

**“HILDEGARD’S WANDER THEATER”  
READING IN DRESDEN, OCTOBER 2006  
PROGRAM NOTES**

by Raymond Barglow



Born in 1908, Hildegard Barglow grew up in a Jewish family in Dresden Germany. In the late 20s and early 30s, she was an actress in a theater company that traveled from town to town in the Rhineland.

In 1938, fleeing the German Third Reich, Hildegard emigrated to the United States, where she raised a family and became a German language teacher. After her husband died, Hilde taught college for several years and then moved to Berkeley California, to be near her sons Michael and Raymond. Her oldest son, Peter, was living in Chicago.

The setting for this play is Hilde’s house in Berkeley in 1986. When she begins to lose her memory, a college student, Melissa, moves in with her to help out, in exchange for rent. Hilde has three other housemates as well, including Herr Vadim, who was born in Romania and lived in Germany before coming to America.

Hilde and her housemates search intensely – and at cross purposes – to find meaning and direction in their lives, past and present. It is Hilde’s quest, however, that is at the center of this drama.

The play draws on three sources of information about Hildegard’s life: the memories of those who knew her, the documents about her German family that are currently archived in Dresden, and five decades of diaries and photo albums.

Raymond Barglow, one of Hilde’s three sons, teamed up with JoAnne Brasil, who was one of Hilde’s housemates in the 1980s, to write this play. Many people contributed to its development and preparation for tonight’s reading, including Jayne Wenger, Pam Montanaro, Margret Schaefer, Richard Kalman, and (for the Dresden reading) Marisa Giannini and Elisabeth Orrison.

Actors:

|                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Elisabeth Orrison | Hildegard            |
| Jochen Kretschmer | Herr Vadim           |
| Ria Strehle       | Melissa              |
| Mirjam Frotscher  | Kate and Young Hilde |
| Leo Tornow        | Roger and Ralph      |

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| Marion Fiedler  | Music    |
| Marisa Giannini | Director |
| Raymond Barglow | Author   |
| Joanne Brasil   | Author   |

Ralph Zucker,  
Hildegard's brother



Germany in the first two decades of the twentieth century became a world center of theater, and works by foreign dramatists as well as German ones were popular. Hilde performed with a small theater company that traveled from town to town in the Rhineland. The troupe presented folk tales for children such as Grimm's "The Brave Little Tailor," but also performed more serious pieces. Plays in which Hilde played a major role include:



Bernhard, "Leap of the Heart"  
 Goldoni, "The Servant of Two Masters"  
 Grillparzer, "The Waves of the Sea and of Love"  
 Hauptmann, "Pippa Dances" and "The Beaver Coat"  
 Hofmannsthal, "Everyman"  
 Maugham, "The Constant Wife"  
 Rehfisch and Herzog, "The Dreyfus Affair"  
 Schiller, "William Tell"  
 Shakespeare, "Hamlet"  
 Shaw, "Saint Joan"  
 Vellier, "The Trial of Mary Dugan"  
 Wilde, "The Importance of Being Earnest"  
 Zuckmayer, "Katharina Knie"

The plays of non-German dramatists were performed in German translation.

The Heine poem that Hilde quotes is “Germany: A Winter’s Tale”:

“Es wächst hienieden Brot genug  
Für alle Menschenkinder.  
Auch Rosen und Myrten,  
Schönheit und Lust,  
Und Zuckererbsen nicht minder.”

The earth grows food enough  
To feed all humanity with ease.  
As well as roses and myrtle,  
beauty and joy,  
Even sugar peas!

The poem is both visionary and witty, mocking even itself. It targets nationalism, militarism, and religion, while championing European Enlightenment ideals of freedom and reason:

Die Jungfer Europa ist verlobt  
Mit dem schönen Geniesse  
Der Freiheit, sie liegen einander im Arm,  
Sie schwelgen im ersten Kusse.

Und fehlt der Pfaffensegen dabei,  
Die Ehe wird gültig nicht minder -  
Es lebe Bräutigam und Braut,  
Und ihre zukünftigen Kinder!

Maiden Europe is betrothed  
to the beautiful spirit of freedom.

They lie in one another’s arms,  
They delight in their first kiss.

And if the clergy’s blessing is missing,  
Their matrimony remains valid.  
Long live the bride and bridegroom,  
And their future children.

Max Schwimmer, who was a few years older than Hilde and lived in Leipzig and Dresden, drew illustrations for the poem, including this one of the betrothal of Europe and the Spirit of Freedom.



