



This photo, from the archives of Marian Michael, was probably taken during a 1912 production of "Ana-Lise," given by Germania, a UT German club. The club produced at least 8 plays between 1906 and 1914.

German Play Productions

There is a continuous tradition of student drama productions in German at the University of Texas at Austin, often in conjunction with the Texas Association of German Students. That tradition in its recent incarnation is fifty years old; before that, plays were given many years, back to before the First World War (see the article from the *Austin American-Statesmen* in Appendix).

Professor Wolfgang F. Michael was the long-time director of these plays.

Professor George Schulz-Behrend's poem wrote a poem honoring Wolfgang F. Michael on the occasion of the plays' twenty-fifth anniversary (see Appendix).

Plays Starting 2001

- 2005: "Mother Courage Action:
Site-specific performance based on Brecht's Mother Courage"
directed by Lissa Lehmenkühler (guest theater artist)
- 2004: Walter Hasenclever, Ein besserer Herr
directed by Ariane Verena Breyer
- 2003: Bertolt Brecht, Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti,
directed by Ingrid Lelos and Kersten Horn
- 2001 Günter Grass, Hochwasser II
directed by Erol Boran, freely adapted by Giorgio Paschotta

Directed by Nina Berman

- 1996 Thomas Huerlimann, Der Gesandte
- 1997 Büchner, Leonce und Lena
- 1998 Shakespeare and Erich Fried, Ein Sommernachstraum
- 1999 Dürrenmatt, Der Besuch der alten Dame
- 2000 Lessing, Nathan der Weise

Plays directed by Wolfgang F. Michael

at the University of Texas at Austin and for the Annual Convention of the Texas Association of German Students

- 1947 Hofmannsthal, Jedermann
- 1948 Lessing, Minna von Barnhelm
- 1949 Goethe, Faust I
- 1950 Freytag, Die Journalisten
- 1951 Scholz, Vertauschten Seelen
- 1952 Thoma, Die kleinen Verwandten
- Hans Sachs, Der fahrende Schüler im Paradies; Der Roßdieb zu Fünsing
- 1953 Hauptmann, Die versunkene Glocke*
 - *First Michael play presented at the convention of the Texas Association of German Students.
- 1954 Bahr, Das Konzert
- 1955 Schiller, Turandot
- Goethe, Jery und Bätely
- 1956 Schnitzler, Zum großen Wurstel
- Mörike, Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag**
 - **Dramatization by Robert J. Henderson; German version by Wolfgang F. Michael, with music of Mozart.
- 1957 Eichendorff, Die Freier
- 1958 Zuckmayer, Katharina Knie
- 1959 Schiller, Maria Stuart
- 1960 Schiller, Kabale und Liebe
- 1961 Kotebue, Die deutschen Kleinstädter
- 1962 Hauptmann, Der Biberpelz
- 1963 Borchert, Draußen vor der Tür
- 1964 Lessing, Minna von Barnhelm
- 1965 Lessing, Emilia Galotti
- 1966 Nestroy, Der Talisman
- 1967 Dürrenmatt, Romulus der Große
- 1968 Kleist, Der zerbrochene Krug
- 1969 Frisch, Andorra
- 1970 Grass, Onkel, Onkel
- 1971 Frisch, Don Juan
- 1972 Hofmannsthal, Jedermann
- 1973 Lessing, Minna von Barnhelm
- 1974 Nestroy, Lumpazivagabundus

- 1975 Brecht, Die Dreigroschenoper
- 1976 Borchert, Draußen vor der Tür
- 1977 Tieck, Der gestiefelte Kater
- 1978 Kotebue, Die deutschen Kleinstädter
- 1979 Nestroy, Das Mädl aus der Vorstadt
- 1980 Kleist, Der zerbrochene Krug
- 1981 Gryphius, Horribilicribrifax
- 1982 Schiller, Maria Stuart
- 1983 Nestroy, Einen Jux will er sich machen
- 1984 Bahr, Das Konzert
Also, in Brenham, TX: Der tote Mann and Das Kalberbrüten by Hans Sachs
- 1985 Grass, Onkel, Onkel
- 1986 Lessing, Minna von Barnhelm

Directed by Dr. Michael's collaborators:

- 1987 William Trenckmann, Die Schulmeister von Neu Rostock +
Texaslieder von Adolph Fuchs (dir. Hubert Heinen & Ed Reinhart)
- 1988 Schnitzler, Anatol (dir. Ed. Rinehart)
- 1989 Bruno Frank, Sturm im Wasserglas (dir. Glenn Ehrstein)
- 1990 Dürrenmatt, Romulus der Grosse (dir. Fred Schwink)
- 1991 Mark Twain, Meisterschaft (dir. Fred Schwink)
- 1992 Kleist, Der zerbrochne Krug (dir. Fred Schwink)
- 1993 Brecht, Kleinbürger Hochzeit, and Thoma, Die kleinen Verwandten (dir. Tom Lawshae)
- 1995 Tankred Dorst, Herr Paul (Dir. Ken Mayer)

APPENDIX I

Professor George Schulz-Behrend was associated with Wolfgang F. Michael longer than anyone else. For many years he performed "yeoman's service," in Marian Michael's words, as business manager for the annual German play. In 1972, on the occasion of the play's twenty-fifth anniversary, Wolfgang F. Michael -- known as "Mike" to his friends, was honored with a party at which the proverbially good-humored Professor Schulz-Behrend delivered the following tribute in deliciously macaronic, gently satirical *Knittelvers*.

