theatres but also in schools, community halls; wherever people get together. STC offers an innovative School Drama™ program; partners with groups in metropolitan Sydney, regional centres and rural areas; and reaches beyond NSW with touring productions throughout Australia. Through these partnerships and initiatives, STC plays a part in ensuring a creative, forward-thinking and sociable future by engaging with young people, students and teachers.

The theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists have been launched and fostered at STC, including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne, Benedict Andrews and Cate Blanchett.

STC often collaborates with international artists and companies and, in recent years, the company's international profile has grown significantly with productions touring extensively to great acclaim.

STC is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, by its arts funding and advisory body, and by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW.

sydneytheatre.com.au

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS



Hugo Weaving and the cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
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SUITABLE FOR

Students in Years 10 to 12

SUBJECTS

Drama Stages 5 and 6

Links to HSC Drama Topic 8: Significant Plays of the 20th Century- 'Mother Courage and Her Children'

Links to HSC Drama Individual Projects Text List: 'Threepenny Opera'

Stage 5, Brecht and Epic Theatre

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY AND UBS PRESENT

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI

BY BERTOLT BRECHT
TRANSLATED BY TOM WRIGHT

CLARK/THEATRE DIRECTOR/
COURT APPOINTED PHYSICIAN
MITCHELL BUTEL

DOGSBOROUGH
PETER CARROLL

IGNATIUS DULLFLEET/
MAULBEER/HOOK/
1ST MILLSTREAMIAN
TONY COGIN

GIRI, YOUNG DOGSBOROUGH
IVAN DONATO

BETTY DULLFLEET/
CARRUTHERS/DELLER/
DEFENCE ATTORNEY
ANITA HEGH

RAGG/GAFFLES/GAZILLO/
PROSECUTOR/SHORT MAN/
PRIEST
BRENT HILL

ROMA
COLIN MOODY

DOCKDAISY/COUNSEL/2ND
MILLSTREAMIAN
MONICA SAYERS

ARTURO UI
HUGO WEAVING

INNA/SCHUSSE/MULLET/
WAITER
CHARLES WU

GIVOLA, MAGISTRATE
URSULA YOVICH

DIRECTOR
KIP WILLIAMS

SET DESIGNER
ROBERT COUSINS

COSTUME DESIGNER
MARG HORWELL

LIGHTING DESIGNER
NICK SCHLIEPER

COMPOSER &
SOUND DESIGNER
STEFAN GREGORY

CINEMATOGRAPHER
JUSTINE KERRIGAN

FIGHT DIRECTOR
NIGEL POULTON

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
ALASTAIR CLARK

VOICE & TEXT COACH
CHARMIAN
GRADWELL

PRODUCTION MANAGER
DI MISIRDJIEFF

STAGE MANAGER
MINKA STEVENS

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER
KATIE HANKIN

ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER
JAYMII KNIERUM

WIG, MAKEUP &
WARDROBE SUPERVISOR
LAUREN A.
PROIETTI

DRESSERS
SIMONE EDWARDS
ALICIA BROWN
CAROL CHOR
KHIM TEE

DAY MAINTENANCE
NYOK KIM CHANG

SOUND SUPERVISOR
BEN LIGHTOWLERS

FOH SOUND OPERATOR
TIM WALKER

RADIO MIC TECHNICIAN
LAUREN PETERS

VIDEO SUPERVISOR
DAVE BERGMAN

VIDEO MIXER
JASON JONES

CAMERA OPERATORS
PHILIP CHARLES
DANIEL BOULES

RPT HEAD ELECTRICIAN/
PRODUCTION ELECTRICIAN
ANDREW
TOMPKINS

RPT DEPUTY HEAD
ELECTRICIAN/LIGHTING
OPERATOR
HARRY CLEGG

RPT HEAD SOUND
KEVIN WHITE

RPT HEAD MECHANIST
STEVE MASON

RPT HEAD FLYMAN
CHRIS FLEMING

RPT DEPUTY FLYMAN
JASON EDWARDS

RPT FLOOR MECHANISTS
KANE MOTT
CARL AVERY

REHEARSAL
PHOTOGRAPHER
HON BOEY

PRODUCTION
PHOTOGRAPHER
DANIEL BOUD

2 HOURS 5 MINUTES,
NO INTERVAL

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI PREMIERED AT ROSLYN PACKER THEATRE, ON 27 MARCH 2018

PRODUCTION PATRONS

DANITA LOWES &
DAVID FITE

PRESENTING PARTNER



Create NSW
Arts, Screen & Culture

SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO

THE PLAYWRIGHT IN CONVERSATION

TOM WRIGHT

What inspired this play for its writer, Bertolt Brecht?

