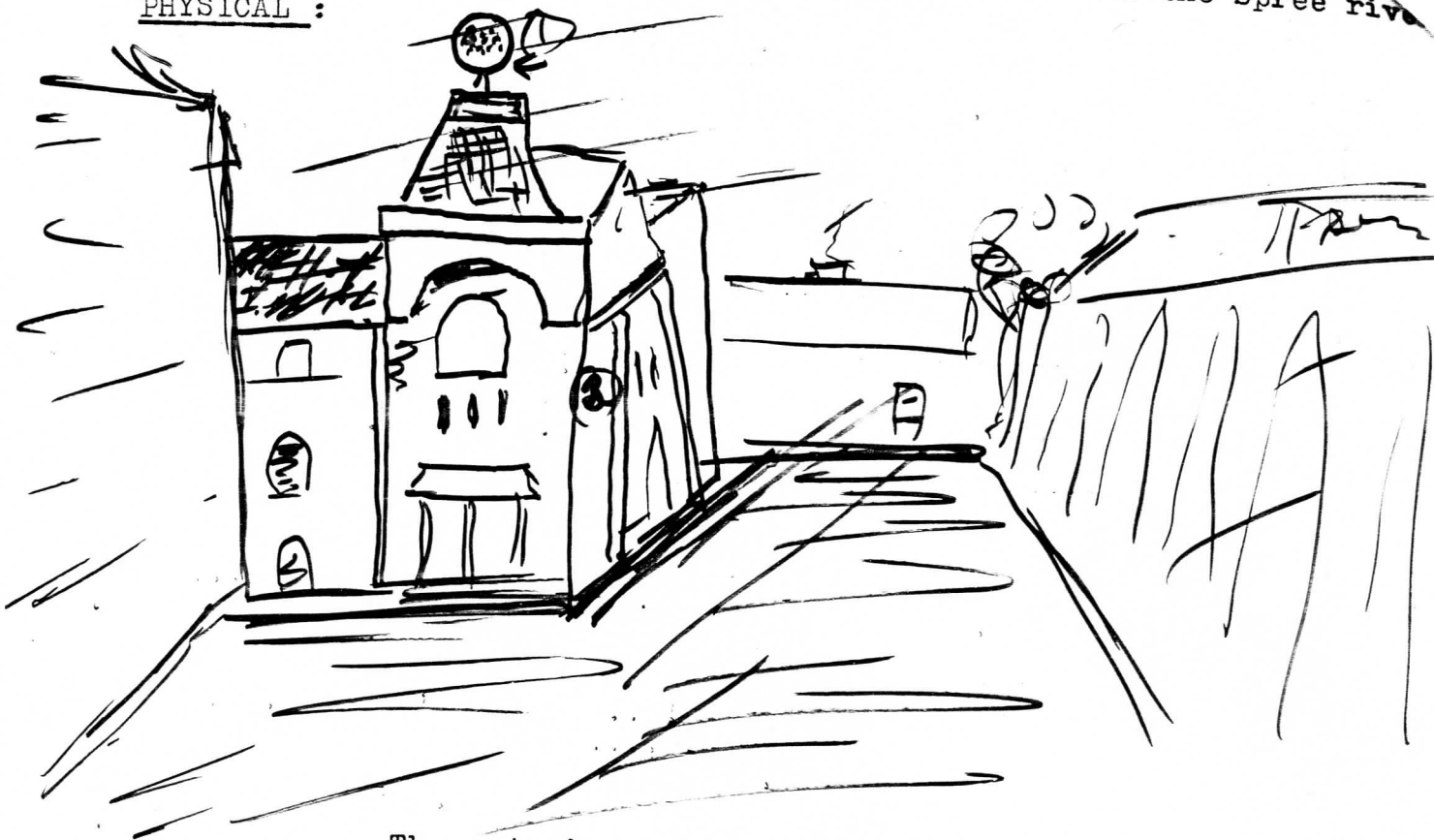


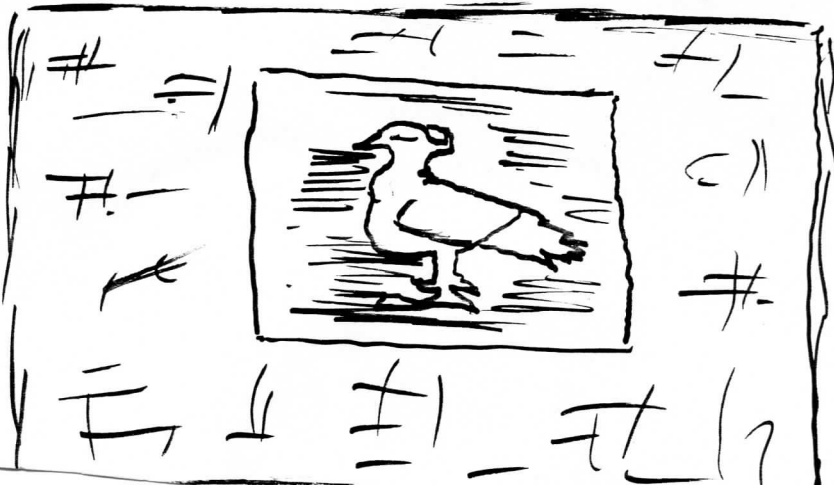
THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE

Location : On BERTOLT BRECHT PLATZ- square! Just off the Spree river

PHYSICAL :



The exterior is grey. The neon sign on top rotates when the play is on and when the box office is open. In white neon BERLINER ENSEMBLE. A huge white canvas with black lettering hangs from the window (# 2) announcing the daily program: HUETE: MANN IST MANN von BERTOLT BRECHT. The lobby is splendid. Rich. As is the interior of the theatre, decorated in gold and cream, with statues of the period plus red velvet seats. It hardly seems the right setting for Brecht who did not bathe but perhaps once a month. It looked like the RICH THEATRE Grotowski detests. For a moment I detested it too. Even some of the cliches I saw on the stage....Chiseled in granite over the box office is a saying of Brechts which I did not understand. The crystal chandeliers and commerce between acts ( selling everything from posters to Brechts Modelbooks) reminded me of the Broadway glitter. After four months in Grotowskis black room this change was astonishing. The curtain is charcoal and textured with Picassos DOVE OF PEACE in its center-



There are 296 members in the Ensemble including 60 actors. The Ensemble was created in 1948 and played in the Deutsches Theatre from the memorable premiere of MOTHER COURAGE in Jan of 1949 until 1954 when they moved to the present day site- the Theatre am Schiffbauerdamm. Brecht lived until 1956 so he spent two years at the present theatre site.

Rehearsals last from 2 to seven months. The Ensemble plays 7 days a week (as a rule) with a months vacation each year. The theatre seats 727 costing from 1 to 10 marks (from 25 cents to 2.50 top price)...

