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This is the first comprehensive study of Brecht's *Mother Courage*. Peter Thomson locates the sources of the play in Brecht's experience and heritage, and provides a detailed account of Brecht's own production with the newly forming Berliner Ensemble in 1949. Thomson then explores how the play has been transmitted in the English-speaking theatre from Joan Littlewood's production with the Theatre Workshop company in 1955 to the Royal National Theatre, with Diana Rigg as Mother Courage, in 1995.

The book also examines such influential interpretations as those by William Gaskill, Judi Dench and Glenda Jackson in the English theatre, and by Herbert Blau and Richard Schechner in America. Seminal productions in France and the Germanies are also discussed. A final chapter highlights the new urgency of the text in light of the wars in former Yugoslavia, and closes with an account of a triumphant staging in Uganda.

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BRECHT
MOTHER COURAGE AND
HER CHILDREN

*

PETER THOMSON
University of Exeter

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with a conclusion by
VIV GARDNER
University of Manchester



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I dedicate this book to the
Mystics and Magicians Cricket Club
and to David Gower, who would be
a welcome addition to it.

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GENERAL PREFACE

Volumes in the series *Plays in Production* take major dramatic texts and examine their transposition, firstly on to the stage and, secondly, where appropriate, into other media. Each book includes concise but informed studies of individual dramatic texts, focusing on the original theatrical and historical context of a play in relation to its initial performance and reception followed by subsequent major interpretations on stage, both under the impact of changing social, political and cultural values, and in response to developments in the theatre generally.

Many of the plays also have been transposed into other media – film, opera, television, ballet – which may well be the form in which they are first encountered by a contemporary audience. Thus, a substantial study of the play-text and the issues it raises for theatrical realisation is supplemented by an assessment of such adaptations as well as the production history, where the emphasis is on the development of a performance tradition for each work, including staging and acting styles, rather than simply the archaeological reconstruction of past performances.

Plays included in the series are all likely to receive regular performance and individual volumes will be of interest to the informed reader as well as to students of theatre history and literature. Each book also contains an annotated production chronology as well as numerous photographs from key performances.

Michael Robinson
University of East Anglia

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One of the most daunting tasks that confronts an author is the pursuit of illustrations. What I would like particularly to acknowledge is the startling rapidity of response from Andrea Müller of *Theater Heute*, Dr Erdmut Wizisla of the Brecht Archiv, Mrs Ute Eichel of the Berliner Ensemble and Jennie Gardner of the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre. Others who have given permission for the reproduction of photographs, etc. are mentioned in the list of illustrations on p. x.

Writing books is not one of the embarrassingly few things I can do without the encouragement of my wife, Rita. Writing this one, alongside the increasingly strident demands of a rampant bureaucracy, would have been impossible without her. Brecht had his HUAC; I have my HEFCE. In conclusion, then, I acknowledge the exemplary irony with which he met his would-be persecutors. Some of it has rubbed off on me.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

There are several published translations of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The one I have used is Ralph Manheim's, from Volume v of the *Collected Plays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), a volume which also contains extracts from the Model Book and many of Brecht's notes on the play. Page references within my text are to that volume.