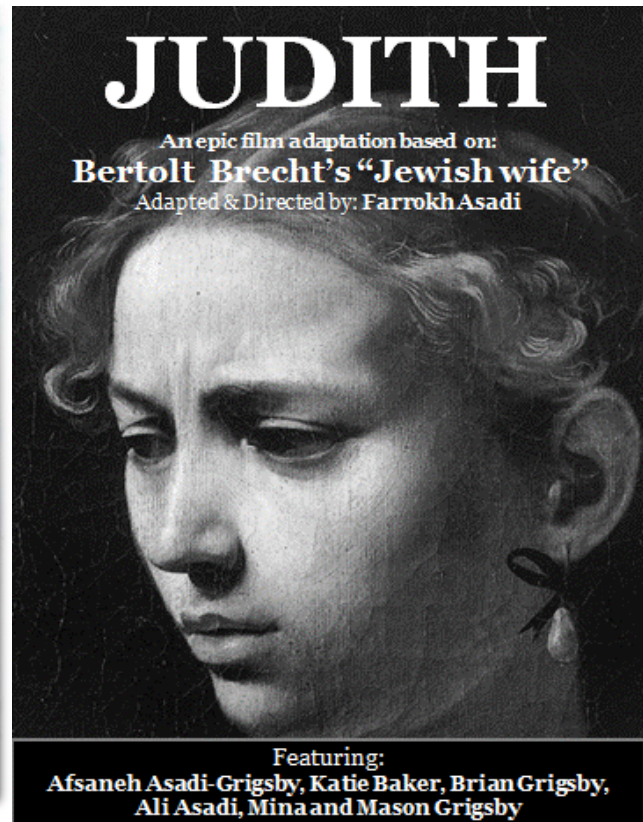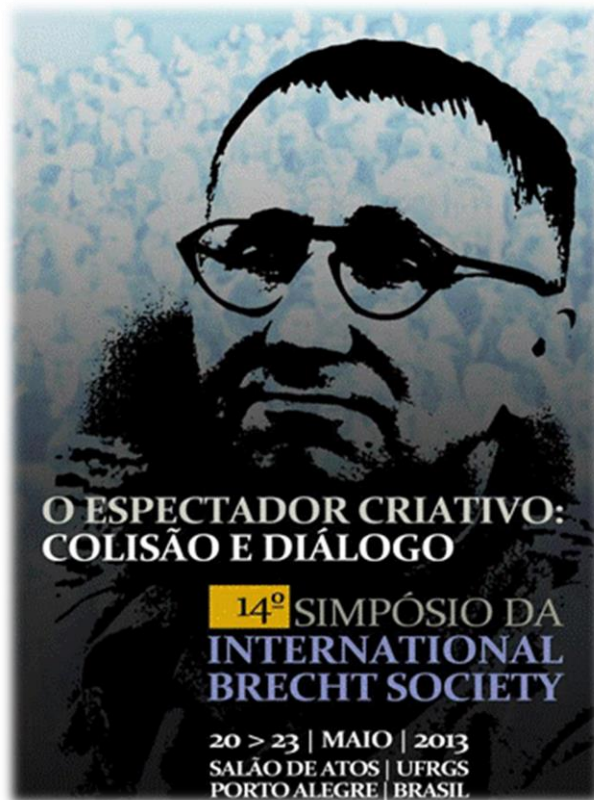**Judith: A film script adaptation based on Bertolt Brecht's "Jewish Wife"**
Adapted, Directed, and produced by: Farrokh Asadi

The Epic Players of Chicago presents:

Introduction: Bertolt Brecht's genius was most evident in his simplicity, accessibility, and humanistic language; however, his work is misguidedly viewed as challenging and unattainable. More specifically, Brechtian theatre employs various theatrical elements as scientific tools to connect with the audience and interpret social issues that are being analyzed on stage. This will allow the audience to raise questions such as "**WHY** is this happening?" rather than merely "**WHAT** is happening?" In many ways, then, science and his theater have one common intention: to investigate and make sense of life while making it justified to live.

"Jewish Wife" is originally part of a series of sketches that form the play *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*. These sketches are all slices of life in the early years of Nazi's supremacy when the horror was slowly beginning to creep into people's lives. Once in power, Nazis were quick to express anti-Semitic ideas and attempted to make life so unpleasant for Semitic-speaking peoples in Germany that they would emigrate. For example, Nazis organized a program designed to encourage Jews to emigrate and the

number of Jews emigrating increased after the passing of the *Nuremberg laws on citizenship and race* in 1935. It has been estimated that between 1933 and 1939, approximately half the Jewish population of Germany (250,000) left the country. It was also made illegal for Jews to have Aryan spouse. Nazis believed that the Aryan's superiority was being threatened by intermarriage and if this is not banned, world civilization would decline.

Play Synopsis: *Judith* is the wife of an Aryan surgeon, and fascistic propaganda has already begun to infiltrate their lives. The play opens with a disturbed, angry and nervous Judith who is packing her bags. At the moment the combined forces that are dividing her country, its people, and her own life have made her unconditionally determined about her decision to leave permanently. She goes to the phone and calls a few people. One of the addressees is a close friend who will hear the truth about Judith's reasons for leaving. Others will be told that she's leaving the country for a just few weeks to see some new faces. After making these calls, Judith turns to an empty chair in her dining room and starts rehearsing how she will notify her husband of her unavoidable departure. Much of the Judith's true feelings are revealed in this imaginary conversation with her husband. In their actual conversation, once he comes home from work, her husband says exactly what Judith thought he would say. When Judith tells him about her decision he initially protests, but not strongly, and is obviously relieved that she has decided to leave. He expresses that a short trip will do her good and he will bring her back in a couple of weeks when the current political mess has been settled for good. In the script, Judith's husband is not portrayed as an antihero but as a victim, a victim of fear and distrust that has gradually altered him. At the end, Judith, her husband, and the viewers will understand that this is a dead-end journey for Judith and she will never come back. Now Judith is seen as a person in danger who is alone to the point that she feels even her husband will eventually turn against her. Judith's in-house troubles and uncertainties have become as fearful as the outside miseries that are enforced by the autocratic authority.

