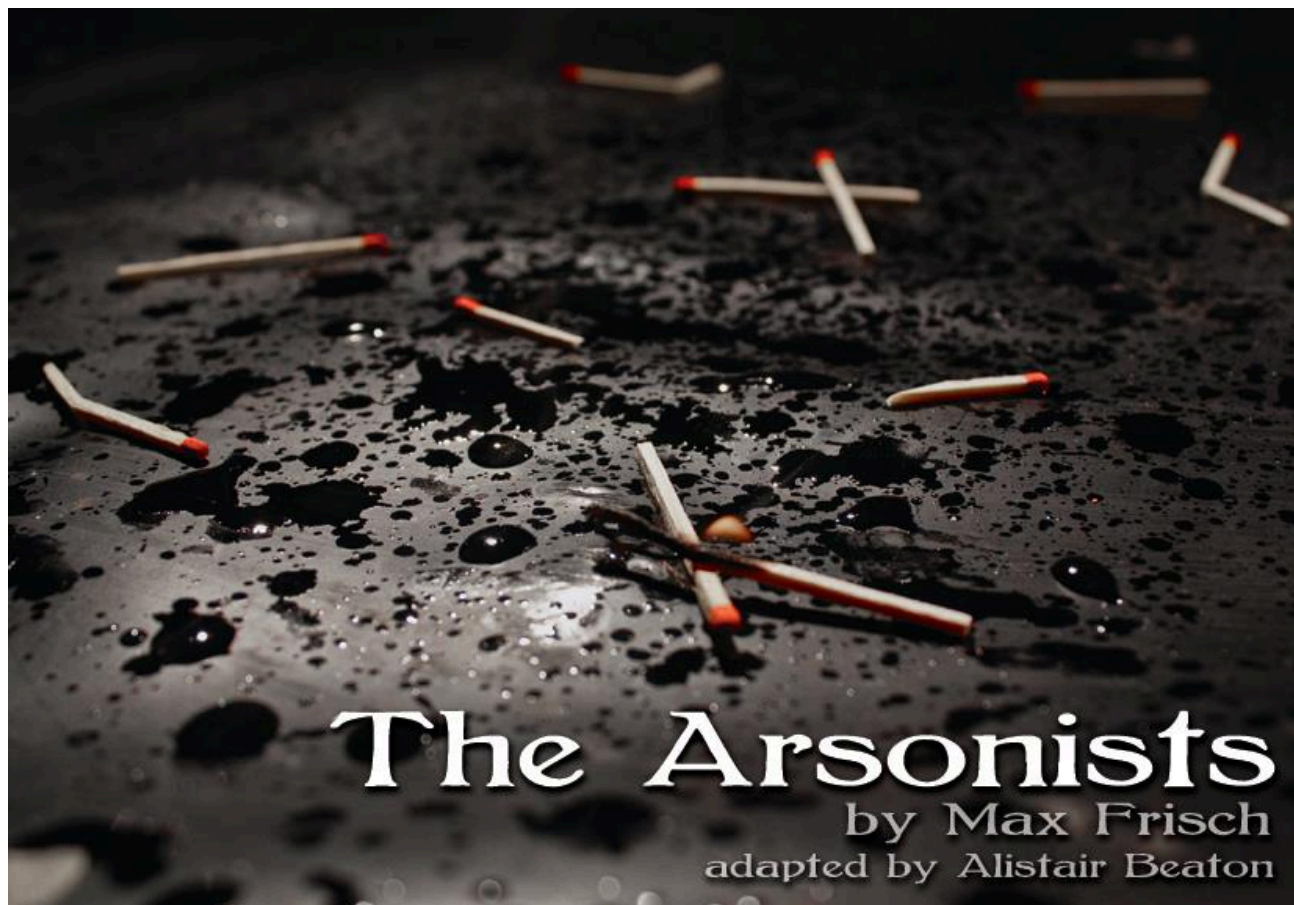

THE ARSONISTS
A Dramaturgical Casebook

Written by: Max Frisch

Adapted by: Alistair Beaton



Marymount Manhattan College
Theresa Lang Theatre
October 10-14, 2012

Directed by: Ellen Orenstein
Dramaturgy by: Anne Ciarlone

*Cover image created by Matthew J. Land

The Arsonists Production Team

Directed by Ellen Orenstein

Scenic Design by Rob Dutiel

Lighting Design by Devon Brown

Costume Design by Kate Mincer

Sound Design by Toby Algya

Projection Design by Rocco Disanti

Production Stage Manager: Chris Steckel

Voice and Text Coach: Barbra Adrian

Movement Consultant: Halia Strauss

Electrics Supervisor: Martin Perrin

Wardrobe Supervisor: Patricia Saanftner

Audio/Projection Supervisor: Ido Levrant

Dramaturg: Anne Ciarlone

Assistant Stage Managers: Amber Wallace, Colin Gallagher

Assistant Directors: Lucca Damilano, Billy Gaffney

Assistant Scenic Designer: Livia Oliveira

Assistant Lighting Designer: Lucas Camp

Assistant Costume Designers: Molly Abraham, Sadye Naizer, Amber Presnell, Allyson Steele

Master Electrician: Erich De La Torre

Production Assistant: Brooke Harbaugh

Publicity/Program Design: Matthew J. Land

CAST

Bierdermann: Michael Perez

Babette: Margaret Stanton

Anna: Adri Bohmier

Schmitz: Neath Williams

Eisenring: Gil Newman

Mrs. Knechtling: Emily Relva

Doctor of Philosophy: Zach Stephens

Policeman/Firefighter's Leader: Max Dickter

Chorus of Firefighters:

Skylar Apter, Kelly Canyock, Alex Dorr, Tori Ernst, Stefanie Flamm, Patrick Heavey, Joe Hetterly, Tyler La Marr, Chelsea LeSage, Bobby Latrenta, Max Schuster, Haley Scott, Jared Sigler, Magen Young

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I. Introduction

My involvement with *The Arsonists* began in December 2012. Upon my first reading of the play, I already had a basic understanding of the historical time period from which it emerged. My interest in dramaturging the show in fact stemmed from a Theatre History term paper I wrote that Spring, in which I compared and contrasted Post-WWII Theatre in Germany to that of the United States. When writing that paper I was immersed in closely related research and became fascinated by the Post-War and Avant-Garde theatre of the 20th Century. After writing that paper, I met with director, Ellen Orenstein, who was planning on directing the piece the following October, and expressed interest in joining the production. It was at that point when we decided that I would become the show's Production Dramaturg.

Throughout the process I worked closely with Ellen and my advisor, Theatre Studies professor Jill Stevenson. The three of us sat down in the beginning of June to determine how specifically I would be involved with the show. In that meeting, Ellen assigned certain research projects for me to complete before rehearsals began in mid-August. This research included compiling the Character Dictionary, scheduling a cast visit to the New York City Fire Museum, preparing a catalogue of Firefighter Photographs, and researching the playwright, Max Frisch. Additionally, much of my research stemmed from my own interests, such as an investigation of the historical context in which the play was originally written as well as the context for the 2006 adaptation of the play, written by Scottish political satirist Alistair Beaton. This casebook presents the evidence of that research.

The work I did on this production culminated to several cast lectures as well as a dramaturgical program note. Early in the process I attended production meetings and rehearsals to present the cast and creative team with the research I found most interesting and relevant to their work. My goal throughout the rehearsal process was to create a support system and to establish an open line of communication with the cast and production team.

It is also important to note that Ellen's directorial style is heavily focused on physical movement and gesture. For *The Arsonists*, Ellen and her Assistant Directors worked closely with the cast to incorporate the Suzuki method, as well as Anne Bogart's Viewpoints approach, into the production. Ellen's style very much influenced my role as Production Dramaturg. Throughout the rehearsal process, less time was devoted to traditional script analysis and table work, with more emphasis placed on movement work.

In this casebook you will find a collection of the research I did throughout the process. Items include a dramaturgical program note, a complete production history of the play, production photographs, and a collection of primary source material from both Max Frisch and Alistair Beaton that informed my research.

