

## Scene Productions

T. Marriott, E. O'Prey and G. Scammell

Emma O'Prey from Victoria College in Jersey first heard about Scene Productions at a Keynote course on Brecht. 'It wasn't the easiest of administrative tasks to bring them overseas but I cajoled the drama departments of three other schools into sharing the costs and experience, and the results were so positive that we have vowed to do this every year.

The performance of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* was superb, and all the Year 10–13 students from our schools thoroughly enjoyed and were inspired by the high-velocity, witty and gregarious show. The production elements were such that the experience was of huge value to the GCSE and AS students for their response to live theatre paper.

The workshop that followed was of immense value to those studying Brecht. Katharine Hurst and Kelly Taylor led the workshops and kept a group of approximately 50 students 100 per cent engaged and on task for the duration of the three-hour practical session. The AQA exam requires students to connect Brecht's theories with practical work that they have seen or participated in. Professional performances of Brecht or Brechtian work are few and far between, and Scene Productions was able to deliver first-hand practical experience as well as that from an audience's perspective. Watching my students in the workshop was like witnessing a hailstorm of pennies dropping and was such a satisfying and reassuring feeling. Students kept coming to me to say 'I get it! I get it!' with such excitement. I am sure the whole experience will have boosted my students' grades by an entire boundary – if not more. I



cannot recommend Scene Productions highly enough.'

Gordon Scammell, director of theatre studies at King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford doesn't know who first recommended Scene Productions to him, but says he will buy them 'the biggest Mars bar available as a token of very grateful thanks'.

'Coming from a mixed background of theatre management and teaching I have booked many touring companies over the years. Most have been very good, some have been mediocre and a couple have been relegated to the drawer labelled "embarrassing things I never want to be reminded of again". I rate Scene Productions in the top three.

'Everything they do is completely focused on the students. My Year 11 students saw *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* when they were in Year 10 and loved it. The discussion the next day was one of the best I have ever had with students. The arguments flew fast and furious – the questions never ending – and these were students who had no experience or knowledge of Brecht. Now in Year 11 those same students saw the latest production, *Threepenny Opera*, and again loved it. This time there was no need to twist arms or threaten them with dire consequences if they did not attend. They were queuing up for tickets. Some even brought along their parents.

'All of my Year 12 and Year 13 drama and theatre studies students participated in the workshops as well as attending the performances. They all felt that it was the perfect experience. They said that it was so useful to work with the performers in the afternoon workshop and to be told "...look out for this moment in tonight's show". All of my AS and A2 students found that after the Scene Productions experience, they were able to link Brecht's theory to actual performance far more easily.'

Scene Productions visited the Eastbourne College theatre for the third time in a year with a five-handed interpretation of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*. Director of drama Tim Marriott found

it 'at once surprising, imaginative, vivid, enthralling and entertaining. The cast is incredibly disciplined and dedicated, and put huge amounts of energy into their performances, to the point where it could be exhausting just watching. All the elements of epic theatre were there – gestus, Verfremdungseffekt, montage, placards, superb character doubling, Spass and narration, alongside vast amounts of audience interaction which was a real eye-opener for the students. That an audience drawn from all age groups and disciplines was so loudly appreciative at the curtain call was a tribute to an extraordinarily hard-working company with whom the college is building a strong working relationship.

'The production was supported by an intelligent and detailed teachers' pack, including all the performance analysis the students require to structure an A-grade essay. The whole mission of the company is to ensure their productions have a tick-box approach, including all the elements required to give the students as much stimulus as possible. They work closely with ASTs, which enables them to structure their productions in a highly accessible way. The company also runs detailed workshops, encouraging the students to work in a demonstrative, gestic manner which has been incredibly useful in getting the penny to drop.

'The next production to start touring in September 2006 will be Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, alongside *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, a performance workshop on *Our Country's Good* and workshops on epic theatre, naturalism and stage combat. I fully encourage teachers to take advantage of this valuable teaching tool. Scene Productions delivers high-quality, small-scale theatre as Brecht would have it – thought-provoking, demanding, stripped bare and confrontational, yes, but also expressing all that's exciting about the medium of theatre in lively, bright and witty performances – no earnest, worthy, precious or indulgent worship at the feet of a warped vision of a great practitioner but a celebration of theatre itself.'

### need to know

<http://sceneproductions.co.uk>

Scene Productions  
277 Barkham Road  
Wokingham  
Berkshire RG41 4BY01483 821 005  
[info@sceneproductions.co.uk](mailto:info@sceneproductions.co.uk)