The Michaels' Play Thing

Mike came in '46. That fall
Enrollment still was rather small.
The chairman, Pollard, took his calendar,
He looked at Clark, he looked at Hollander,
And said to no one in particular
"Now, class, let's see how quick you are
In picking up a little quirk I have

That neither money costs nor staff:
As teachers we should be in touch
With Texas Germans and for such
I know there is no better way
Than now and then a German play.
Here Mike spoke up and said: "This factor
Appeals to me, for I was trained as an actor,
And as a drama coach I'll intermix
With Texas Germans in the sticks.
But always first we'll play in Austin here.
Then in Neu-Braunfels, mit or ohne Bier,
In Friedrichsburg, in Houston, Conroe,
In Giddings, Comfort, Börne, Monroe,
And never will be play alone
In Lubbock, Uhland, San Antone.
Als erstes Stück, das sag' ich an,
Geb' ich im Frühjahr Jedermann."
He drilled each student actor's part
Till he or she knew it by heart.
Sometimes he'd also use T.A.'s
And faculty on lucky days.
(If anybody asks who said so,
just ask Frau Willson here, Miss Redrow.)
Professors' children, too, got in it,
For they speak German (or begin it),
The Heinens, Pollard, Schulze-Behrend,
(Die Wirkung war manchmal verheerend).
And now the second generations
Submit to Michael's ministrations.
Und dieses Jahr kam wieder dran
Der weitbeschreidt Jedermann.

**

When April with his showers sote
The drought hath pierced to the rote,
Then go these players on their pilgrimages
And get their cars from their garages.
They load them high with properties
(Theatrical that is) and hitch with ease
Big trailers on for giant flats
That have been stored all year in Batts
Hall underneath the stage,
For now the German play is all the rage.

**

Year after year in strenuous work,

Mike now lived up to Pollard's quirk:
 Minna, Stuart, Journalisten
 Durften so ihr Leben fristen,
 Freier, Jer- und Bätely
 Legt er über Kathrin Knie.
 Mozart auf der Prager Reise
 Bracht er in gewohnter Weist.
 Einundsechzig kam hinzu
 Die deutsche Kleinstadt -- Kotzebue
 Wien schickt Schnitzlers Wurstelprater
 In Faust I hüpfte der Meerkatzkater.
 Alles, was man sonst begehrt --
 Draußen vor der Tür, Konzert,
 Ja, ich will es nicht verhehlen,
 Biberpelz, Vertauschte Seelen,
 Talisman, Don Juan, Krug,
 Immer ist's noch nicht genug.
 Dann aus Nazi und Gomorrah
 Holt er sich herbei Andorra.
 Stumme Schönheit, Romulus
 Zeigt er uns mit Thespisgruß.
 Turandot, Kabale/Liebe
 (Daß nur ja nichts außen bleibe)
 Fast tret ich mit auf die Socke,
 Denn es fehlt Versunk'ne Glocke.
 Statt Sarotti gibt's Galotti
 Und es geistert durch die Landschaft
 Thomas Miniaturverwandschaft:
 Und daß kein Ungemach erwachs
 Spielt er schließlich auch Hans Sachs.
 **

As you sit on your bench you see
 Dramatic labors of a quarter century.
 But let's also remember in this list
 Is also hidden the assistance
 of Wolfgang's darling Marian
 Who does the work of any man (or two or three).
 If Marian had not always helped him,
 His troubles might have overwhelmed him.
 And oft she was the Blitzableiter
 Für Riesensorgen und so weiter.
 **

Vater Zeit dreht um die Sanduhr
 und die tempora mutantur.
 With T.A.G.S. by Sister Joan of Arc
 To bring out students further from the dark,

Dramatic contests now abound
And many plays instead of one are found.
And here, too, the Mikes are busy,
So much, in fact, it makes me dizzy.
And even now the Mikes look forward
To next year's play -- I think, by Horvath?
It keeps in touch them with the young
And earns them much Bewunderung
In Texas, in the world, the nation --
An admirable situation.

**

Tonight let's raise our glass of wine
And hope in '96 we'll dine
To toast the semi-centennial:
Prosit, Michaels, and God bless you all!

APPENDIX II

Let's go Deutsch

**Thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Wolfgang F.
Michael, UT carries on Texas' strong
tradition of performing German plays**

By Jane Smith
Austin American-Statesman,
Saturday, 12 April 1997: C 10

The long list of German plays performed at the
University of Texas includes a 1949 production
of 'Faust,' with Franz Goreth in the lead role.