Brecht went into exile in 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany. He wrote this play almost a decade later, still in exile.

So, in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, he's looking back on the country he's had to flee and asking questions about the historical forces that led to Hitler's rise – were they inevitable or were they resistible? That's the core question throughout.

Between 1939 and 1941, when Brecht was writing the play, I think he was resisting the fatalistic idea that, in the end, German society was corrupt and Hitler cajoled the population into believing he had answers which he didn't. What Brecht says is that it's more complicated than that – people are constantly trying to force their political will on liberal democracies and, at a certain point, it can lead to totalitarianism unless you resist. He is writing it in the midst of the Second World War, while fleeing from country to country, from Denmark to Finland to the United States, asking the question of how and where does resistance start? Of course, it seemed too late to talk about resisting Hitler – the beast was already all over Europe.

Working with Brecht on the text was Margarete Steffin who was his very close collaborator. Together, they brought this idea of resistance together with some of Brecht's older interests: American popular culture; gangster films; Chicago as a site for über-capitalism, where the marketplace ran rampant in the early 20th century. Those things came together into this one play, almost as if he were uniting a number of unfinished projects.

How do Chicago and gangsters resonate with Hitler?

There's an interesting thread of criminality and the way in which criminality intersects with politics and the way in which politics intersects with genuine power, which is economic power. What you get is a place in which all of those competing forces are at work – that is, an image of the city. And it's not a literal version of Chicago, or a literal Berlin, or for that matter, for our purposes, a literal Sydney, it's 'the city'.

It's interesting that Brecht, in the midst of a war, is not writing a play about what it's like to be in the trenches or at the Polish front – he's writing a play about what it's like to be at war within 'the city'. So you realise that, for him, 'the city' is an image of Western political discourse – a microcosm with the same forces at work as a global war. So, it's a play about what leads to dictatorship, but it's also, metaphorically, a play about war. And smack-bang in the middle of the script that Brecht and Steffin wrote is one solitary woman who doesn't reappear anywhere else in the play, who speaks as the small-scale victim, the person who is at the mercy of all these forces, saying, "Why can't anybody help?"

Added to this mix are a number of direct references and allusions to Shakespeare.

Yes, I think Brecht is refracting his theories of epic theatre through a Shakespearean lens. He's thinking about how Shakespeare could write history while, simultaneously, history could also write Shakespeare, in the sense that famous plays like *Richard III* or *Henry IV* are, to a certain extent, not just Shakespeare's understanding of history but also the authorised and received history of our common knowledge. Brecht was interested in the way in which theatre can sometimes become a way of explaining and becoming history. Theatre is history and history is theatre within that Shakespearean epic realm.

So, Brecht began to think about what would happen if a modern-day Shakespeare were to write the story of Adolf Hitler. Obviously, it being about 1941, no one knows how the play is going to end – indeed, there is no classic fifth act in *Arturo Ui* that wraps things up. Is this a play about the rise and fall of a despot? Does it finish like *Macbeth* or *Richard III* with downfall in battle? Brecht doesn't know, so it's a four-act play missing a resolving final act.

The thing is, the play isn't performed until 11 years after the war ends. By this time, Brecht is back in Berlin and able to revisit the play. Does he rewrite it to include a fifth act? Or does he leave it as it was in those dark days when he didn't know what would happen to Germany, to Europe, to the world? What we get is that beautiful final speech, a coda of sorts, to say, "Yes, we all know it didn't last, but it could all erupt again."