Ernst Toller (1893-1939)

“Der deutsche Hinkemann,” the play by Ernst Toller that Hilde refers to, was shouted down by fascists on opening night in Dresden, January 17, 1924, and there were no more performances in Dresden. Such disruptions of theater were commonplace in the Weimar Republic, and the perpetrators were treated very leniently by the courts.







Sioux Indians in Dresden

Children of Hilde's age read adventure stories about American Indians written by Dresdener Karl May. And a tribe of Sioux Indians was invited to Dresden in 1912 to join the Sarrasani Circus.

During the First World War, they went hungry, like many Dresdeners.



Hilde was interested in Germany poetry and wrote her Master's thesis on Gertrud Kolmar.

Below is an English translation of the Rilke poem, recited by Hilde, about the sculpted Sundial Angel at Chartres Cathedral.

### Rainer Maria Rilke, "Sundial Angel"

Im Sturm, der um die starke Kathedrale  
wie ein Verneiner stürzt der denkt und denkt,  
fühlt man sich zärtlicher mit einem Male  
von deinem Lächeln zu dir hingelenkt:  
lächelnder Engel, fühlende Figur,  
mit einem Mund, gemacht aus hundert Munden:  
gewahrst du gar nicht, wie dir unsre Stunden,  
abgleiten von der vollen Sonnenuhr,  
auf der des Tages ganze Zahl zugleich,  
gleich wirklich, steht in tiefem Gleichgewichte,  
als wären alle Stunden reif und reich.  
Was weißt du, Steinerner, von unserm Sein?  
Und hältst du mit noch seligerm Gesichte  
vielleicht die Tafel in die Nacht hinein?

In the storm that swirls around the mighty Cathedral  
Like a non-believer who thinks and thinks,  
One suddenly feels gently drawn to you by your smile:

Beguiling angel, feeling figure,  
Your mouth made of a thousand mouths:  
Are you aware of how the hours  
Slide off your full sundial,  
Which displays the numbers of the day  
In deep equilibrium,  
As if all moments were ripe and rich?  
What do you know, O stone one, of our life?  
Do you smile even more blissfully  
When you hold your slate out into the night?

The passage from Walter Benjamin that is recited in the play refers to Paul Klee's drawing of an angel done in 1921. Benjamin purchased the drawing for the equivalent of about thirty dollars, and it remained a prized possession until he fled to Spain in 1940. Below is an English translation of the German passage.



“This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”



Volunteers in Jalapa, northern Nicaragua

Following the Sandinista revolution in 1979, many peasant communities in Nicaragua came under devastating attack by the U.S.-sponsored Contra army. “Witness for Peace,” the faith-based group referred to in the play, began bringing delegations to Nicaragua in 1983, with the aim of documenting Contra atrocities and deterring future attacks. In Jalapa, for instance, a town of about 9000 people located near the Honduran border, volunteers held vigils in the main plaza twice daily, at dawn and at dusk, joining townspeople in song, prayer and discussion. They vigiled also in the surrounding villages. Contra attacks ceased in the Jalapa area during this period, probably because of the presence of the “witnesses” from abroad.



Solidarity with the Sandinistas was very much in keeping with Berkeley's radical tradition. Already in the late 1950s, Berkeley and the Bay Area had provided safe harbor for a rebellious "Beat Generation." This was followed by the Civil Rights Movement, the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, protest against the War in Vietnam, formation of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, and the movement to unionize California farm workers, referred to by Herr Vadim in the play.

Berkeley's history during these tumultuous years is charted on a wall mural, still visible just up the street from where Hilde lived. Among the painters of this mural is Osha Neumann, son of Franz Neumann, German historian and author in 1942 of *Behemoth - Struktur und Praxis des Nationalsozialismus*.