Anne Ciarlone
Production Dramaturg, *The Arsonists*
Marymount Manhattan College
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II. Program Note

As a playwright I should consider I had done my duty if I succeeded in a play of mine in putting a question in such a way that from then on the members of the audience were unable to live without an answer. But it must be their answer, their own, which they can provide only in the framework of their own lives.

Max Frisch, *Sketchings 1946-1949*

In 1948 the Swiss-born playwright, Max Frisch, visited Czechoslovakia during the aftermath of the Communist coup d'état and at a moment when major nations of the world appeared, once again, on the brink of war. For Frisch, who was born in 1911 and had thus spent much of his life surrounded by war, it was all too familiar; indeed, it had barely been three years since the end of World War II. As his journal suggests, the images Frisch encountered in Czechoslovakia profoundly impacted him. Puzzled by how cruel dictators are able to gain control over populations, Frisch wrote a creative narrative in which two arsonists infiltrate the home of an average citizen and deceive him into aiding them. This brief essay provided the skeleton for what later became Frisch's 1953 radio play *Die Bidermann und die Brandstifter* or, as our adaptation would have it, *The Arsonists*.

When the play received its first staged production in Germany in 1958, it represented Frisch's first major success as a dramatist. London's Royal Court Theatre produced the first English translation of the play (entitled *The Firebugs*) in 1961 and two years later the translation was staged Off-Broadway. The version we have chosen to stage is one reimagined by Scottish political satirist Alistair Beaton for a 2007 production also performed at London's Royal Court Theatre.

The Arsonists emerged from Frisch's own post-World War I and II, pre-Cold War context, and it contains various allusions to that particular historical moment. For example, the idea of arsonists serving as the play's antagonists seems to be an almost direct reference to the 1933 Reichstag Fire in which the German government building was set fire by an arsonist a mere four weeks after Adolf Hitler had been appointed chancellor. This event simultaneously instilled fear in the German population and gave Hitler the political opening he needed to consolidate his power and carry out the Nazi coup of the German government. Similarly, it's likely significant that Frisch gave the only clear victims in the play, the Knechtling family, a uniquely Yiddish name; furthermore, at one point in the play, Mr. Biedermann tells his maid that Knechtling should "stick his head in the oven," producing imagery that brings the Holocaust to mind.

Yet despite the specificity of its original context, it is striking how relevant the play's themes feel today. Beaton may have been inspired by events such as the July 7, 2005 London bombings and the increasing tension with the Islamic world, or it may have come from the growing divide between the upper and middle class (after all, the name "Biedermann" can be translated to mean "petty bourgeois"). Regardless, the play's theme of the weakness of personal ethics in the face of an unspecific "evil" still resonates with

audiences today. Be it Occupy Wall Street, The War on Terror, or any number of other political issues in dispute this November, the ideas expressed in *The Arsonists* remain open to an infinite number of interpretations.

-Anne Ciarlone, Production Dramaturg

Sources

Alistair Beaton, "The Arsonists Still Burns Brightly," The Guardian 2007.

"Cold War - Timeline," History In An Hour, <<http://www.historyinanehour.com>>.

Max Frisch, Personal interview, 23 April 1971

"The Reichstag Fire: 'A God-Given Signal,'" History In An Hour,
<<http://www.historyinanehour.com>>.

Sketchbook 1946-1949, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: HBJ, 1971).

III. Max Frisch

**The research I did on Frisch was some of the most fruitful throughout the process. I began by researching his personal background, but in the process was led to much more supporting material. Apart from my own personal interest in Frisch's life and work, I realized early in the rehearsal process how receptive the cast was to this research as well. Overall I felt that hearing directly from the playwright, rather than reading dramatic criticisms, was most beneficial in helping the cast gain a more in-depth understanding of the piece. In the Appendix of this Casebook I've included the primary source material I shared with the cast. This specifically includes three short essays reproduced from Frisch's diary and an excerpt from a Frisch interview. The topics Frisch covers in these documents go beyond his work on The Arsonists, but reveal the type of writer, philosopher, and citizen Frisch was. Below, you will find a brief biography of Frisch.*

i. BIOGRAPHY

Max Frisch was born on May 15, 1911 in a suburb of Zurich where he lived most of his life. Frisch was raised in a conservative family with a modest income; his father was an Architect and Real Estate Broker. Though his family regularly struggled with finances, in 1930 Frisch was sent to the University of Zurich. While in school, Frisch studied a plethora of topics including German language, literature, art history, and philosophy but unfortunately had to drop out in order to help support his family after his father's death in 1932.



After leaving school, Frisch began work as a freelance journalist. During this time Frisch traveled throughout most of Eastern Europe; his first ever visit to Germany was in 1935. Like most Swiss men of his generation, Frisch served in the Swiss Army during WWII. Though Frisch never saw active combat, he kept a diary of his experiences. In the years of his service, Frisch served as a guard on the Swiss and German border, a position that no doubt provided him with a unique perspective on the war.

Ultimately Frisch would return to school, this time to study architecture, graduating in 1941. In 1942 he married his first wife, Constanze von Mayenburg, and opened his own architectural firm in the same year. Though architecture became his primary source of income, Frisch continued to keep a diary, documenting his experiences while traveling and jotting down ideas and short stories in his spare time.

Despite his modest success as an architect, Frisch could not keep away from writing. He published his first play, *Nun singen sie wieder*, in 1945 for which he won local acclaim. In the next several years, Frisch's reputation as a writer grew more and more widespread. His success allowed for the chance to meet famous dramatists as Bertolt Brecht and Thornton Wilder, two encounters that Frisch specifically notes as being highly influential in his diary. After the success of his 1954 novel *I'm Not Stiller*, Frisch was at last able to close his architectural firm and commit to a full-time career in writing.

Frisch first came up with the idea of *The Arsonists* after a 1948 visit to Czechoslovakia, which had recently fallen to Communists. After his experiences there, Frisch wrote a six page short story in his diary documenting an allegorical tale in which a pair of arsonists manipulate a homeowner into housing them in his attic, which they eventually burned down along with the rest of house. This short story, originally entitled "Burlesque" (which can be found in the Appendix of this Casebook), was then adapted into a Radio Play in 1953. The popularity of the Radio Play and Frisch's own reputation allowed for the story to be transformed into a full-scale stage production, premiering in Zurich in 1958. In the years to come the play would be performed around Europe, including a 1961 English translation (translated by Mordecai Gorelik) which premiered at London's Royal Court Theatre. The play, then known as *The Firebugs*, was Frisch's first big success as a playwright.

In the midst of his new-found success Frisch separated from his wife, eventually divorcing in 1959, and continued to write as he traveled the world. Frisch married again in 1968, but was again divorced in 1979. His experiences in Post-World War II and Cold War Europe slowly transformed his once conservative political views to an extremely left-wing stance. Though by the 1970s Frisch began to focus most of his creative efforts on writing novels, his dramatic work would be what won him the most international distinction. After a career of publishing politically driven works, Frisch was invited to speak at the 1987 Moscow Peace Congress. Soon after, Frisch returned to Zurich permanently, where he eventually died of cancer on April 4, 1991.

IV. Production History

**At a production meeting early in the process, Ellen and I briefly discussed the production history of the piece. In this Casebook I have included a summary of the research I found most helpful to our process. Though I researched multiple productions, I found that research on the Royal Court Theatre's 2006 production (translated and adapted by Alistair Beaton) was the most influential to our production as it was situated in a similar socio-political context.*

i. HERR BIEDERMANN UND DIE BRANDSTIFTER

Radio Play

First Broadcast: March 26, 1953

“Although [Frisch] had never written a radio play before (and, he claimed, never even heard one), the product [was] quite slick; [...] A [narrator] informs us in advance of the disaster, telling us that Biedermann himself handed over the matches; with tongue in cheek he denies Biedermann’s culpability, and throughout the play he questions the listeners on whether they would have acted any differently.[...] A great number of other small features are introduced (as the material is expanded from six pages to the forty- six of a sixty-minute broadcast), many of which serve to heighten the aspects of comedy.”