Brecht is trying to set up a theatrical space in which a discussion can take place that reverberates and refracts through the minds of the audience, with the result of political action. That's certainly his aspiration. And, to a certain extent, the core lesson (if there is a moral to the piece) is encapsulated in the last lines. Individual tyrants and despots and abusers of the public polity come and go. They're not the problem. The problem is the machine and the set of circumstances we allow to erupt periodically within our societies that give voice to these men or these women. Hitler is not a once-off for Brecht. There were people along the way who thought that they could unleash a Hitler or an Ui and keep them under control, only to realise the Hitler or the Ui can often feed on the very things that gave rise to them. That's Brecht's big warning: don't think that you can dabble with extremism to achieve certain ends and not wear the consequences.

THE PLAYWRIGHT IN CONVERSATION

TOM WRIGHT

To hone in on Shakespeare and the way in which Brecht is trying to instigate political action, one could argue that a Shakespearean character like Richard III is given a charisma that makes palatable his horrible deeds. Brecht seems to be writing against Shakespeare in this regard.

It might not be objectively true, but you could assert that Shakespeare's big anxiety is revolution – chaos and disorder. That, in the end, for Shakespeare, tyranny is a future where there is no leader, no kingly authority. Because, in most of those plays, the problem is simply one of legitimacy. Shakespeare is not questioning whether or not there should be a dictatorial presence in the kingdom. He's questioning who the right dictator is.

So, Shakespeare doesn't have Brecht's radicalism. Shakespeare's plays deal with legitimacy and how power shifts and mutates both within families and within kingdoms. But either way, the power itself is not the problem, nor is it questioned. The problem is the way in which it is wielded or administered. For Brecht, it feels like power itself is the issue. Power is the core problem.

One thing they have in common is the way in which the characters' interior life is of less interest than their exterior life. Of course, Ui has an inner life and has thoughts and doubts but they are only of interest to Brecht insofar as they serve the core questions of the play. We see this throughout Western literature – at what point does the pursuit of power and the pursuit of politics dehumanise the individual to the extent that they are no longer capable of acting with empathy? This is a political question for Brecht, but quite unlike the way in which similar ideas are raised in a play like *Macbeth*, in which there are characters that literally say, 'I must dehumanise myself in order to function as a political animal'.

One of the big, important scenes in this regard in *Arturo Ui* is the ghost scene, which is almost a burlesque on Shakespeare. The ghost of Ernesto Roma comes back to haunt Ui just as Ui is on the cusp of seizing power. That's the only real moment of weakness for Ui all the way along. We realise he's haunted by the mates he's had to murder along the way, which is true to the Shakespearean idiom, but Brecht then has him, in the very next scene, in an act of demagoguery. So, yes, he's haunted, but he's haunted as an illustration of the fact that he has lost all empathy and been utterly dehumanised. If anything, the haunting is an indication of how dangerous he is, not how vulnerable.

This relationship between inner life and outer life – what is Brecht actually interested in? The public man. And Shakespeare is woven into this too, because Brecht is questioning not only how we look at history, but how we look at theatrical representation as well. How much is theatre the art of persuasion? As someone observed many, many years ago, an actor going through an emotional crisis is far more capable of moving you than a real person going through a crisis. Actors are human beings plus. And Brecht's question is to what extent does that side of theatre serve the Hitlers of the world. All the way through this play, you watch Arturo learn not just how to be an effective criminal or how to be an effective politician, but also how to be a good actor.

Theatrical artifice is depicted in the play as a device to get somewhere. And once Ui gets there, it becomes real. What was an artificial, almost hammy performance in one moment suddenly becomes the default position of politics. That's where some audience members might like to see a certain intersection with Trump. At what point does the artifice that gets you elected suddenly metamorphose into the new house style of democracy.

THE PLAYWRIGHT IN CONVERSATION

TOM WRIGHT

Built into the play is a scene in which a director instructs Arturo Ui in how to perform, how to be. It's a wonderful opportunity for humour in your translation, did it operate similarly in the original?