A MUSEUM to Brecht : Photos of current and old productions hang on the walls. Brechts face is everywhere. On a pole which runs alongside a stairway to the balconys, there are models of sets used in the Berliner Ensemble. Beautifully made models ala Maronek. Nine on each side of the stairs.....During intermissions programs, postcards, modelbooks, posters may be purchased from women standing ~~#####~~ behind a table display. Some of the drapes on the windows near the box office are painted with moments of scenes from THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE....A huge Picasso Peace Dove hangs in the lobby upstairs where refreshments are sold..It has written on its borders in many different languages: Peace to All Nations.

A THEATRE WITH A POINT OF VIEW: Of course it had a genius as its creator. Just as the Deustches Theatre had Max Reinhardt, and the Lab Theatre has Jerzy Grotowski, the Berliner Ensemble had Brecht. A theatre without a point of view is boring. Brechts theatre- although at times looks old fashioned and stilted, can still excite because of the point of view. Helen Weigel is so pro communist you can tell what she would do with Purple Dust. But a point of view is what we need at the Goodman! And not the all embracing " just good theatre" point of view we all talk about.

CURTAIN CALLS AND AUDIENCE : It gets pretty hot sitting up there in the second balcony and in some long talky passages audiences seemed restless. But when the final curtain fell, inevitable the actors received the minimum of a dozen curtain calls.

STAGINESS: Some gestures ( even Helen Weigels) were so stagey- I could hear Grotowski shouting to them " Your father sees you and knows you are not telling the truth."...The women were more prone to be contaminated with this weakness than the men.

REP AND SETS: High costs or heavy crew work mean little to the Ensemble designers. Sets are radically different from each other. Gimmicks, clever ideas, though they involve money and complicated crew shifts, are never struck because of costs or work. The set for each production is the designers liscence- and he can do what ever his imagination provides.