-Excerpt from THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIEDERMANN

Edited by Peter Hutchinson

Reproduced from *Biedermann Und Die Brandstifter*, Twentieth Century Texts

ii. BIEDERMANN UND DIE BRANDSTIFER

Originally performed in Zurich, Switzerland

(Production later moved to Germany)

1958

“The play was initially produced in Zurich, but for the first German performance Frisch extended the length of the piece by almost a quarter through the addition of a ‘postscript’. [...] For the Zurich performance a short one-act farce was used to fill out the evening, but for the first German production Frisch decided to avoid this unsatisfactory compromise by adding a scene to the main play. Here Biedermann and his wife find themselves in hell, after having been consumed by flames, and they meet the other figures of the play here also. Schmitz and Eisenring turn out to be devils; the [Doctor of Philosophy] is a visiting angel. The scene is in part a parody of the ‘Prolog im Himmel’ in Goethe’s *Faust*, but those aspects which aroused most interest were lines which clearly attacked West German society of the period. For example, Biedermann and Babette protest their innocence ‘compared with others’; they express a desire for ‘compensation’, despite their guilt; the devils complain that the biggest sinners of all—military officers— are being admitted to heaven; and the

city which was destroyed has risen from the ashes even more triumphant than before. [...] The scene exposes the hypocrisy and immorality of the age [...] True, its very first performance proved a considerable success, and it has been particularly popular in the Communist countries (for clearly political reasons); but the general western reaction has been unfavourable, and Frisch soon left a decision on whether or not the 'Nachspiel' should be performed to the individual producer. He later decided that he no longer wished to have it performed, nor, indeed, published with the play."

-Excerpt from THE NACHSPEIL
Edited by Peter Hutchinson
Reproduced from *Biedermann Und Die Brandstifter*, Twentieth Century Texts

iii. THE FIREBUGS (or THE FIRE RAISERS)

Royal Court Theatre
London, United Kingdom
Directed by Lindsay Anderson
By Max Frisch
Translated by Mordecai Gorelik
December 1961

Principle Cast:

Alfred Marks, James Booth, Colin Blakely, John Thaw, Doris Hare

FIRE UP ABOVE

Reviewed by Irving Wardle
Reproduced from *The Observer*,
London, United Kingdom,
December 24, 1961

In one of Brecht's didactic poems the Buddha answers a doubling pupil by telling a story about a burning house. Its occupants, he says, were in no hurry to leave: -

One of them.
While the heat was already
scorching his eyebrows.
Asked me what it was like outside,
Whether it wasn't raining.
Whether the wind wasn't blowing,
Perhaps, whether there was
Another house for them, and more



I went out again. These people here.
I thought,
Must burn to death before they stop asking questions.

This uncomfortable little parable could stand as an epigraph for Max Frisch's *The Fire Raisers* (Royal Court), a streamlined satire on bourgeois idealism which would have earned the approval of the Master especially in scenes where a chorus of firemen thunder forth lines like "Bestow not the name of fate on men's mistakes." However, "The Fire Raisers" is too good a play for anyone including the author, to be able to boil its meaning down to capsule statements. It is one of the rare works ("Lord of the Flies" is another) that are sustained from first to last by a central and ravenously urgent idea. It is a beautiful formal mechanism, a wound spring whose nature is simply to uncoil.

The ironically named hero, Biedermann ("honest man") is a well-to-do suburbanite who has made a fortune out of hair oil by filching the discovery of a poverty-stricken inventor who kills himself in despair. When a grim-visaged ex-convict strides uninvited into his home asking for bed and board, the guilt-laden Biedermann seizes on the chance of performing an act of charity that will leave his possessions intact. A wave of arson is sweeping the country, but Biedermann refuses to entertain any suspicions of his guest- he installs him in an attic where he is shortly joined by an equally unsavoury companion and a large collection of petrol drums.

Quaking inwardly but unable to admit his fear, Biedermann falls back on appeasement, asks them to dinner, and finally hands them a box of matches with which they promptly burn the house down.

It says much of one's own bourgeois reactions that the destruction of Mr. Biedermann's bit of property is more appalling than his death would have been. But, of course, the house is more than a materialist symbol: it also represents the rational fortifications of the ego that await demolition from the mindless id. That dreaded intruder of modern drama. The play is as close to Pinter as it is to Brecht.

The final third of the play in Lindsay Anderson's production is nothing short of terrifying as the two criminals progressively work the genteel dinner-party up into a *Totentan*- Alfred Marks, a Blimpish Biedermann with an excruciating command of hollow bonhomie, and Colin Blakely and James Booth as the arsonists, deliver a solid blow to one's sense of security.

**Following the 1961 London production, The Firebugs was produced off-Broadway. Though the production was considered a flop, it was the first time Frisch's work had been showcased in the United States.*

iv. THE ARSONISTS

Royal Court Theatre
London, United Kingdom
Directed by Ramin Gray
By Max Frisch
Adapted by Alistair Beaton
September 1 to December 16, 2007

Cast:

Zawe Ashton, Michael Begley, Paul Chahidi, Benedict Cumberbatch, Jacqueline Defferary, David Hinton, Will Keen, Munir Khairdin, Claire Prempeh, Alwynne Taylor, Graham Turner

TALE OF THREE FIRE-STARTERS BURNS BRIGHT IN THE AGE OF TERROR: THE ARSONISTS

Reviewed by Michael Billington
Reproduced from *The Guardian*, London, United Kingdom: November 7, 2007.

Will Keen walks on stage as Biedermann at the start of Max Frisch's play. Producing a packet of fags from his pocket and, glancing nervously at a mildly protesting audience, he says: "It's not easy these days lighting a cigarette." It is a perfect opening, both edgy and funny, and a reminder that Frisch's dazzling parable, written in 1958, has gained extra resonance in our apprehensive age.



Frisch's theme, as Alistair Beaton's sharp new translation makes clear, is bourgeois guilt. Biedermann, who has lately sacked an employee in his hair-rejuvenating firm, is driven by an uneasy conscience to welcome a series of insidious intruders into his home. First there is the ostensibly homeless Schmitz, who is as fussily demanding as Pinter's tramp in *The Caretaker*. Then comes Schmitz's suave mate, Eisenring, who stashes petrol-filled drums in Biedermann's attic and politely asks his host to help him measure the detonating wire. Even though the town is filled with fires, Biedermann lavishes attention on his guests in the erroneous belief that, by appeasing them, he can literally defuse their threat.

The beauty of Frisch's play is that it is compact, well-characterized and easily applicable to

today's world (unlike Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, with which it plays in rep at the Royal Court). Given the presence of a third arsonist, driven by a belief in the virtue of wholesale destruction, it is impossible not to relate the play to international terrorism. But it could equally be seen as an attack on our complicity in governmental adherence to nuclear missiles. However you take it, the play works because we recognise part of ourselves in Biedermann: the classic bourgeois trimmer who, though aware of impending disaster, does nothing to prevent it.

Keen plays him brilliantly. Forever creating a circle with thumb and forefinger in an effort to impose his will, he backs off at the first hint of opposition. Ramin Gray's production, played on Anthony Ward's immaculate, glass-walled set, boasts first-rate support from Paul Chahidi and Benedict Cumberbatch as the invading arsonists and Jacqueline Defferary as the hero's worried wife.

Admittedly, after the recent tragic blazes in Warwickshire and California, it becomes a little hard to accept Frisch's serio-comic Greek chorus of firefighters. But otherwise, this is less a piece of whimsically jocular absurdism than a timeless political satire

V. Alistair Beaton

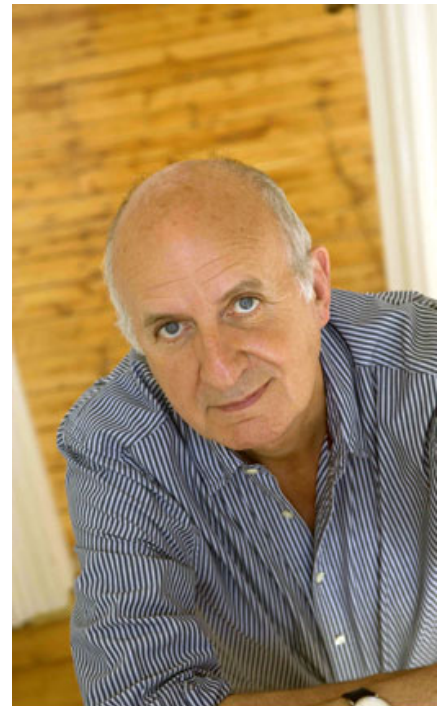
**After the cast began to ask specific questions about translation I undertook research on Alistair Beaton and discovered the significant role he took in adapting the production for a contemporary audience. In my research, I was lucky enough to stumble upon his editorial “The Arsonists Still Burn Brightly” that he published just before the 2007 London production premiered at the Royal Court Theatre. In the article, Beaton discusses the different adjustments he made to Frisch’s original script to make the play suitable for a contemporary audience, as well as different forms of inspiration for his new translation. This article can be found in the Appendix of this Casebook. Below, you will find a brief biography of Beaton.*

i. BIOGRAPHY

Alistair Beaton is a well-known, left-wing political satirist currently working across Europe. Beaton was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1947 and later attended Edinburgh University where he studied German and Russian, from which he graduated with honors.