Yes, it was important to Brecht to point out that Adolf Hitler was actually just some two-bit lowlife from the back lots of Austria. That 'Adolf Hitler' was a construction. To us in the 21st century, the idea that our political figures, our leaders or, for that matter, our actors are constructed entities is such a given that we don't even have to think about it. We understand that our Prime Ministers have elocution lessons and walking lessons and practice endlessly in their office how to answer questions from the press and so on. Everything is rehearsed. Everything is planned. Everything is scripted. We expect that.

But, in Brecht's time, we're talking about the very early age of mass media culture. Brecht is drawing our attention to the fact that Shakespeare's great play of demagoguery, in which we watch Mark Antony manipulate language and meaning and, as a result, manipulate the polis, is alive and well. We're living in the midst of it. The same rhetorical techniques of Ancient Rome, that were used in various forms all through Shakespeare, are present in every one of those stadium speeches of Hitler, right down to the self-conscious wiping away of a tear or clenching of a fist or pausing as if exhausted. It's all artifice.

There's a question asked of the audience, at what point did you decide to prefer artifice over reality? Look how absurd it is. Look how manufactured it is. Maybe next time someone comes at you with these techniques, you'll take action, you'll resist.

And with that long speech from *Julius Caesar* what we also see is Arturo Ui's very quick mind grasp how language is every bit as sharp as a razor.

It's the moment he realises he can wield more power without violence. The only difference between the political mind and the criminal mind is the weapon of choice.

And Arturo doesn't want to just be a criminal. You could say that there are two fundamental types of criminals: those who just want to make some cash, and those for whom crime is a bridge to something else. And that's the age-old narrative that we're familiar with from *The Godfather* films all the way through history – crime as a starting point, followed by a craving for legitimacy.

In Brecht's play, Arturo's henchmen are the kind of criminals who have no interest in leaving their criminality behind. That's all they want to be. They're hoodlums. And that was, as Brecht would say, what the Nazis were. But for Arturo, loan-sharking and being a stand-over man is small stuff. What he actually wants is power, true power. That's the story of *Arturo Ui*. The top-end of town think of him as a hoodlum that they can control. They bring him in to smash up the unions, to tap the flow of government money. The men in suits think they can use him and then put him back in his box. But Arturo learns along the way and, before they know it, they're dancing to his tune.

On the first day of rehearsals, you mentioned that the play is also about the fragility of public culture. A fragility we see today in the way that public space and public goods are increasingly being privatised and commercialised.

Cities used to be largely, by definition, public spaces with a small amount of private space. However, as the eons go by, they become more and more privatised to the point where, in modern cities, including Sydney, it's very hard to know whether the street you're walking down is a private one or a public one. There are the ways in which parkland or government land find itself mysteriously acquired by a nexus of business elements. It's very hard to know who owns our public conversations and the circumstances in which those conversations take place. That's true of the media and it's also true of our literal public spaces.

You could write a history of Sydney consisting solely of examples of where the public realm has been corporatised, privatised and colonised by money, going right back to the Rum Corps. A history of Sydney which extends to almost every iteration of private development on Moore Park, to Barangaroo, to the way in which the Green Bans movement worked and didn't work in the 1970s. It's a big part of this city's history and it sits as an unspoken, underlying theme in *Arturo Ui*, without ever being directly referred to.

In my translation, the character Maulbeer, one of the businessmen, says, "You know there's decay beneath the surface when mushrooms sprout after rain. So too, you know there is rotteness going on behind closed doors by the number of cranes that sprout on the skyline." In Brecht's play, this kind of image was linked to the way German big business was prepared to go hand-in-hand with the Nazis if they knew there were contracts in it for them, but it also has a certain resonance in contemporary Sydney. The way in which people sense that the real discussions, the real debates and the real decisions are being made away from our scrutiny. And, at that point, you start to lose faith in the process of politics.

Brecht's big lesson is that, when you see the warning signs, don't look away. Drag the conversation into the public realm. Allow the citizenry ownership of the big debates. That aspect of the Brechtian narrative feels like it speaks directly to our times.

THE PLAYWRIGHT IN CONVERSATION

TOM WRIGHT

In translating the text, you've included a few very particular quotations and references, including some fun surprises. What was behind those choices?

