



The Wooster Group

- Bertolt Brecht's *The Mother* *A Learning play*

Theater

FEBRUARY 8 - 11, 2023 at 8:30 PM

FEBRUARY 12, 2023 at 3 PM

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We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

The Wooster Group

• Bertolt Brecht's *The Mother* A Learning play

Directed by ELIZABETH LECOMPTE

Composed by THE WOOSTER GROUP

Text: BERTOLT BRECHT / Original Music: HANNS EISLER

New Music by AMIR ELSAFFAR

with JIM FLETCHER, ARI FLIAKOS, ANDREW MAILLET, ERIN MULLIN, SCOTT SHEPHERD,
KATE VALK

Sound Design & Music Arrangement: ERIC SLUYTER

Video Design: IRFAN BRKOVIC

Tour Video: ANDREW MAILLET, YUDAM HYUNG-SEOK JEON

Lighting Design: DAVID SEXTON

Assistant Director & Prop Construction: MICHAELA MURPHY

Vocal Music Director: HAI-TING CHINN

Stage Manager: ERIN MULLIN

Set Construction: JOSEPH SILOVSKY

Technical Director: DAVID GLISTA

Production Manager: BONA LEE

General Manager: MONIKA WUNDERER

Factotum: MIKE FARRY

Archivist: CLAY HAPAZ

Producer: CYNTHIA HEDSTROM

Translation by THE WOOSTER GROUP

Music Recording: AMIR ELSAFFAR (trumpet, santur, and modular synthesizer), Sonya Belaya (piano), STEPHEN BOEGEHOLD (drums), TYRONE ALLEN (bass), and OLE MATHISEN (saxophone)

Co-production: PIECE BY PIECE PRODUCTIONS, WIENER FESTWOCHE

Gareth Hobbs originated the role of Pavel Vlasov.

Thank you to: Antonia Belt (costumes); Ilie Paun Capriel (props); Enver Chakartash, Charlie Coursey, Steve Cuiffo, and Matthew Dipple, who contributed to the development of the piece; Zoe Hutmacher and Tim Daniel Simon (courtesy of the Goethe Institut), who assisted in the translation process; and to Alexandre Artaud.

Special thanks to Rita Ackermann and Hauser & Wirth.

The Wooster Group wishes to thank the Heirs of Bertolt Brecht.

Music by Amir ElSaffar commissioned by The Wooster Group with funds from New York State Council on the Arts and New Music USA (made possible by annual program support and/or endowment gifts from Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Helen F. Whitaker Fund, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Howard Gilman Foundation, Anonymous).

Additional support provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Runtime: Approx. 80 minutes, no intermission

“ With the learning play, then, the stage begins to be didactic. (A word of which I, as a man of many years of experience in the theater, am not afraid.) The theater becomes a place for philosophers, and for such philosophers as not only wish to explain the world, but wish to change it. ”

- Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 80

The Mother premiered in Berlin on January 12, 1932. It was performed at three theaters in the city, as well as at a community hall in the working-class district of Moabit. The total capacity of these venues was 25,000, and Brecht estimated that about 15,000 working-class women saw the play.

SCENE LIST

Prologue

1. **The Vlasovs' room in Tver**

Song: *"The Question of the Way Out"*

Song: *"When you have no soup . . ."*

2. **Suklinov factory yard (lunch break)**

Song: *"Song of the Patches and the Coat"*

3. **The Vlasovs' room in Tver (later)**

4. **Street in Tver (May 1st)**

Song: *"That is why you'll see it again . . ."*

5. **Home of Fyodor the Teacher in Rostov**

Song: *"Praise of Communism"*

Song: *"Praise of Learning"*

Song: *"Praise of Revolutionaries"*

6. **Prison**

Song: *"To Those Who Want to Despair"*

7. **Smirnov's estate ... country road
and estate kitchen**

"Praise of Vlasov"

8. **Home of Fyodor the Teacher in Rostov**

"Praise of the Third Thing"

9. **Home of Fyodor the Teacher in Rostov (later)**

Song: *"Eulogy for One Who Was Taken to the Wall"*

10. **Home of Fyodor the Teacher in Rostov
(many years later)**

WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Teacher.....Jim Fletcher
Pavel Vlasov.....Scott Shepherd
Pelagea Vlasov, The Mother.....Kate Valk
Semjon, Revolutionary Worker.....Ari Fliakos
Masha, Revolutionary Worker.....Erin Mullin
Police.....Jim Fletcher
Gatekeeper.....Ari Fliakos
Karpov, Worker's Representative.....Ari Fliakos
Worker.....Andrew Maillet
Fyodor the Teacher.....Jim Fletcher
Jobless Gorski.....Ari Fliakos
Prison Guard.....Jim Fletcher
Strikebreaker.....Jim Fletcher
Vasil the Butcher.....Ari Fliakos
The Butcher's Wife.....Erin Mullin
Bible Lady.....Erin Mullin
Voiceover.....Ari Fliakos

The following is a list of some of the things we encountered on the way to this production:

- Educational media, including: *Kukla, Fran And Ollie*; *Pee Wee's Playhouse*; and NPR's Radiolab
- Slavoj Žižek's YouTube videos, including *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* and *Let Us Be Realists And Demand The Impossible: Communism*
- A film of the 1958 Berliner Ensemble production of *The Mother*, featuring Helene Weigel
- 1930s gangster movies on TCM
- Rainer Werner Fassbinder's film *Mother Küsters Goes To Heaven*
- Quentin Tarantino's film *Once Upon A Time In Hollywood*
- 1970s East German architecture, especially from the book *Palast der Republik: A Journey Through Time In Pictures*
- *Brecht on Theater: The Development of the Aesthetic*, edited and translated by John Willett
- The books *Bertolt Brecht, A Literary Life* by Stephen Parker and *Brecht And Political Theater: The Mother On Stage* by Laura Bradley
- Interviews with Brecht's long-time collaborator Elisabeth Hauptmann
- The works of Sarah Sze