Throughout his career, Beaton has earned much acclaim for his modern interpretations of classic plays, including *The Arsonists*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *The Government Inspector*. Beaton has also produced multiple original plays, the most famous being *Feelgood*, which earned him a 2001 Laurence Olivier Award Nomination for Best New Comedy.

In addition to writing for the stage, Beaton has published several books and written several screenplays for television movies in the UK. He is a co-founder of the British television show *Not The Nine o’ Clock News*, which ran for several years and was the screenwriter for the 2007 BAFTA Nominated television movie *The Trial of Tony Blair*. Beaton currently lives in London, where he is a well-known voice on BBC Radio 4.



VI. Miscellaneous Research

**I researched most of the items in this section per the specific request of our director, Ellen, at the beginning of the rehearsal process. For the Character Dictionary, I researched both the origin and meaning of the names of characters in the play and included any interesting facts that I felt would add to character development. This research was pulled from multiple internet and print sources, including A Dictionary of German- Jewish Surnames. Through this research the cast and I discovered how the name of each character is very telling of their function in the play.*

Also included is a summary of the cast's trip to the New York City Fire Museum. During rehearsals, I also shared with them a collection of historical and contemporary images of Firefighters, which can be found in the Appendix of this casebook.

Lastly, this section includes an article that I shared with the cast entitled "The story behind the song: Lili Marlene" which describes the historical significance of the song "Lili Marlene" (the character Eisenring whistles the song in the play). In the Appendix of this Casebook the English version lyrics of the song can also be found.

i. CHARACTER RESEARCH

The Biedermann House

BIEDERMANN: Origin and Meaning

- Originally a nickname from the German words BIDERBI meaning "honest, upright" and MANN meaning "man"
- In modern German the name translates to "honest man" or "petty bourgeois"
- from BIEDER meaning "respectable, unadventurous" and MANN meaning "man"

BIEDERMANN: Interesting Facts

- The name was adopted in 1853 by a group of German humorists as the name of a fictitious writer, Gottlob Biedermeier, satirized as an unimaginative bourgeois philistine
- Was once used to refer to a solid style of furnishing and decoration popular in the 19th century

GOTTLIEB

- German in origin
- Translates to mean "Love of God"
- In the era of Pietism (17th and 18th centuries) it was common to create German male names with GOTT meaning "God" plus a pious adjective (LIEB meaning "love, kind, sweet")

BABETTE

- In Hebrew the name translates to mean "My God is a vow"
- Originally a common form of the English name Elizabeth meaning "God is perfection"
- Originally another form of the Latin name Barbara, derived from BABARI meaning "foreign, stammering people"

ANNA

- Hebrew in origin
- Originally derived from the word CHANNAH meaning "grace, favor"
- A German version of the Hebrew name HANNAH
- Also a shortened version of ANASTASIA meaning "resurrection"
- Translates to mean "gracious"

The Arsonists

SCHMITZ: Origin and Meaning

- Originally an altered version of the name SCHMIDT meaning "smith"
- Derived from the ancient word SMITAN meaning "to smite"

SCHMITZ: Interesting Facts

- There are roughly 1,400 variations of the name
- Some feel that the name originally was given to those who worked with iron (ex: blacksmiths)
- Others feel the name was given to soldiers or warriors who wore armor made of iron (and therefore had to constantly mend it- hence "smith")

JOSEF (JOE)

- Hebrew in origin
- Originally from the Latin word IOSEPH from the Hebrew name YOSEF meaning "he will add"
- A German and Czech variant of JOSEPH
- In German it translates to mean "God will increase"

EISENRING: Origin and Meaning

- The surname was originally from Switzerland
- In modern German the name translates to "iron ring"-From the German word EISEN meaning "iron" and RING meaning "ring"

WILLIAM (BILLY, BILL)

- German in origin
- Comes from the German elements WIL meaning "will, desire" and HELM meaning "helmet, protection"
- Short forms and variants (ex: Will, Bill, Billy) are associated with the same basic meaning of "will" "determined" or "resolute"

The Knechtling Family

KNECHTLING: Origin and Meaning

- Derived from the German word KNECHT meaning “servant, farmhand, slave”
- LING is a common diminutive suffix meaning “a smaller or inferior version”; it also may indicate possession

JOHAN

- Hebrew in origin
- From the Hebrew name JOHANAN meaning “gracious gift of Jehovah”
- Also a variant of the Greek name JOHN
- Translates to mean “God is gracious”

ii. FIREFIGHTER RESERACH

TRIP TO THE NEW YORK CITY FIRE MUSEUM

One of the first things Ellen and I discussed in the beginning of this process was the idea of taking a trip to the local New York City Fire Museum. Hoping that it would give the cast a solid foundation from which to create their characters (specifically members of the Chorus of Firefighters), it became my duty to organize a visit to the museum.

The museum, which is located in South Manhattan (Spring Street), has been in operation in one location or another since 1934 and documents the history of the New York City Fire Department. The collection includes artifacts (old Firefighter uniforms, firefighting tools, fire engines, paintings, etc.) from as far back as the late 1700s. Though the museum and it’s historians focus of the history of New York City Firefighting, the collection includes items from across the country as well as Europe. The museum also includes a section on recent NYFD history and a memorial for members of the NYFD lost on the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.



I organized a visit for the cast at the end of their first week of rehearsals. The museum was able to offer our group a Fire Safety Information Session (including a run of their Smoke Run Simulator!) and a guided tour on the history of the NYFD. While the cast and I had a very pleasant and educational experience at the museum, I am unsure how

beneficial the visit actually was in the long run. Though the play is grounded in a specific historical context, it is not necessarily about any historical events. Similarly, the Chorus of Firefighters is a particularly unrealistic entity in the play and is structured after the Classical model of a Greek Chorus and not so much a realistic Fire Department.

What was most helpful about the museum visit, however, was the influence it had on the costume and prop design of the show. Though Ellen was unfortunately not able to make it that day, our Costume Designer, Kate Mincer, came along. The museum thankfully encouraged visitors to take photographs of the collection, which Kate obliged. The museum's collection served as a great addition to the research Kate had already done and had an impact on her final design concept. Though the Chorus of Firefighter's were clothed unrealistically, the Firefighters Leader was dressed in a traditional nineteenth-century Firefighter uniform.

iii. "LILI MARLENE" RESEARCH

THE STORY BEHIND THE SONG: LILI MARLENE

By Frances Lincoln

Reproduced from *The Telegraph*, London, United Kingdom: October 11, 2008

In 1915, as a 22-year-old soldier fighting in the First World War, Leip wrote his poem to express the anguish of separation from his sweetheart, a grocer's daughter named Lili. On sentry duty at night, he would receive a friendly wave from a nurse going off duty; her name was Marleen.



In 1937, feeling that the darkness of another war was looming, Leip released his collection of poems, including *The Song of a Young Sentry*, under the title *Die Hafenorgel* ("The Little Organ by the Harbour"). It was his hope that those who had not lived through the First World War might be alerted to the pain and horror of wars fought in the name of "national pride".