Well, we were talking about Shakespeare, and I've tried to lace lines that reference actual Shakespearean lines – for instance, Arturo refers off-handedly to the “whirligig of time”. These are phrases that have entered our everyday vernacular, so you get that sense of theatre’s artifice being in constant discussion with reality.

In a similar vein, I've tried to use certain phrases from the Australian political realm of the last few decades as similar sorts of beacons, not to make an overt point, but just to mark the rhetorical devices and clichés that are part of our public discourse. For example, at one point, one of the characters talks about “moral dieticians”, which was a phrase originally used by Prime Minister John Howard. It always struck me as a lovely pairing of words. I liked the idea of someone prescribing a diet for your ethical code. So, these beacons sit there, not to make a point about any single politician but to ring a familiar bell for audience members. Just to remind us that the world of this play is our own.

With the use of song lyrics, I wanted to make the point, at the end of the play, when Arturo is nearing his apotheosis and has become the Führer, so to speak, that his language gets more and more artificial and more and more banal. It becomes riddled with cliché and fabricated, false emotions which have more in common with advertising jingles and popular music. His language has been reduced to what Orwell would call the debased language of politics. So it's included partly in a spirit of humour, but also with a serious edge, to say that all of us are susceptible to mistaking banality for profundity.

SYNOPSIS

Written as an allegory for the rise of Hitler in Germany, Brecht set his original play in Chicago, against the 1930s gangster racket.

Arturo Ui is a small-time gangster down on his luck, who comes across incriminating information about the hitherto uncorrupted politician Dogsborough, who has been involved in some dubious negotiations with the Fresh Produce Trust. Ui uses that information as leverage against Dogsborough and the Fresh Produce Trust to the extent that he comes to control them. Ui's gang are standover men; they fund their activities by being paid off in return for 'security solutions'. Ui ascends through systems of power and authority – including government, business, media and the law – and topples them. He is so successful in Chicago that he seeks to expand into the nearby city of Cicero.

This adaptation of the play is set in an Australian context. It never explicitly states which city it is set in – the setting is referred to only as 'the city' – but it can be recognised as our present day Sydney. When Ui plans to expand across borders,

instead of Cicero the neighboring city is called Millstream, which is the literal translation of the name Melbourne, as derived from Old English.

The play starts in a backroom meeting in a Chinese Restaurant in the style of *The Golden Century* in Sydney's Chinatown. The meeting is between Dogsborough and the Fresh Produce Trust. This meeting and the bribe Dogsborough accepts, become the catalysts that eventually enable Ui's rise. As Ui's greed and lust for power grow, his means for achieving his goal become more and more brutal. In order to make himself more appealing, he takes classes from a theatre director in how to sit, stand, walk and talk in a more charismatic way. Eventually Ui takes over the city and then sets his sights even higher.



Hugo Weaving and Peter Carroll in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
© Daniel Boud

SYNOPSIS (CONT.)

In the beginning, the world of the play is a real-world context and is recognisable, and somewhat naturalistic. Some of the scenes might be familiar to the audience as similar to recent events in politics and the media. This calls to mind the corruption of disgraced former politicians such as Eddie Obeid. As the play progresses, the style evolves from this naturalism to become first more theatrical, as the artifice of the stage becomes apparent, then more and more abstract, as the play nears the end. In this way, it defies any one particular style.

While the original script by Brecht was very much about Hitler, this adaptation by Tom Wright is about more than an individual dictator. It is about how any authoritarian leader is able to rise to power. This play is asking important questions about the social and political climate which must exist in order for such a person to succeed. The contemporary Australian context is important in allowing for these resonances; it is not specific as to who the figure might be, but it is a familiar context, making the rise of Ui feel immediate as

well as pointing to how possible it might be to dismantle our current democratic systems.



Colin Moody and Hugo Weaving (background) and the cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
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CHARACTER ANALYSIS



Hugo Weaving in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
© Daniel Boud

ARTURO UI

Arturo Ui starts the play as a small-time gangster down on his luck. He comes across information about the recently corrupted politician Dogsborough and it enables him to start his pursuit of power. Ui undergoes training to become a convincing politician and his strength becomes his command of language and his ability to convince his peers and the public.