Key features of "Judith" Film Adaptation:

- Judith is the protagonist of both the original "Jewish Wife" play and my film script.
- I chose "Judith" to replace the original title of "Jewish Wife" in order to apply a more universal them to the concept of the play that can ultimately take place at anytime and anywhere in the world. In my belief, Brecht himself may have chosen the name "Judith" for the leading character based on a fictional hero supposedly set in 587 B.C., who decapitates the general of an enemy army in order to liberate her own country (figure 1).
- To make the message of a scene more clear, the plot was broken down so that each scene can appear as one single action unit.

- In contrast to "Jewish Wife" play, each scene in my adaptation has its own message and start with a musical interlude and/or captions. The intention is to prevent the audience from feeling any sympathy with the events and making them to think critically.
- By presenting this story as a sequence of events between different characters, I hope to allow the audience to interpret these events through the collective behavior of the characters' relationships. Ultimately, I believe this will create interplay of social forces from which the film's messages emerge.

Figure 1. Judith by Caravaggio (c. 1598; oil on canvas; Galleria Nazionale dell'Arte Antica, Rome.) Source: http://www.ibiblio.org/vm/paint/auth/caravaggio/judith.jpg

- Film script as well as production is in epic style, the term that is used to describe *Brechtian Theater*. The film is episodic, apparently disconnected, and is presented in a non-chronological way without the restrictions of time or place. I anticipate that the audience will arrive at its own conclusion of how the events are linked together in my film.
- Technological effects were used to fragment the *realistic* unity of the film location. For instance, by employing slides, movie clips, animations and texts, I am helping the audience to relate the action on screen to recent social events. To announce the action that will take place before a scene began, I have also used captions with discordant music.
- I have also applied the concept of *verfremdungseffekt (*the *alienation effect*). I used various techniques to keep the audience conscious of the fact that this is a theatrical performance and that they are witnessing so they can respond in a distanced and objective manner. For example, my actors were advised, whenever it was necessary, to address the audience directly by looking and talking into the camera. To avoid formation of false moods in a scene, simple and natural lighting was utilized.
- Actors were advised not to empathize totally with their characters and try to demonstrate characters' behavior.

- In addition to altering the title of the original play, I have also added a few characters in my film that do not physically appear in the play. These may have been characters that were referred to by Judith and Fritz in Brecht's original version of "Jewish Wife," which I have decided to expand on in order to produce more depth and interaction between the main characters.
- Both "Jewish Wife" play and my film script adaptation are relevant under today's political climate, and offers a view on the regimes around the world that are oppressive, manipulative, dishonest, corrupt, and create fear and misery in their societies.
- Finally, the order of scenes that I've arranged in this film is different with the sequence of the original play. When Brecht decided to stage "Jewish Wife" for the very first time, he re-ordered the scenes that appeared in the script. As a special tribute to him, I have chosen to shoot the scenes in the same order in Epic Style with the intension of challenging the audience (Table 1).

Table 1. A comparison between "Jewish Wife" play and "Judith" film script

Description	"Jewish Wife" Play	"Judith" Film Adaptation
Style	• Non-epic style • Non-episodic	• Epic style • Episodic
Characters	• Judith (Jewish Wife) • Fritz (the husband)	• Judith (Jewish Wife) • Fritz (the husband) • Anna (Friend) & her children • Gertrude (sister in-law) • Doctor (a family friend) • Max (a family friend) • Lotte (Max's wife)
Setting	• Frankfurt, Germany • March 1935 • Evening	• Anywhere • Any date • anytime
Opening	• Judith is packing • Judith begins to call various people	• An introduction to portray motives for Judith leaving • Judith packing • Judith begins to call various people
Phone talks	Only Judith can be seen and can be heard	Judith and all call recipients can be seen and can be heard
Phone Talks Order	Doctor, Lotte, Gertrude,	Anna, Gertrude, Doctor,

	and Anna	and Lotte
Scenes	- Judith packing - First call - Second call - Third call - Fourth call - Judith rehearsing - Judith Fritz	- Introduction & Prologue - Animation - Judith packing - Animation continues - Judith packing continues - First call - Animation continues - Second call - Animation continues - Third call - Animation continues - Fourth call - Burning the phone book - Judith rehearsing with Fritz flashbacks - Fritz & Max scene - Fritz coming home - Judith & Fritz scene - Judith leaving - Final scene, Fritz calling Max - Epilogue - Closing credits

"Judith" Film Cast and Crew:

Afsaneh Asadi-Grigsby	Performed as Judith
Katie Baker	Performed as Anna, Gertrude & Lotte
Brian Grigsby	Performed as Doctor & Max
Ali Asadi	Performed as Fritz
Farrokh Asadi, Jon Santigo, Ali Asadi	Script Development
Ali Asadi, Farrokh Asadi	Filming
Eric Dossou, Farrokh Asadi	Editing
Idene Saam	Legal & Multimedia Assistant
Sasa Klopanovic	"If sharks were men …" Animation
Farrokh Asadi	Adapted, Directed, and Produced