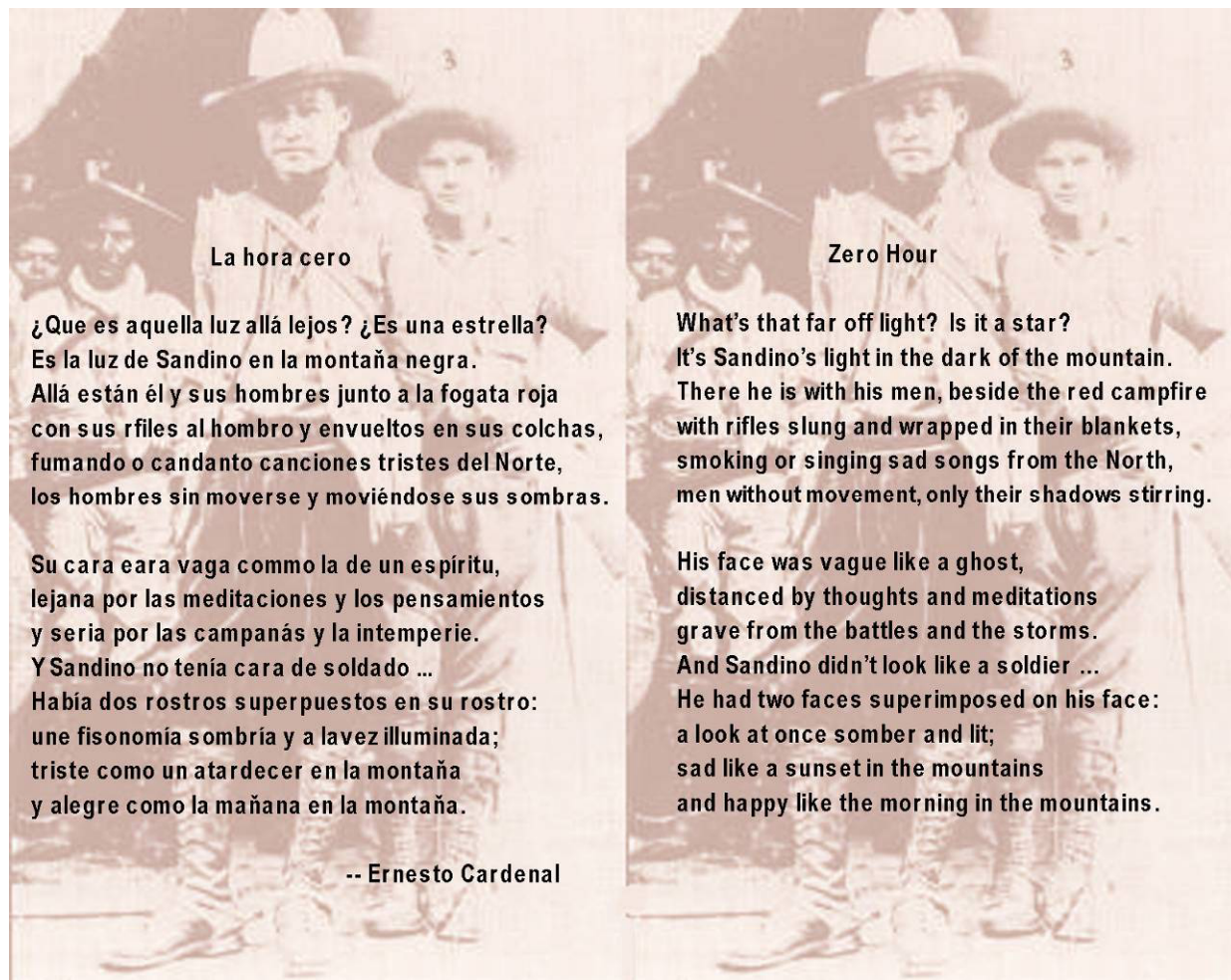


This small portion of the mural portrays the struggle to build "Peoples Park" on university property. Water from the fire hydrant was used to diminish the effect of the tear-gas used by the police. Architectural features of the wall are integrated into the mural.

To see the entire mural, come to Berkeley and we'll visit it together!



The inspiration for the Nicaraguan revolution was Augusto Sandino, who led a peasant rebellion between 1927 and 1933. In February 1934, immediately following a dinner in the presidential palace – to which Sandino had been invited to negotiate terms of peace -- he was arrested and murdered by soldiers under the command of General Somoza.



### La hora cero

¿Que es aquella luz allá lejos? ¿Es una estrella?  
Es la luz de Sandino en la montaña negra.  
Allá están él y sus hombres junto a la fogata roja  
con sus rifles al hombro y envueltos en sus colchas,  
fumando o cantando canciones tristes del Norte,  
los hombres sin moverse y moviéndose sus sombras.

Su cara eera vaga commo la de un espíritu,  
lejana por las meditaciones y los pensamientos  
y seria por las campanás y la intemperie.  
Y Sandino no tenía cara de soldado ...  
Había dos rostros superpuestos en su rostro:  
une fisonomía sombría y a lavez iluminada;  
triste como un atardecer en la montaña  
y alegre como la mañana en la montaña.

-- Ernesto Cardenal

### Zero Hour

What's that far off light? Is it a star?  
It's Sandino's light in the dark of the mountain.  
There he is with his men, beside the red campfire  
with rifles slung and wrapped in their blankets,  
smoking or singing sad songs from the North,  
men without movement, only their shadows stirring.

His face was vague like a ghost,  
distanced by thoughts and meditations  
grave from the battles and the storms.  
And Sandino didn't look like a soldier ...  
He had two faces superimposed on his face:  
a look at once somber and lit;  
sad like a sunset in the mountains  
and happy like the morning in the mountains.