Ui eventually embodies the charisma of despotic leaders, but it is his transformation which is particularly interesting – how a person can learn and perform power, and how effective this can be. In the same way that Ui goes to a theatre director to learn, Hitler also had lessons in oration and powerful gestures from an actor.

Hugo Weaving plays this Ui as a thuggish criminal, brutal in his pursuit of power and unwilling to stop at anything until he achieves it. His costuming cleverly reflects his gains; his suits become higher quality and better fitted as he starts to command power over more and more people. His physicality also reflects this; he is coached in sitting, gesturing, and walking in a more commanding way, and the projected camera close ups allow the audience an insight into his psychological states.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS (CONT.)

ROMA

Roma is Arturo Ui's best friend, accomplice, and 'right hand man'. He is a standover man, and provides the brute force and threatening presence often used to persuade people. Roma is created in reference to Ernst Rohm, who was an early member of the Nazi party and a close ally to Hitler. Eventually Rohm became a rival to Hitler and was subsequently executed.



Colin Moody (background) and Hugo Weaving (foreground) in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
© Daniel Boud

CHARACTER ANALYSIS (CONT.)

DOGSBOROUGH

Dogsborough has always been an honest politician, but right at the end of his career he succumbs to a bribe. As a result of this, Ui is enabled and Dogsborough becomes implicated in the world of the gangsters. As Ui rises, Dogsborough falls. He has a son with a disability and justifies accepting the bribe in order to gain money to support him. His descent is further characterised through his ailing physical health. Dogsborough is written in reference to Hindenburg, who was the German president responsible for appointing Hitler Chancellor and facilitating his rise to power.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS (CONT.)



IGNATIUS AND BETTY DULFLEET

In the play, Ignatius Dullfleet is a newspaperman in Millstream, the next city Ui plans to take over. Written in reference to the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss, in the play Dullfleet comes to represent the media and the ways Ui starts to control public opinion. Dollfuss was the 10th Chancellor of Austria and was killed when the Nazi party made an attempt to invade Austria in 1934.

Betty is the wife of Dullfleet. When Dullfleet is killed and Ui comes to the funeral, she publicly denounces him and his brutal authoritarian mode of power. Shortly after this, she can be seen to be endorsing Ui, partly because she is afraid of him but also because she can see the ways in which

supporting him will benefit her personally. Betty represents the Austrian people and the ways they initially resisted and then succumbed to Nazi rule.

THEMES AND IDEAS

ALLEGORY FOR THE RISE OF HITLER IN GERMANY

Writing in exile from Germany in 1941, Brecht was open about the fact that the play he was writing was a direct allegory for the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany.

This adaptation shifts the allegory from a direct study on Hitler to asking a broader question about how any tyrant is enabled to gain power. The play is not set in the Chicago that Brecht utilised, but in a place referred to as 'the city' which is very recognisable as our own contemporary Sydney. By keeping the setting less specific but more recognisable in this way, the audience are invited to find parallels between the action on stage and real world situations from history and current political times.



Hugo Weaving (background) and Monica Sayers (foreground) in Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
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THEMES AND IDEAS (CONT.)

POWER AND CORRUPTION

In changing the context in this adaptation, the central focus moves beyond Nazi Germany and onto broader questions about how fascism is able to flourish. The play suggests that people are more able to be corrupted because of the culture of greed within which we now live. Individual power is championed and the individual is encouraged to promote themselves, often at the cost of the society.

This new translation by Tom Wright brings the action to a city that could be Sydney, in the present day and criticises capitalism as well as fascism, and investigates how capitalism leads to fascism; the culture of greed and of the individual facilitates corruption of democratic systems that are meant to serve the people. Dogsborough's entire reputation and career has been about honesty, before he makes one corrupt action which becomes the catalyst for Ui's ascent. There is a class struggle in the play and a mirror is held up to the audience, asking what sort of world have we set up and how does it permit the corrosion of morality?



Anita Hegh (background) and the cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
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THEMES AND IDEAS (CONT.)



