

Remembering Erwin Piscator

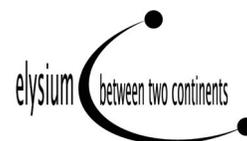
**THE
NEW
SCHOOL**

Wednesday, March 30, 2016
2:00 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

**The New School
Theresa Lang Community & Student Center
Arnhold Hall
55 West 13th Street, Room 1202
New York, NY 10011**

Free and open to the public

**Welcome: James Miller, Chair of Liberal Studies
and Professor of Politics at the New School**



Erwin Piscator (1893 - 1966) was one of the most original and influential directors and producers of theater in the 20th century, not just in the German-speaking lands where his career began, but also in the United States, where he took refuge in mid-century New York.

More than just a man of the theater, Piscator was an exemplary man in dark times — his passion for fierce art forms that challenged the status quo was never dimmed by his episodic struggles against political persecution. In Europe in the 1920s and 30s, he collaborated with playwrights like Bertolt Brecht, composers like Hanns Eisler, and visual artists like John Heartfield and Wieland Herzfelde. During his time in New York, Piscator founded the Dramatic Workshop at The New School in 1940 and trained myriad actors, including Marlon Brando, Judith Malina, Tony Curtis, Tony Randall, Elaine Stritch, Ben Gazzara, and Harry Belafonte. He continued to be active in Germany in the 1950s and 60s, crowning his career by producing a trio of provocative new plays as artistic director of the Freie Volksbühne Berlin: Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*; Heiner Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, and Peter Weiss's *The Investigation*.

His friend Brecht once said that "Piscator is the greatest theater man of all time. He will leave a legacy which we should use."

March 30, 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of Erwin Piscator's death. On this occasion, The New School, in partnership with Elysium – between two continents, presents two talks exploring the theater impresario's enduring legacy.

Prof. Dr. Erika Fischer-Lichte **Inventing New Forms of Political Theater: Erwin Piscator's Theater Work in Germany**

The focus of this talk will be on three different periods of Piscator's work - the first being his political revues and his productions at the Volksbühne in the early 1920s; the second the productions at his Piscator-Bühne in the late 1920s, and the third, his invention of the documentary theater in the 1960s. In each of these periods he responded to a changing political situation by inventing a new form of political theater. Each of these forms proved to be aesthetically highly demanding and set new standards for political theater.

Erika Fischer-Lichte is Professor at the Institute of Theater Studies at Freie Universität Berlin / Germany. She has published widely in the field of aesthetics, theater history and contemporary theater. A number of her books have been translated into English. She is the recipient of this year's Erwin Piscator Lifetime Achievement Award.

Michael Lahr **A School that is a Theater - a Theater that is a School: Piscator's Dramatic Workshop at the New School and his contribution to the American Theater**

This talk will examine Piscator's work during his exile in the United States (1939 – 1951). After his original hopes to direct *War and Peace* on Broadway had been disappointed, Piscator focused on founding the Dramatic Workshop as a professional training course for aspiring actors and a laboratory of experimentation. This undertaking was in some ways a continuation of Piscator's idea of "Political Theater", in others a departure from his previous work.

Michael Lahr is Executive Director of the Lahr von Leitis Academy & Archive, and Vice Chairman of the Erwin Piscator Award Society.