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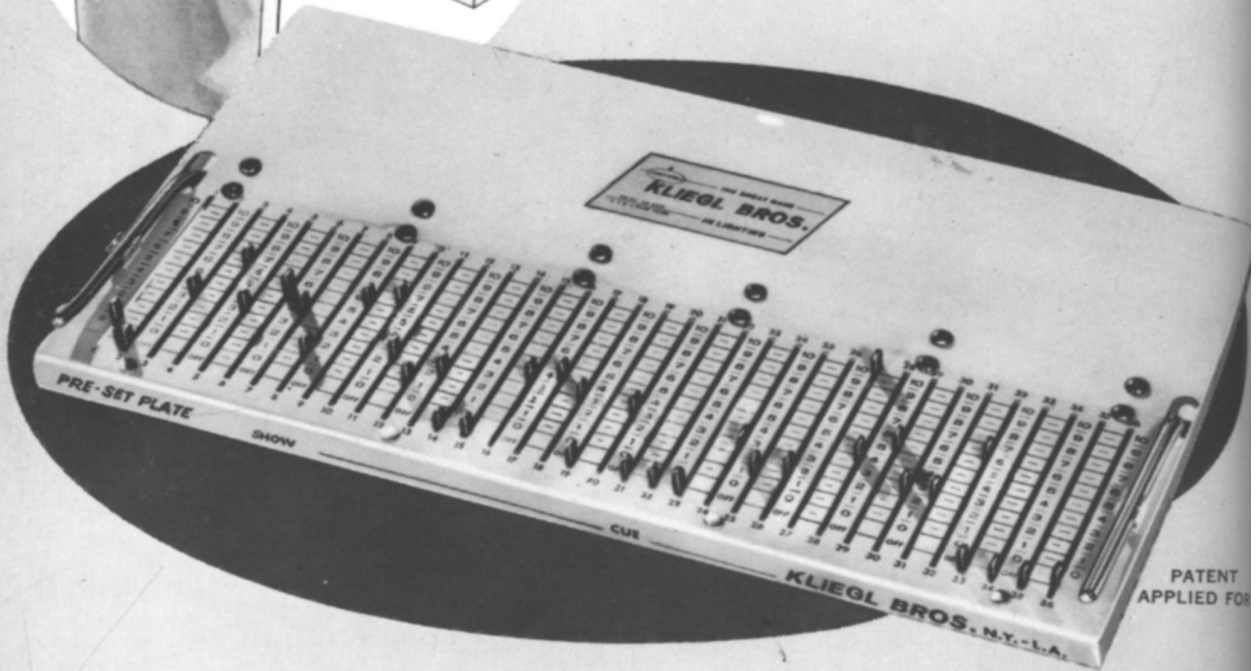
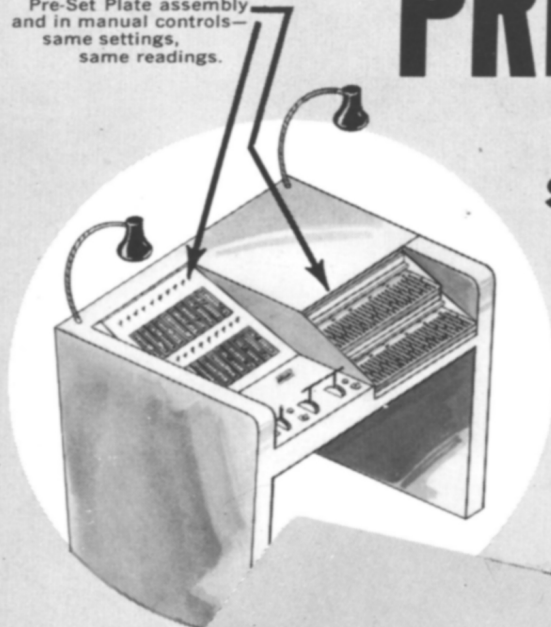
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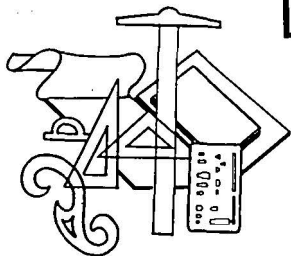
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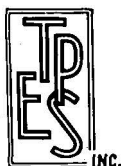
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A recent double issue (Vol. XV, Nos. 3 & 4) honoring the tenth anniversary of the death of Bertolt Brecht, contained articles by directors from 20 different countries, Asian and Western, large and small, on "The Staging of Brecht's Plays Today." Among the contributors were Egon Monk and Leopold Lindtberg who collaborated closely with Brecht, and Werner Hecht of the present Berliner Ensemble. The issue included excerpts from Brecht's writings hitherto unpublished in either French or English.

Other recent issues were devoted to "Present Day Puppets in the Western World" (Vol. XV, No. 2) "Puppets in Asia and Africa" (Vol. XIV, No. 5) "Total Theatre" (which includes such things as "happenings"), with the late Irwin Piscator, Jacques Polieri and Joseph Svoboda among the contributors (Vol. XV, No. 1). From time to time a whole issue is concerned with the theatre of one country as with Vol. XIV, No. 4, on "Theatre in East Germany."

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Brecht's Tradition

By MAX SPALTER

Despite Bertolt Brecht's continuing popularity as a contemporary dramatist, this is the first book-length discussion in any language of his literary tradition. While attempts have been made to relate Brecht to the German "classical" tradition of Goethe and Schiller or to establish the influence of the romantics, of the expressionists, of Paul Claudel, and even of the Japanese No plays, what Brecht called "epic theater" has more frequently been conceived of as a by-product of his Marxism than as a part of an indigenous tradition. Dr. Spalter's illuminating study leaves no doubt, however, that the roots of the dramatist's episodic, characteristically "Brechtian" style go much deeper than social radicalism to draw on the influence of a number of highly original dramatists whose work, while not unnoticed, has not hitherto been fully explored for its influence upon the development of modern theater.

In his search for the origins of "epic theater" Dr. Spalter turns to the *Sturm und Drang* period of German literature, which rejected the principles of neoclassicism. Of major importance to Brecht's development are the works of J. M. R. Lenz, a contemporary of Goethe, who wrote strange, erratically brilliant plays filled with social outrage and an ironic sense of its futility. The author indicates Brecht's debt to Lenz, not only in matters of technique, but also in the conviction that there can be no solution to many of the world's ills. Dr. Spalter turns next to the plays of Georg Buchner and Christian Dietrich Grabbe, who gave eloquent poetic expression to nihilism and attempted to put on stage a world immune to idealistic values. He concludes with an examination of the episodic, cynical, and dramaturgically exaggerated plays of Frank Wedekind and Karl Kraus, in which the anti-idealistic rebellion in German drama extends to modern times. In his final chapter Dr. Spalter identifies the techniques that Brecht learned from his forerunners and illustrates how his work manifests a conflict between extremes of exhibitionistic nihilism and self-assured belief.

Dr. Spalter is in the English Department at Columbia University.

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