The cast of Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.
© Daniel Boud

RESISTANCE

In this production, resistance to the power of Ui seems futile, and indeed he does not stop on his trajectory until he achieves absolute power. It is implicit in the play's title however that his ascension to absolute power was avoidable. The 'Resistible' of the title forces the audience to consider the ways in which Ui's brutal rise to power was made possible by the political and social structures in which he exists.

For example, the greengrocers come to the realisation they should have stood up and they didn't. In one of the final scenes a greengrocer says 'it's too late, we should have stood up earlier.' There are various points at which the legal system or media could have stood up and resisted but didn't. The play suggests that the options for resisting are not good, that looking at historical examples, when people try to protest violent regimes they are silenced, that the majority of people pretend it's not happening, keep their heads down so they don't get incarcerated or killed. Generally people become silent or don't resist for their own personal safety.

STYLE

EPIC THEATRE

Bertolt Brecht was not interested in realism, he wanted his audiences to be aware of the artifice of the theatre in order that they became engaged in the political ideas of his plays, rather than getting distracted by empathy for the characters. He used a number of techniques to achieve this, and his style of theatre has become known as Epic Theatre. While it is a translation by Tom Wright, this production still uses a number of conventions of Epic Theatre.

Projection is used on the screen at the back of the stage. This screen is used for the live video feed but it is also used to project signage for each scene. Brecht uses signs in his work to offer information about plot but also to further the sense of alienation. In this production, the projected signs offer background to scenes, introduce characters, and convey plot points. The colours and font, accompanied by the soundtrack, convey the mood and atmosphere of the gangster film genre.

As the audience enter the auditorium, the cast are observed warming up and preparing for the show. Throughout the show, costume changes happen on stage and actors can be seen to be waiting in visible wings to come on for their scenes. Grotesque mask-like facial expressions are sometimes used to create caricature style acting, this is another Brechtian idea; an actor must never fully become their character but rather represent them.

As Ui and his gang's control over other characters mounts, so too does their power over the act of theatre making, until it gets to a point where it feels like Ui's gang has taken over the performance itself.

THE ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION



Set design by Robert Cousins for Sydney Theatre Company's *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*. © Nisha Agiasotis

SET DESIGN

The play is about performance and the performance of power, it is about the construction of a public identity and the theatre of politics. The mechanisms of this construction are exposed in this production. The artform of live theatre becomes a way of meditating on the theatre of politics and the overall conceit is true to Brecht's style as it is an exposed act of storytelling.

The set is designed in such a way that the audience see actors and crew preparing, the scene changes are exposed, the artifice is apparent all the way through the play. Live video is used to project live action onto a screen downstage, and the screen is the receptacle of the reality. As the audience watch the dramatic action, they see the film crew and this tension is at the heart of the production. The projection onto the screen centralises the idea that for Ui, anything transmitted publicly is a complete construction for his audience, and he is aware of how to manipulate and create an image. The design is true to the central idea that any political identity is engaged in an act of theatre making in real life.

This melding of cinema and theatre allows for a psychological interrogation of Ui. He is not simply a monster but it is important to ask, how did this individual become this powerful figure?

COSTUME DESIGN

The costume design is inspired by contemporary business wear and street wear commonly seen in Sydney. The politicians and businessmen wear clean lines and navy suits, while the gangsters wear tracksuits. Costume is used in an important way to show Arturo Ui's rise, he doesn't just speak and walk differently, he also dresses differently.

THE ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

CHARACTER

'Characterisation is the process of developing from a role to build a complex personality and background for a particular character.'

SYMBOL

'Symbols can help you understand and focus the drama- they can sum up the meaning of the performance, sometimes on a subconscious level.'

TIME AND PLACE

'All dramatic action occurs at a time and place... Time affects the place and situation that characters find themselves in.'

These definitions are from the NSW Drama syllabus.

TAKE YOUR CUE

Research

Who are the Historical figures the characters are based on and what part did they play in the rise of the Nazi party?

TAKE YOUR CUE

List all of the techniques of Epic Theatre that this production uses

TAKE YOUR CUE

What are the social, economic, and political conditions that might lead to a person like Arturo Ui rising to power? Use historical examples

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROGRAM

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Sydney Theatre Company, 2018.

PLAY

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