### Carlos Mejia Godoy, "Nicaragua, Nicaraguita"

Ay Nicaragua, Nicaraguita  
La flor mas linda de mi querer  
Abonada con la bendita, Nicaraguita,  
Sangre de Diriangen.\*

Ay Nicaragua sos mas dulcita  
Que la mielita de Tamagas.  
Pero ahora que ya sos libre, Nicaraguita,  
Yo te quiero mucho mas,

Ay Nicaragua, little Nicaragua  
Prettiest flower of my desire  
Nourished with the blessed  
Blood of Diriangen.\*

Ay Nicaragua you are sweeter  
Than the honey from Tamagas.  
But now that you are free, little Nicaragua  
I love you all the more.

\* Diriangen was a warrior of the Chorotega tribe who fought the Spanish invaders early in the sixteenth century.

## **Faust**

Murnau, 1925-26

Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!  
Stay a while! You are so beautiful!

These lines in the play are from Goethe's *Faust*. The bargain that Faust strikes with the Devil permits him, the disenchanted scholar, to do anything he wants – travel round the world, teleport himself into the past or the future. Money, sex, power, wine, magic are his for the asking. Faust agrees, in return, to remain perpetually restless and hungry for new experiences. Should he ever find a moment so wonderful that he surrenders to it and says “Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!” then he is doomed to perdition.

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## **Berkeley Photos**



Hilde with Raymond, Peter, and Michael



Melissa and Hilde



## PRESENTING THIS EVENING'S READING:

Marion Fiedler is a jazz student at the Musikhochschule in Dresden, and has been composing and performing since she was 13 years old. She sings (e.g. Townpipe-Bigband), plays the piano and other instruments and directs music projects. She has performed in concerts, created audio books, and composed pieces for Bigband or solo concerts. She has been a member of the Komponistenklasse Dresden, different choirs and several bands.

Mirjam Frotscher (Kate, young Hilde) was born in Potsdam in 1984. She is studying at the TU Dresden, majoring in American Studies/Literature. In 2000/01 she spent a highschool year in the US (Washington State), attending a drama class that sparked her love for the theater. Ever since she has been involved in theater projects.

Marisa Giannini, originally from New York, has lived in Dresden and worked at the TU Dresden as an English teacher for about 11 years. In that time, she has also written, directed, assisted and acted in productions of the English Theater Group in conjunction with the students in the Department of British and American Studies and Laura Park. Marisa also currently participates in another English theater group, the "Eclectic Theater."

Herr Kretschmer (Herr Vadim) was educated in the Theaterhochschule Leipzig. His first engagement was with the Theater der Jungen Generation in Dresden, 1964-1968. Also: Stadtische Bühnen Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1968-2003. Member of the Staatsschauspiels Dresden. Important roles: Mephisto in "Faust," Dorfrichter Adam in "Zerbrochenen Krug," Iago in "Othello," Macheath in "Dreigroschenoper," Erzengel Gabriel in "Adam and Eva" (Hacks), Orilus in "Ritter der Tafelrunde" (Hein), President in "Kabale und Liebe." Solo programs: Heine "Deutschland, ein VWintermarchen," Goethe "Reinecke Fuchs," "Marx in Soho" (Howard Zinn), among others.

Elisabeth Orrison (Hildegard) teaches in the English Department at the TU Dresden. She is a lyric soprano with a background in opera, theater, and church music. A war refugee from Görlitz, she grew up in Tübingen and became the mother of eight. In the United States she taught humanities, English literature, French and German, while performing in local concerts. In 1988, she returned to Germany and has been teaching languages, voice and piano after coming "home" to Saxony following the Reunification.

Ria Strehle (Melissa) has much acting experience, having performed since she was in high school. She, is a student at the TU Dresden, preparing to teach in a German high school. She has studied in France, Latvia, and Utah (so unique that it might be considered a separate country), and has been involved in social action projects such as teaching children at the Learning Support Center in Radeberg.

Leo Tornow (Roger, Ralph) is a student at TU Dresden. Spent a year in Texas and survived. Aims to be a teacher of English and Spanish. Recently began acting with the university theater.

Tonight's musicians include: Michi Hiemke, Susanne Bertsch, Nora Dittrich, Maggy Finck, Konrad Sziedat, Andi Muller, Stephan Hanel, Marie von der Planitz, Doreen Bittner, Pascale Grunert, Georg J. Haarbeck, Franziska Splitt, Caro Steinbdort, Lydia Schneider, Lotte Heinecke, Eunelcia Wiesend, Elias Schwarz.