Norbert Schultze was a successful German composer of songs, opera and film music. He barely remembered the Great War but when he read Leip's poems, he caught their ominous mood and wrote a melody for the Young Sentry poem. But the song was rejected by several publishers. By 1939 Schultze had modified the composition and a successful singer named Lale Andersen was offered the new song to record. It didn't appeal to her but she made the recording, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Its sales were lacklustre. More seriously, Nazi politics nearly sent the song into oblivion.

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda chief, was reported as hating the song for not being "military" enough. He wanted it changed into a stirring march. To loyal Nazis, the song seemed to be anti-war, even close to treason, and singer Lale Andersen was believed to be sympathetic towards Jews. The song was banned and both Andersen and Schultze were charged with "moral sabotage" of the nation's aims. She was placed virtually under house arrest and he was ordered to compose music praising Nazi ideals.

By 1941, the Germans were broadcasting to their troops in North Africa from a radio station in Belgrade. When the station was shelled, most of its records were smashed and the station was desperately short of music to play. One day the station's military director, Lieutenant Karl-Heinz Reintgen, came across a dusty box in which a few records had survived - and right at the bottom was Lili Marlene. Officially the recording had been banned, but Reintgen knew that a buddy of his in the Afrika Korps had liked the song, and they had precious little else to play, so Lili Marlene was broadcast.

It was a turning point. The German troops asked for the recording over and over again, and non-military people also requested it. Field Marshal Rommel didn't agree with Goebbels and asked Radio Belgrade to play the song every night. Goebbels was forced to retract, and to pretend that the Nazis welcomed the song. Schultze and Andersen were brought in from the cold and sent around Germany to perform the song.

Allied troops in Africa could also hear the German broadcasts, and the plaintive song soon crossed enemy lines and became a favourite with the Eighth Army, who sang it with its original German words. American troops followed suit.

When a group of British soldiers were on leave in London, publisher Jimmy Phillips chided them for singing a song in German, so the men challenged him to produce an English version. Phillips did so, in collaboration with Tommy Connor. Their "translation" offered words which differed from Leip's original poem. Although still plaintive, it was now a bitter-sweet song of dreaming about a distant love, rather than a plangent anti-war statement.

Anne Shelton recorded this English version with the Ambrose Orchestra, and the BBC promoted it enthusiastically, establishing its popularity throughout Britain. In France, Suzy Solidor recorded it in French. By 1943 German-born anti-Nazi Marlene Dietrich was singing the song throughout war-torn Europe, and continued to sing it for the rest of her career, as did Vera Lynn. Many recordings followed - Bing Crosby, Edith Piaf, Perry Como and Jean Claude Pascal.

Hans Leip died in 1983, and Norbert Schultze's death followed in 2002. They had seen their song survive the Second World War, be translated into 48 languages (including Hebrew and Latin) and feature on hit parades in countries as diverse as the US and Japan. When the original recording artist, Lale Andersen, was asked in 1972 if she could explain the popularity of Lili Marlene, she replied, "Can the wind explain why it became a storm?"

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VIII. PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS

**Photographs taken by Gerry Goodstein*



Max Dickter as the Firefighter's Leader



Margaret Stanton as Babette Biedermann



Michael Perez and Adri Bohmier as Biedermann and Anna



Michael Perez and Neath Williams as Biedermann and Schmitz



The Chorus of Firefighters



Babette, Schmitz, and Biedermann



Max Dickter as the Firefighter's Leader



Zach Stephens as the Doctor of Philosophy

IX: Appendix

i. BURLESQUE

**Frisch's original outline of The Arsonists written after his 1948 visit to Czechoslovakia*

By Max Frisch

Reproduced from *Sketchbook 1946-1949* (pg. 167-172)

Burlesque

One morning a man comes to your house, a stranger, and you cannot help yourself, you give him a plate of soup and some bread. For the injustice he has suffered, according to his own account, cannot be denied, and you don't wish him to take it out on you. And there is no doubt, the man says, that he will one day have his revenge. Anyway, you can't get rid of him, so you give him some soup and bread, as I said, and indeed even more: your sympathy. At first through your silence, but eventually with nods and finally with words. You agree with him, for if you did not, you would have to admit, more or less, that you are being unjust yourself, and then you would perhaps be afraid of him. But you do not wish to be afraid. You also do not wish to modify your injustice, for that would have too many consequences. You wish for peace and quiet, and that's all. You wish to have the feeling of being a good and upright person, and so you can't avoid offering him a bed as well, since, as you have just heard, he has lost his own through an act of injustice. He doesn't want a bed, he says, or a room, just a roof over his head; he would be quite happy, he says, with your loft. You laugh. He likes lofts, he says. You feel, while still laughing, that there is something rather uncanny about him, at any rate odd, disturbing; there has been so much in the papers recently about arson; but you want your peace, as I said, and so there is nothing for it but to stifle the suspicions now forming in your breast. Why shouldn't he sleep in the loft if he wants? You show him the way, the lock and bolt, the workings of the ladder, and the switch for the light. Alone in your nice house, smoking a cigarette, you find your thoughts returning several times to the same point, and it's no use reading the papers, between the lines you always read the same thing: one must be trustful, you shouldn't always believe the worst of a person you don't know, and why should he be an arsonist?

All the same, you resolve next morning to send him on his way—in a friendly manner, so as not to offend him by letting him think you suspect something. You do not resolve not to be unjust: that, as I said, would lead too far. All you mean to do is to be friendly and, in a friendly manner, to send him away. That night you have some sleepless moments; the air is close, and the stories of real arsonists which so obstinately keep coming into your mind are really too absurd; a sleeping pill gives you the rest you deserve. . . . And there you are, you see: next morning your house is still standing! Your trust, your faith in this person, even though he is living in your loft, has been vindicated. You feel a not inconsiderable urge to be noble, helpful, and good; for instance, by providing breakfast. Face to face with him, drinking coffee and eating eggs together, you feel ashamed of your suspicions, shabby: at any rate you cannot possibly send him away now. Why should you? A week later, when he is still living in your loft, you have overcome all your fears, and even when he one day brings along a friend who also wants to sleep in your loft, you may perhaps hesitate, but you don't refuse. You hesitate because this other man has been in prison, God knows what for, and has only just been released. You would never, obviously, have allowed him into your loft by himself. He is also much cheekier than the first, though that is perhaps because he was in prison, and he makes you feel a little uneasy, the way he admits so frankly to having been locked up for arson. But in fact it is this very frankness, quite without shame, that gives you the reassurance you so much desire in order to enjoy your peace and quiet; in the evening, when for all your yawning you can't get to sleep, you reread Max Mell's *Apostelspiel*, the legend that illustrates the power of true faith, a fine piece of poetic writing; you fall asleep with a feeling of contentment which makes the sleeping pill almost unnecessary. . . . And there you are, you see: next morning your house is still standing! Your friends shake their heads, can't understand you, ask every time what those two boys are doing up there in your loft, and get on your nerves so much that you now seldom go to the bar; all they are trying to do is get you rattled. And, between ourselves, they are succeeding to some extent; at any rate you do begin to keep a bit of an eye on the boys, and not without some result; the

mere fact of their carrying small cans into your loft does not of course disturb your faith in human nature, for after all they are doing it quite openly, and when you rather jokingly ask what they want with all these cans, they reply quite naturally that they are thirsty. And, after all, it is summertime: in the loft, you tell yourself, it must be very hot. Once, when you were standing in their path, they did let a can fall from the ladder, and there was a sudden smell of gasoline. For a short moment, admit it, you were startled. Is that gasoline? you asked. The two men, without interrupting their work, made no attempt to deny it, and when you rather jokingly asked whether they were drinking gasoline, they replied with such a ridiculous story that all you could do, in order not to look a fool, was laugh. But later, alone in your house, listening to those lively little cans that smelled of gasoline rolling about above, you seriously did not know quite what to think. Were they really abusing your noble trust? For a while, lighter in hand, an unlit cigarette between your dry lips, you had your mind made up to throw the two boys out, simply throw them out. And this very day too. Or tomorrow at the latest. That is, if they didn't depart of their own accord. For it isn't so easy—quite the contrary in fact: if they are not arsonists, you are being very unjust to them, and injustice will make them mean. Mean toward you. You don't want that. Not on any account. Anything rather than a guilty conscience. And then it is always so difficult to foretell the future; someone who always draws conclusions from the known facts or takes care to understand what he knows to be going on, maybe someone like that can foretell certain things, but he won't enjoy a single moment of peace; not with all those suspicions of his. The fact that they are carrying gasoline up to your loft—what of it? One of them, the friend, just laughed and said they were intending to set fire to the whole town. That could just have been a joke or big talk. If they meant it seriously they would never have said it. This thought, the more often you repeat it, convinces you utterly; or, rather, it sets your mind at rest. The other one even said: We're just waiting for a favorable wind! It is stupid to be intimidated by such remarks; too contemptible. For a moment you think of going to the police. But when, so as not to make yourself look ridiculous by spreading false alarms, you apply your ear to the ceiling—

