

Press Release

24 November 2017

Bertolt Brecht's Film Legacy Preserved by the Akademie der Künste

Archive presentation, 5 December, Pariser Platz

After nearly two years of work in close cooperation with the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, the Akademie der Künste has now largely completed its project to secure and digitise the film collection in the Bertolt Brecht Archive.

Approximately 50 film titles in this exceptionally diverse collection – which can be traced back to Bertolt Brecht's estate, and was augmented by Helene Weigel with further works after his death – are now available digitally. In the coming year these materials will be accessible for research using the archival database and for screening in the reading room at the Akademie der Künste. Among them are also previously unknown film materials, which were only discovered by the project staff in the course of processing the collection, including a television recording from the Berliner Ensemble showing Brecht's production of the play *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1957) and a roll of film recording a *Galileo* performance (1947) in New York, with Charles Laughton in the leading role. The completion of the project allows this film collection to be researched, screened and used in its entirety for the first time.

The core of the cinematic documents are private recordings of Bertolt Brecht, his family and his contemporaries, as well as numerous production documentaries from the 1930s to 1950s, in which Brecht's work for the stage have been recorded. There are also later screen versions of Brecht's works, documentaries which were projected as parts of performances, documentary portraits, and reports about Brecht and Weigel, as well as films from the estates of Ruth Berlau and Theo Linggen, which are also found in the archives at the Akademie der Künste.

The current Akademie exhibition on Hanseatenweg, *Benjamin and Brecht. Thinking in Extremes*, provides a first impression of this extensive digitisation task. A performance of the play *Mann ist Mann* (*Man Equals Man*, 1931), shown in the exhibition in a frame-by-frame recording, is the earliest surviving film documentary of a stage production by Bertolt Brecht.

The safeguarding and digitising of Brecht's film legacy has been made possible through the support of the Lotto-Stiftung Berlin (German Lottery Foundation Berlin) and the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media). The work had become urgently necessary, because some of the analog film material, which originated

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between the late 1920s and the 1970s, was in a critical state of preservation. The first signs of chemical decomposition and physical damage have begun to affect the films in recent decades. In the course of this project, the films could be copied onto a stable polyester-base film. The original materials, the copies that have been secured on polyester-base film or film base, and digital copies are preserved in the film archive at the Deutsche Kinemathek.

The project and its working processes will be introduced in an event on 5 December at the Akademie der Künste, which will also include select film clips from the digitised inventory. This presentation will be followed by a discussion about possibilities that may ensue today when dealing with cinematic adaptations of Bertolt Brecht's work for the theatre.

Special Event Information

Brecht's Film Legacy at the Akademie der Künste

Presentation of the project by Anja-Christin Remmert and Maxi Zimmermann

Discussion with Martin Koerber, Johanna Schall, and Bernd Stegemann;

moderated by Cornelia Klauß

Tuesday, 5 December 2017, 7 pm

Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4, 10117 Berlin

Free admission

For further information or inquiries

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Press photos are available for download in the press section: www.adk.de

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