ABOUT THE WORK

The Wooster Group returns to REDCAT with a new production of Bertolt Brecht's 1932 play *The Mother*. This play was written by Brecht in the style of a "learning play," intended both to entertain and to incite social change. He used plain language and songs to tell the story of an illiterate Russian woman's journey to revolutionary action. The Wooster Group's American translation of *The Mother* uses the vernacular of early Hollywood gangster movies (one of Brecht's favorite genres). The production features new music by composer Amir ElSaffar, who works across classical, jazz, and Arabic musical forms. *The Mother* is The Wooster Group's first staging of Brecht, and the result is a dialogue between two influential experimental theater methodologies.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Founded in 1975, **The Wooster Group** is an artist-led company that makes experimental work for theater and media. The Group's work spans multimedia, theatrical, and performance arts. Its pioneering approach combines contemporary, classic, and improvised texts with technology to tell stories in new ways. The Group's founder and director Elizabeth LeCompte has made more than 40 theater works, 22 media pieces, and one *Ribbon Cutting Ceremony* (for the new Whitney Museum). These include: *Rumstick Road* (1977), the dance *For the Good Times* (1982), *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points...)* (1984), *Brace Up!* (1991), the video *White Homeland Commando* (1992), *The Hairy Ape* (1996), the film *Wrong Guys* (1997), *House/Lights* (1999), *To You, the Birdie!* (Phèdre) (2002), *Hamlet* (2006), the 360-degree video installation *There Is Still Time..Brother* (2007), the opera *La Didone* (2008), *Vieux Carré* (2009), *The Room* (2015), *The Town Hall Affair* (2017), *A Pink Chair (In Place of a Fake Antique)* (2018), and *The Mother* (2021).

Longtime Group member Kate Valk directed *Early Shaker Spirituals* (2014), *The B-Side: Negro Folklore from Texas State Prisons* (2017), and *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me* (2022), all record album interpretations.

The Group has been included in numerous museum and gallery shows, among them three Whitney Biennials and an exhibition devoted to the Group's work at carriage trade gallery, New York, in 2019-'20.

Based at The Performing Garage in the SoHo neighborhood of New York City, the Group was founded by Elizabeth LeCompte, Spalding Gray, Ron Vawter, Jim Clayburgh, Willem Dafoe, Kate Valk, and Peyton Smith. To learn more, visit thewoostergroup.org.

CURRENT COMPANY AND ASSOCIATES

Evan Anderson, Bill Ballou, Eric Berryman, Irfan Brkovic, Zbigniew Bzymek, Enver Chakartash, Hai-Ting Chinn, Niall Cunningham, Maya Davis, Dennis Dermody, Matthew Dipple, Amir ElSaffar, Mike Farry, Jim Fletcher, Ari Fliakos, Mia Fliakos, David Glista, Clay Hapaz, Cynthia Hedstrom, Bruce Jackson, Yudam Hyung-Seok Jeon, Marika Kent, Ken Kobland, Dorota Krakowska, Elizabeth LeCompte, Bona Lee, Andrew Maillet, Frances McDormand, Jasper McGruder, Greg Mehrten, Philip Moore, Erin Mullin, Michaela Murphy, Guillermo Resto, Suzzy Roche, Kaneza Schaal, David Sexton, Scott Shepherd, Joseph Silovsky, Eric Sluyter, Maura Tierney, Jennifer Tipton, Danusia Trevino, Ariana Smart Truman, Kate Valk, Monika Wunderer, Jharis Yokley, Omar Zubair

DIRECTORS CIRCLE

Antonia & David Belt, Paul Cassidy & Vernon Evenson, Christine Larsen & Vincent Dopulos, Alan Mark & Jeffrey Fraenkel, Frances McDormand, Robyn Mewshaw, Catherine Orentreich (the Orentreich Family Foundation), Tom Shapiro, Wendy vanden Heuvel

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Ei Arakawa, Patty Chang, Pearl C Hsiung, Amanda Ross-Ho, Anna Sew Hoy, Shirley Tse, and Amy Yao

FAC XTRA RETREAT (FXR)

February 17 - 18

FAC XTRA RETREAT (FXR) is a studio art pedagogy-themed performance by a temporal grouping of seven Asian American artist-educators based in L.A.: Ei Arakawa, Patty Chang, Pearl C Hsiung, Amanda Ross-Ho, Anna Sew Hoy, Shirley Tse, and Amy Yao. Academia uses acronyms more than Gen Zers! Inspired by the many mandatory online training modules and follow-up quizzes required of instructors by their teaching institutions, *FAC XTRA RETREAT (FXR)* promises “learning outcomes” with a series of weird, hard, soft, informative, and sometimes physically challenging multiple-choice problems with answers deeply associated with each artist’s teaching philosophy. With the help of suspicious polling devices, costumed performers and all members of the public take on-stage votes. The results of the polls will be acted out, branched out, and change the destination of the performance. Participants will be awarded an FXR certificate of completion at the end.

Adrienne Kennedy and Monty Cole

Etta and Ella on the Upper West Side

February 23 - 25

One of the American theater’s seminal writers, Adrienne Kennedy captures the Black experience in America in the 20th century with a trademark embrace of symbolism, lyricism, and mythic figures. In this world premiere production, Etta and Ella Harrison are talented academics on the Upper West Side—as well as sisters and rivals. After a lifetime of competition, they are on the verge of destroying each other. Next-generation director Monty Cole employs a cinematic approach to this intricate blend of monologue, dialogue, voiceover, and prose in a work that is part experimental play, part narrative thriller.



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