not exactly, you discover, a simple operation—all is completely still. You can even hear one of them snoring. And anyway the police are out of the question; you would only be in trouble yourself for having allowed such people to live in your house for weeks without reporting it. But of course it is above all humane reasons that prevent your taking such a step. Why don't you simply tell the boys quite frankly that you don't want gasoline in your loft? It is always best to be frank. Then suddenly it occurs to you, and you have to laugh for not having realized it before: they won't set fire to your house while they themselves are in the loft! All the same, now in your pajamas, you climb once more onto the chair, the bureau, and the closet. He really is snoring. Half an hour later you are asleep yourself. . . . And next morning, there you are, you see: your house is still standing! The sun is shining, the wind has turned, clouds sail over the roofs of the town. If they really are bad lads, then, just for that very reason, it won't be easy simply to turn them out; not advisable; for as long as you're their friend they will at least leave you alone. It is always best to be friendly. And by going upstairs this morning and inviting them to breakfast, you are not just being cunning or pursuing an ulterior motive, you are obeying one of those sudden cordial impulses which, as you rightly say, should not always be repressed. The ladder to the loft is already in place, the door open, you do not even have to knock. The loft, which out of politeness you have not visited for a long time, is full of those little cans, and one of the men, the friend from the prison, is standing at the skylight, holding out a wet finger to test the direction of the wind; the other has unfortunately already gone out, but will be back. So your breakfast idea comes to nothing. But he'll be back for sure sometime during the day, as soon, says the friend in his usual rather bantering way, as he has collected all the wood shavings they need. Wood shavings? All you need now is for someone to mention a fuse. For a moment you are again somewhat bewildered, somewhat dismayed, though you try hard not to show it. At base, you well know, nobody can be as cheeky as this boy is making himself out to be just because he imagines you are afraid of him. Once and for all resolved not to be afraid, resolved to preserve your peace and quiet, you pretend not to have heard; as far as the breakfast is concerned—well, some other time will

do. And your friendly gesture as such may prove to have been worth making. Then supper perhaps? you say. With pleasure, says this queer fish, if they have the time and do not have to go to work; that will depend on the wind. He really is a queer fish. And of course you are now not a little curious whether they will in fact come to supper, whether they do value your friendship. Perhaps you ought to have shown your friendliness even sooner. But better late, you tell yourself, than never. You rightly avoid providing an all-too-special and lavish supper, but even so you do fetch up a bottle of wine from the cellar, to have it cooled just in case. Unfortunately, when they at last arrive around nine o'clock, it is not possible to sit on the terrace; too much wind. Did he find the wood shavings? you ask in an effort to make the conversation more personal. Wood shavings? he says and looks at his friend as one would look at a traitor. Then, God knows why, you have to laugh, and eventually they start laughing too. Wood shavings, no, he hadn't found those, but something else: cleaning rags from a garage. Found; you cannot doubt this can only mean stolen. Altogether they have very individual ideas about right and wrong. After the first bottle—not for nothing did you cool the wine—you tell them that you too in your time have done wrong. Since they do not answer, you tell them more and more as you uncork the second bottle (their friendship is worth that). Clearly they are now feeling at home; the friend, the cheekier of the two, switches on your radio to hear the weather report. There is only one thing they still need: matches. Nothing would be worse than if you were now to look startled: friendship can never be built up on suspicion. Why matches? You succeed in concealing your offensive trembling and proffer cigarettes as if you had nothing on your mind, and then—not a bad idea—you offer them a light with your own lighter, which you afterward put back in your pocket. The conversation continues, that is to say, they are listening, regarding you, and drinking wine. Your honest confession of all the wrong you have done moves them no more than politeness requires; altogether they seem very preoccupied. The third bottle is already between your knees, but they decline. Since you nevertheless open it, you will now have to drink it all yourself. Only as they are leaving, while you are expressing your hopes that people might one day come closer together

and help one another, do they again ask you for some matches. Without cigarettes. You tell yourself with some reason that an arsonist, if he were genuine, would come better equipped, and you give them those too, a little book of yellow matches; and next morning, there you are, you see: you are burnt to ashes and can't even feel surprised at your own story. . . .

ii. CAFÉ ODEON

**Frisch discusses drama and playwriting*

By Max Frisch

Reproduced from *Sketchbook 1946-1949* (pg. 87)

Café Odeon

Discussion with students from both universities. The Waagsaat turns out to be much too small, so we walk through the city to another, larger restaurant for the hearing and judgment. I do not deny that such a large audience both surprises and pleases me: whatever happens, it shows interest. I soon realize that students like anyone else want a play to provide solutions. The need for a guiding hand comes out again and again. And what if one were to provide it? Such as, for example: Go out and give away all your possessions, forget your rights, do as Saint Francis did. What would happen? Nothing. What would have been gained? One would know the author is obviously a Christian. Good for him, maybe, but purely his own concern—as indeed it is. The solution is always our concern, my concern, your concern.

Henrik Ibsen once said:

“I am here to ask questions, not to answer them.”

As a playwright I should consider I had done my duty if I succeeded in a play of mine in putting a question in such a way that from then on the members of the audience were unable to live without an answer. But it must be their answer, their own, which they can provide only in the framework of their own lives.

This constant appeal for an answer, a general one, which one so often hears uttered in reproachful and moving tones, is perhaps not as honorable as those who make it tend to think. Every human answer, as we well know, is open to attack the moment it goes beyond the personal and claims to be generally valid, and the satisfaction we get from contradicting the answers of others is due to the fact that it enables us at least to forget the question that is vexing us. In other words: we do not really want an answer, we just want to forget the question.

In order to rid ourselves of the responsibility.

iii. HAMBURG, NOVEMBER 1948

**Frisch discusses arts and politics (the artist's responsibility).*

By Max Frisch

Reproduced from *Sketchbook 1946-1949* (pg. 230-234)

Hamburg, November 1948

What is meant by culture (one of the great and urgent questions which, though always in my thoughts, very soon brings me to the limit of my capacities)—culture, art, politics . . . At any rate, one thing is clear: culture cannot be reduced in meaning simply to art; a nation has no right to think itself cultured just because it possesses a few symphonies.

As our generation, born in this century but brought up in the spirit of the last, has learned only too well, particularly in the Second World War, people imbued with this sort of culture, connoisseurs who can converse intelligently and reverently about

Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Bruckner, can equally well turn out to be butchers, both beneath the same skin. The sort of attitude that marks out this type of person we might define as "aesthetic culture." Its hallmark, always clearly visible, is detachment: it sets a clear dividing line between culture and politics—or between talent and character, between reading and living, between the concert hall and the street. It is a mental outlook that allows its possessors to think the highest thoughts (for to make the balloon rise they simply throw earthly gravity overboard), but does not prevent the lowest; it is a culture that strictly ignores present obligations and places itself entirely at the service of eternity. Culture in this sense is a false deity which, while apparently content with our artistic or scientific offerings, drinks the blood of our brothers behind our backs. Culture as a form of moral schizophrenia—and this, in our era, is in fact its usual form. How frequently, when we start talking about Germany, does someone come up with the names of Goethe, Stifter, Hölderlin, and all the rest, always with the suggestion of genius as an alibi—

People with the same education as my own, speaking the same words that I do, loving the same books, the same music, the same paintings, are by no means immune from the danger of turning into monsters and doing things we would not have thought possible among the people of our own day, apart from a few pathological exceptions. If they are not immune, why should I be so confident of my own immunity?

