A Brechtian Perspective on *London Road*: class representations, dialectics and the Gestic character of music from stage to screen

Evi Stamatiou

ABSTRACT

This article uses Brechtian philosophy to assess the role of music and song in the audience reception of the "verbatim musical" London Road. *The first section analyses class representations in* London Road*, with a particular focus on the dialectics and the* gestic *role of the music and song. The second section explores how the adaptation from stage to screen further affects the dialectics of the musical and, paradoxically, serves key Brechtian aims. I focus on two dramaturgical changes in the adaptation from stage to screen: the chronological order of the narrative and the alternation of interview sections and dramatized sections, which resembles the structure of the popular drama-doc genre. Given that reordering and restaging the original verbatim numbers affected audience reception, I analyse the way the meaning is affected through the Brechtian notions of* alienation *and the* gestic *character of music. Throughout, I discuss class representations and relevant dialectical implications.*

KEYWORDS

Musical theatre, Brecht, verbatim musical, class representation, dialectics, screen adaptation

Three-quarters of the way into the musical *London Road,* from the darkest place of National Theatre's Cottesloe stage, Sarah sings: '…I wanna get clean for 'em because it's took their lives from them to think about and go "Come on. Let's get these girls off the street"' (Blythe 2011: 58). After five murders in Ipswich 2006, the surviving sex workers were helped. In the next scene, the journalists sing 'The Verdict' (Blythe 2011: 60-62) after Steven Wright is found

guilty. Julie, a London Road resident, is grateful to Wright: 'I'd still shake his hand. I'd love to just shake his hand an' say "Thank you very much for getting rid of them"' (Blythe 2011: 65). Sarah and Julie are real interviewees who speak for themselves in their interviews. But because there are no leading characters in the musical, it is easy to see them as the leaders of the two conflicting choruses – the marginalized sex workers and the working-class residents.

The social conflict between a local working class and a local marginalized class[i] is an ideal starting point for Bertolt Brecht's theatre that turns 'dialectics into a source of enjoyment' (1948: 17). *London Road* enabled a class conflict in Ipswich 2006 to be presented as entertainment to a middle-class audience at the National Theatre in 2011. As it was their first time working on a musical, the creators Alecky Blythe (librettist) and Adam Cork[ii] (composer) were reluctant to categorise *London Road* as such (Costa 2011). However, the work has been acknowledged for its innovative musical form, winning 'Best Musical' at the 2011 Critics' Circle Theatre Awards (Edwards 2011). It also reached broader audiences in a screen adaptation in 2015.[iii] Having seen both productions, it seems important to analyze the middle-class audience's reception of the portrayed working-class and marginalized class and investigate how the two mediums challenge or perpetuate negative dispositions about the residents of Ipswich and the sex workers in different and distinct ways.

London Road follows a 'theatre of the real' tradition,[iv] established by the Broadway musical *A Chorus Line*[v] (1975) and the UK 'docu-musical',[vi] which focused on the stories of marginalized groups. The National Theatre invited Blythe and Cork to collaborate on a verbatim musical theatre production. Blythe's working technique is to record conversations with people from a community, play the conversations to actors and ask them to repeat them exactly as they are spoken – including every cough, stutter, hesitation and personal idiosyncrasy (Blythe 2011: v-vi). The interviews used to create *London Road* were conducted following the murders. Blythe was drawn to the story of the murders and began interviewing

sex workers who operated in the area at that time. However, she found greater dramatic possibilities in the interviews with residents of the area, so she shifted the focus of the story from the murders themselves to the story of 'a community healing itself' (Calkin 2015). This shift of focus undermined verbatim theatre's commitment to showing 'a particular narrative of opposition' that aims to present both sides of a conflict, which prevents a production from becoming 'singular in its political objective' (Tomlin 2013: 120).