This is the story of a man, a woman, true love, and many umlauts.

For the past 50 years, the students in the University of Texas Department of Germanic Languages have produced a spring play performed in German. Tonight, Assistant Professor Nina Berman continues the tradition with Georg Büchner's "Leonce and Lena," a 19th-century love story that still resonates.

The Man

It takes an unusual person to start, maintain, and inspire such a tradition, and UT found a treasure in 1946 when Dr. Wolfgang F. Michael was hired. The following year he organized his first departmental production, and continued to do so each year until about seven years before his death in July 1994. During his tenure, the department produced plays by Bertolt Brecht, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Günter Grass, Heinrich von Kleist, Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schiller. In 1967, Winedale performances were included.

In a recent conversation, his wife, Marian, spoke of her husband's love for theater and his life. "Mike," Her nickname for him, was born in Freiburg, Germany and began performing at an early age. Although he received a doctorate in theater history in Munich and trained as an actor, Hitler's rise to power eradicated any employment chances for the half-Jewish Michael. He went to England, then America, translated documents on rockets and jet engines for counterintelligence and finally turned to teaching.

"I was a student of Dr. Michael's in the '50s and early '60s," said UT professor Hubert Heinen. "I acted in several plays and it was a very important experience," he said. "It actually changed me from being a science major to being a German professor."

"It was always a very intense experience because he was an intense personality. When you were rehearsing or working, you put everything you had into it, or maybe even more than you had. Of course, Marian did more and more of the work of building sets and doing the costumes. She had more artistic sense. He was more of an actor. They both really devoted themselves to the play. The way was his first love. He originally wanted to be an actor and became a German professor by the accidents of history."

The Woman

If Dr. Michael was, in a sense, the heart of the tradition, Mrs. Michael is definitely its soul. While she may be quiet when it comes to self-promotion, others loudly sing her praises. Explaining how lucky they are to have her, Heinen said, "Marian is a tremendous point of continuity. She still works more for the department on a volunteer basis than most (employed)."

True Love

A former journalism instructor at UT, Marian Pendergrass met her future husband in 1951, when a different German teacher volunteered her services backstage. She, too, became hooked. "We both suffered terrible withdrawal pains when the shows were over." So far, she has participated in 45 productions.

Endlessly energetic, Mrs. Michael handles the sets and costumes, attends rehearsals, locates hard-to-find props and has even auditioned live canines when their onstage presence was required. She is also the keeper of the archives and knows that for all their years producing, she and her husband weren't the first to offer German-language plays in Texas.

"When current actors climb into their cars to continue the tradition as they did in March at Winedale Historical Center near LaGrange, they travel in the buggy tracks of a yet older tradition of UT actors performing not only at home, but in central Texas strongholds of German settlers.

"Surviving programs and newspapers attest to performances by the UT Germanic Dramatic Club of eight plays between 1906 and 1914. They often performed not only in Austin, but also in New Braunfels, Seguin, Fredericksburg, Taylor and Bartlett," she related.

"We would attend meetings of the statewide organization for German Students, Texas Tech, A&M, SMU and high schools would come and present German plays and original works. Texas has a very rich culture of German play production," Mrs. Michael said. For example, in 1987 they produced "The Schoolmasters of New Rostock," A 1903 play written by William Andreas Trenckman, the editor of the Bellville (Texas) *Wochenblatt*.

She also knows great stories. Once, when a personal invitation from Ima Hogg took the troupe to Winedale, "Mrs. Hogg came to the performance and sat in a wheelchair in the front row. She once discombobulated an otherwise unflappable actor, who sang a song written for the occasion by Dr. Michael, which had a verse about Ima Hogg. Acknowledging the reference, she wagged her finger, practically in the actor's face since her wheelchair was about a meter away from him, and he almost cracked up."

While Mrs. Michael bridges the past with the present, Berman is well-suited to carry on the directing side of the tradition. "We turned the play into a course. It is somewhat more formalized, but (this way) it will hopefully survive. I introduced such a class a Berkeley, where I taught before, and I have worked in theaters in Germany," Berman explained,

"I love doing theater, and in terms of the language acquisition for students, this is really wonderful. They have to speak up loud and they really lose their shyness. They learn to say the words with some authority and they have to memorize. I love teaching this type of class. It requires teamwork, everybody is very important and everybody knows that at some point. They really grow on a personal level."

For Berman, "Leonce and Lena" is "very much a modern play because it is about two young people who don't know what to do with their lives. The dialogue is almost out of the 'Slacker' movie. They are the generation after a revolution, where politically it is kind of conservative. The play was written after the 1830 French Revolution and before the 1848 German Revolution. It was a rather reactionary time in Germany, but at the same time people were beginning to question that."

While Berman feels the play "deals a lot with boredom," audience members at tonight's show are sure to be anything but bored as they watch this ironic and playful love story and celebrate this valuable tradition.