▶ Winston Churchill, in a recent speech about the German conqueror von Rundstedt, offered the advice that we should be prepared at last to let bygones be bygones. Even if the purpose of such an amnesty is easy to see, the phrase used to describe it sums up most succinctly just what it is that dismays me. It is unfortunately the case that by the time we are ready to be shocked by these "bygones" and to learn from them, they have already been obscured by new misdeeds, and these allow us to forget in our anger—that welcome, feverish anger which is stirred up with such suspicious alacrity—what is cause and what effect. Not only in Germany, but here in Switzerland as well, we like to talk of today as if there had been no yesterday

preceding it. Let bygones be bygones! I find this particularly obscene when one invokes Goethe to dress it up, with talk of Faust's creative sleep, the healing powers of oblivion, etc. Only those who have truly taken the lesson to heart are entitled to say that, and only they. Though we may think we know what these "bygones" were—in fact only too well (as we all like to say)—I have met very few people who have really taken their lesson to heart and in such a way that, if it were a classical tragedy, the chorus would come in to cry: Enough! All we say is: So now we know. But when one stands on the place where it happened, one knows that we most certainly do *not* know; our memory does not encompass the inconceivable, and that is just as well. But sometime, I believe, the full horror of it should strike through to us, otherwise there will be no way forward.

What, we say, has art to do with politics? And by politics we do not mean things that concern the polis; the problems of how men, who cannot survive by themselves, can live together; the problems of a social order which initiates a culture or civilization, safeguards it even when it does not basically form it, and even at times destroys it. What we mean by politics is simply low, vulgar, everyday affairs, with which the intellectual person, the glorious cultural ambassador, should not dirty his hands. The cultural ambassador, the cultural creator. It is remarkable how many Germans (particularly Germans) strive so anxiously and unremittingly to be intellectuals; and above all *how* they strive: by talking of literature, of music, of philosophy. And that is all. Remarkable too how frightened they are of being considered philistines; one can hardly meet a German without hearing this word in the very first sentences he speaks. Philistine being understood as meaning the opposite of intellectual. Were they to have seen Gottfried Keller in the street or in his office or even at a shooting contest, I am convinced that most of those who make use of this fatal word would have categorized him as a philistine, as the opposite of an intellectual, of a cultural ambassador, a cultural-creator, a being miles removed from the elite. There is in fact, in our ideas on culture, a not insignificant difference between the German attitude and the Swiss, and it is in this area perhaps that the Swiss are most independent from the German mode of thought. The feeling,

essential to all nations, or possessing a culture of its own can hardly be said in our case to derive from the fact that we have artists among us; we do not at any rate feel that the talents of a Jeremias Gotthelf (to take just one example) are sufficient excuse for the practice of selling children in his country, a monstrous practice from a social point of view. By culture we mean primarily our democratic achievements, our communal outlook, rather than the artistic or scientific masterpieces of an individual citizen. Even if for the Swiss artist the air of his homeland seems often rather dry, this disadvantage, however much it affects the artist personally, is still only the sorry reverse side of a way of life that, despised by most Germans as philistine, has as a whole our full approval—and precisely for the reason that it is the opposite of that “aesthetic culture” which has led—as was indeed inevitable—to a lethal catastrophe.

“Of course he was a swine,” somebody says, “but a person of his talent—you even admit that yourself!—and anyway, I ask you, what has art to do with politics?”

To that there is only one reply:

There is unfortunately no such thing as a human being who practices nothing but art—and if one day, in order to be free to practice his art, he signs something that for instance sends others to the gallows—former friends perhaps, at any rate people who have been no threat to him—then my interest in his talent is only partial, even if he assures me that he does not “on principle” interfere in politics and that he is “only” an artist, a “cultural creator.”

A person who does not concern himself with politics has already made the political choice he is so anxious to spare himself: he is serving the ruling party.

In this category belongs also the literary concept of partisanship which, as we are told everywhere, has nothing to do with literature—partisanship as an interpretation of conditions that, since it does not conform to the reader’s own interpretation, must be dubbed a “distortion” and therefore cannot be regarded as pure literature—for we regard literature as pure only when we are not conscious of its partisanship as such, when the in-

terpretation, which of course is always present, agrees with our own because it has become ours; then we come to that state of pure enjoyment that arises from the feeling that our own view is the only possible, true, and absolute one. . . .

The unholy fear of being considered a philistine, the misunderstanding inherent in that very fear, the anxious desire to seek refuge in the eternal in order to escape responsibility for what is happening on this earth, the countless unconsidered metaphysical distortions—are these things not more of a danger to culture than all the philistines together?

iv. AN INTERVIEW WITH MAX FRISCH (AN EXCERPT)

**Frisch discusses drama, parables, and The Arsonists.*

Interviewed by Rolf Kieser

Reproduced from *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (pg. 1-3)

Q. Mr. Frisch, you said recently that you are disillusioned with the theater.

A. It's true that I feel uneasy about the theater—my own as well as that in general. Actually, I seldom go to the theater. I don't know exactly why. As far as my own plays are concerned, I must admit that after *The Firebugs* and *Andorra*, I developed a dissatisfaction with the parable.

Let me first explain how I came to use the parable: I did not use it only because of Brecht's example—there are others, too—but rather because the parable is one of several ways to avoid the theater of imitation, since the theater of imitation is to me a total mistake. It is the kind of theater represented in plays such as those by Tennessee Williams where something is shown on stage as if it were a copy of nature. This kind of drama cultivates "illusionism" and that is certainly not the mission of the theater. We see enough of nature and life ourselves. What we want is something different. "Illusionism," by the way, is a blunder of a later period of the theater. Neither the original drama, the ancient drama, the medieval drama, nor the Shakespearean drama were imitative. In each the play did not represent reality but instead created a new kind of reality. Desiring to avoid this later tendency of the theater, I wrote, for example, the costume-play. My *Don Juan* is from the onset a play that knows it is one. Furthermore I wrote *The Great Wall of China* (incidentally, a play which I do not particularly like) which from the

beginning is a revue and does not depict reality at all. Finally, I tried out the parable since this form does not claim to be a story about something that actually happened. Its connection with reality lies only in the fact that the parable develops a meaning that can be applied to reality. Therefore the parable has always and unfailingly a tendency to be didactic. It concludes with a meaning, thus becoming a *Lehrstück*. And so it happens that through the form as such, one assumes a didactic attitude. This means that one delivers a message, a didactic message, which is not necessarily intended and in which one is not interested. The doubts I had at the time about my didactic vocation in the theater were expressed in that abstruse subtitle *Ein Lehrstück ohne Lehre*. Let me add just one more thing to what I said about my uneasiness in reference to the parable. Some time ago I saw a first production of *Turandot, or the Congress of the Whitewashers* which, by the way, is not a very accomplished play, and I saw there, too, how questionable the parable is, by the fact that it can work in either direction. This, I feel, is also true for the *Firebugs*. One could say that one thing is meant or another. It can be asked why I do not spell out what is meant—is it the bourgeoisie or is it fascism? How is it based on history? Well, I have to answer that it can refer to this or to that but it is not necessarily so. That proves that the parable is vague.

Q. Do you believe that all those misunderstandings in connection with *Andorra* also have their origin in this ambiguity of the parable?

A. Yes, it applies there, too. In *Andorra* the parable goes so far as to set up antisemitism as an example only—"only," of course, being a strange word in relation to the tragedy which in this century is historically connected with it. But it is not a play about antisemitism; the latter is used as an exemplary motive, yet the spectator tends to focus on antisemitism as the topic (at least in those countries where it exists). When the play was performed in South America, the accent was placed differently. The outcast, the scapegoat, was identified there with the leftist minority—again, an example of how the parable can be easily applied in different ways. That is the reason I wanted to get out of it by starting the experiment of *Biography*, where I was most concerned about eliminating the illusion that we, as voyeurs, take part in reality. My experiences with this play—which was successful—are negative because when the play is performed in that psychological manner (which is also part of the play, of course), an illusion is created over and over again through the dialogue: Now we are taking part in the real thing. Or rather, it is not the illusion that exists as much as the embarrassing notion that the

performance forces me into entering an illusion which, of course, I cannot accept.

Q. It is your opinion, then, that *Biography* does not reflect sufficiently the rehearsal-situation?

A. It is too little of a rehearsal. The structure of the play, after all, was of interest to me, too. It is like a chess game played backwards. That is the reason I have chosen such a trivial, or let us say, average topic, a biography which does not interest me as such, which is average in the sense that it does not show us a criminal, for instance, neither a terribly poor person nor an important person. The plot did not interest me but the structure did. Now, while illusion is created on stage, phase after phase, the structure disappears and the plot appears. And this plot is trivial. It is unimportant whether the protagonist finally gets his Antoinette or not. That is why I was disappointed with the play. It did not turn out the way I wanted it to. The stage proved me wrong. The stage has much more of an illusionary power than I wished for. One would therefore have to continue—at this point I do not yet know how—by digressing much more radically from all, let us call it, natural content or from all styles of performance which are still relatively close to imitation. The new development of the drama clearly points away from imitation which first of all means away from literature. The theater regains a consciousness of itself by reducing itself to the play of the body, the pantomime, to different kinds of dance. The word does not matter anymore, or it matters very little. Personally, I do not deplore this development at all, although primarily it eliminates us, the authors, completely.

v. THE WORK OF MAX FRISCH

NOVELS

- *An Answer from the Silence* (1937)
- *I'm Not Stiller* (1954, *Stiller*)
- *Homo Faber* (1957)
- *Gantenbein* (1964)
- *Wilhelm Tell: a School Text* (1971)
- *Dienstbüchlein* (1974)
- *Montauk* (1975)
- *Man in the Holocene* (1979)
- *Bluebeard* (1982)

JOURNALS

- *Blätter aus dem Brotsack* (1939)
- *Sketchbook 1946-1949* (1950)
- *Sketchbook 1966-1971* (1972)

DRAMATIC WORKS

- *Nun singen sie wieder* (1945)
- *Santa Cruz* (1947)
- *The Chinese Wall* (1947)
- *When The War Was Over* (1949)
- *Graf Öderland* (1951)
- *The Arsonists* (1953, *Firebugs*)
- *Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie* (1953)
- *Die Grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz* (1956)
- *Andorra* (1961)
- *Biography: A Game* (1967)
- *Tryptichon. Drei szenische Bilder* (1978)
- *Jonas und sein Veteran* (1989)

vi. THE ARSONISTS STILL BURNS BRIGHTLY

By Alistair Beaton

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The Arsonists is my title for a play previously known in this country as The Fire Raisers, first staged in Britain at the Royal Court in 1961. When Domonic Cooke and Ramin Gray asked me to come up with a new translation as part of the Court's international season, I went back to the original German text to see how much the play still had to say to a modern audience. In other words, I



wondered whether I ought to be doing a straightforward translation or a new version. I was pleased to find that Max Frisch's famous play required little in the way of updating. In fact, apart from removing a few archaisms, I only took one major liberty with the text, replacing a traditional nursery rhyme with something more apposite to modern London.

The central character in *The Arsonists* is Biedermann, a man of contradictions. In his

business life, he is brutal and unforgiving. In the domestic arena, he tries to live a life of blameless middle-class decency. This evokes echoes of all the monsters of history who spent their days torturing and murdering before going home to behave with impeccable correctness towards wife and children. It is this sense of bourgeois propriety that renders Biedermann defenseless when two arsonists turn up at his house.

The play itself is an extended metaphor about the weakness of personal ethics in the face of evil. Exactly what that evil is, Frisch never says, though as a Swiss citizen he felt keenly the stifling and hypocritical nature of middle-class morality. In the Royal Court production of 1961, director Lindsay Anderson cut to the chase and suggested that the evil in question was the atomic bomb.

We immediately have to ask: what is the great evil we are failing to face up to today? Is it still nuclear weapons? Is it the destruction of our environment through personal greed and corporate plunder? Is it the misery we inflict upon the Third World? Is it the erosion of our liberties in the name of the War on Terror? Is it the violence perpetrated on the people of Iraq? Is it Israel's cruel and illegal occupation of Palestine? Or could it be the threat to liberal values posed by radical Islam? With a Greek chorus composed of firefighters (as in the original), the play inevitably awakes memories of the London bombings of 2005, and if audiences want to engage with the issue of Islamism, this production certainly allows them to do that. But in the end, the power of *The Arsonists* lies in the undefined nature of the evil it portrays.

Where the play is precise is in identifying what happens when there is a private-public split in a person's moral code. When Biedermann finally realises that the men in his house really are arsonists, he is quite happy for them to go off and burn down someone else's house, not realising that he too will become one of the victims. What the play tells us is not that the liberal conscience is weak, but that the hypocritical liberal conscience is weak. We can't be decent people at home while ignoring the evils of the world. It just doesn't work.

The Arsonists opens at the Royal Court Theatre London on November 6 2007. Previews begin tonight.

vii. "LILI MARLENE" LYRICS (IN ENGLISH)

Underneath the lantern by the barrack gate
Darling I remember the way you used to wait
Twas there that you whispered tenderly
That you loved me
You'd always be
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

Time would come for roll call
Time for us to part
Darling I'd caress you and press you to my heart
And there 'neath that far off lantern light
I'd hold you tight
We'd kiss good-night
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

Orders came for sailing somewhere over there
All confined to barracks was more than I could bear
I knew you were waiting in the street
I heard your feet
But could not meet
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

Resting in a billet just behind the line
Even tho' we're parted your lips are close to mine
You wait where that lantern softly gleams
Your sweet face seems to haunt my dreams
My Lili of the lamplight
My own Lili Marlene

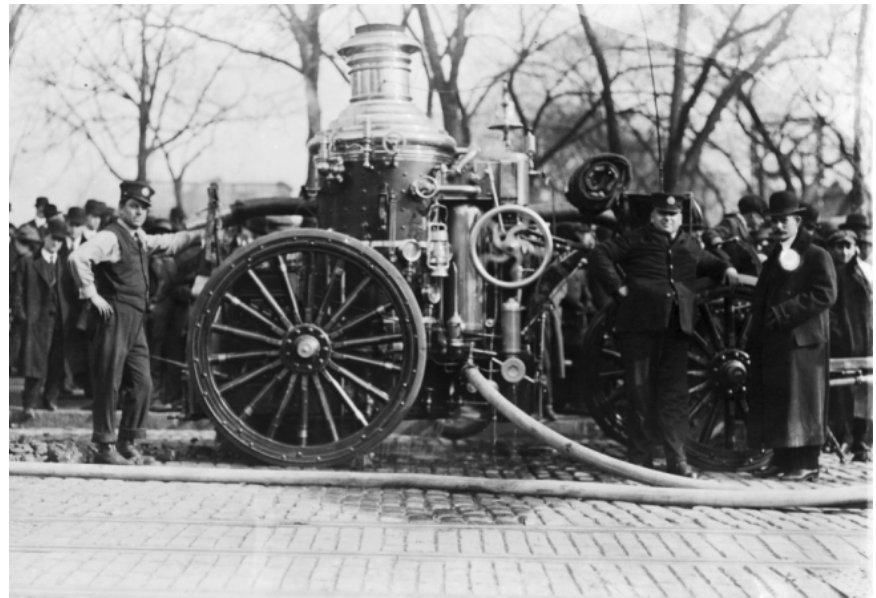
When we are marching in the mud and cold,
And when my pack seems more than I can hold
My love for you renews my might
I'm warm again
My pack is light
It's you Lili Marlene
It's you Lili Marlene

viii. Firefighter Images

**Per the request of Ellen, I found a collection photographs (both historical and contemporary) of Firefighters. The cast members used the photographs for their own personal research and character development.*



Young man, late 1800s



Fire Company, early 1900s



Fire Company, 1920s



Bombing of London, WW2



English Firewomen, WW2



Pearl Harbor Firewomen, WW2



Fire Company, 1950s



Paid NYC Firefighters, 1960s



Firemen, 1960s



Fireman, 1970s



Fire Company, 1970s



Firefighters, 1990s



Female Fire Company, Modern Iran



Firefighters, 9/11



Modern Fire Women



Modern Fire Company