The social and political implications invite a "Brechtian" analysis. Bruce Kirle suggests that even 'commercial Broadway showmen' like Stephen Sondheim and Harold Prince have been influenced by Brecht's work, which can be traced 'in the ironic, often jeering commentary and use of musical comedy and vaudeville conventions to underscore intellectualized ideas' (2005: 121-122). However, there is a resistance to acknowledge Brecht's contribution to the transatlantic dialogue of musical theatre, because of his association with a Marxist ideology (Kirle 2005: 121). Indeed, in order to activate his left values, Brecht's applied a dialectical philosophical methodology (Barnett 2015: 11-36), which encourages the representation of oppositional views in a work, in a discursive rather than didactic manner. Aiming to engage audiences intellectually, he developed the *Verfremdungseffekt,* commonly recognized as the *alienation effect*: 'A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar' (Brecht 2014: 192). The impression that Brecht aimed to 'totally eliminate emotional response' (Kirle 2005: 122) was false. Instead, he aimed for 'different emotions from those being experienced by the characters on stage' (Eddershaw 1996: 16), which involves a kind of conceptual blending from different areas of cognition, such as reality and fiction (McConachie 2006). Brechtian theatre as a philosophy of its own terms offers a critical lens for works that merge the entertaining with the social (Radosavljević 2013: 119-149). Considering that Brecht's 'philosophy of theatre, rather than any prescriptive rules distilled from it, resonates with 20th and 21st century verbatim

theatre productions' (Radosavljević 2013: 126), *London Road* can be analyzed through Brecht's notions of class representation and the *gestic* character of music and song. Drawing on theatre, musical theatre and media studies,[vii] and having seen both productions, I discuss how the screen adaptation further affected the musical's dialectics and meanings.

The *gestic* use of music and song

The music in *London Road* promotes a critical distance to the storytelling. It becomes an interpretative framework because it provides 'a dynamic strategy for the destabilisation of the real to promote critical insight' (Taylor 2013: 370). Lib Taylor observes that Blythe's naturalistic approach would affect audiences towards empathizing patterns, but it is the use of music that counterbalances this: 'Voice in *London Road* both claims and defers authenticity and authority, in as much as the voice signifies presence and the embodiment of identity but the reworking of speech into sung tunes signals the absence of the real' (2013: 379). On the same topic, Demetris Zavros suggests that the reworking of speech into sung tunes does not signal an absence of the real, but rather an 'irruption of the real':

> this musical recomposition is not *imposed* as a critical frame only to reveal the artifice and constructed nature of (the) performance. It is a poetic accentuation of the musical attributes that *already exist* in the language, which comments on the artificiality of the source material itself: the performativity inherent in what we might usually assume to be (expressions of the) 'real/authentic/personal' in the everyday—in 'real talk'. (2018: 712.0/787)

The two approaches examine how the music in verbatim theatre affects the *alienation effect* and audience reception. A Brechtian perspective contributes with a social perspective, that

focuses less on how the music achieves *alienation* and more on the music's potential to emphasize the dialectics of the work.

London Road's portrayal of the class conflict between the residents and the sex workers aligns with Brecht's social aims, who as a 'shrewd political theorist and practitioner continually strove to open up events on stage and expose the social forces acting upon individuals' (Barnett 2016: 5). In *London Road,* the reality of the interviews and the artificiality of the musical theatre form work with and against each other to represent the social conflict. Typical Brechtian devices that have contributed to the *alienation effect* include the direct engagement with the audience, the non-chronological dramaturgy and the chronological leaps. The *alienation* is further supported by the *gestic* use of song, the type of melody and music structures, the adapting of the interviews to the libretto's components and the singing style. The *gestic* character of music (Weill and Albrecht 1961: 30) derives from Brecht's key concept *gestus,* which describes 'actions that are both themselves and emblematic of larger social practices' (Martin and Bial 2000: 5). It refers to movement but also to costumes, music, set and the overall appearance of the performance. The *gestic* character of music in *London Road* plays an integral part in the dialectics of the piece because it amplifies, underlines or contradicts the representation of the residents and the sex workers.

The interviews turn into songs, and comment on the events that followed the murders, similarly to *The Threepenny Opera* (Brecht and Weill 1928), where the songs are used to 'comment on the action rather than to further the plot or to define character' (Kirle 2004: 95). The residents comment on the sex workers, the murders, the trial and conviction. The stage version opens with Ron's interview in the number 'Neighbourhood Watch AGM':

> Hopefully the problem with the girls has disappeared. We don't see them now. I believe there still a few round in Hanford Road but er (*Beat.*) we really can't concern ourselves with them. I think the police have done exceptionally well under exceptional circumstances to clear the streets as they have done. (Blythe 2011: 5)

The lyrics represent the working class's pejorative perspective of the marginalized class as "litter". The socially exclusive terms continue in all the first act, only to be opposed by the surviving women's perspective in the second act's song 'We've All Stopped' (Blythe 2011: 56). The representation of the conflicting views through song highlights the *alienating* irony of the stage version, which peripherally comments around the events, instead of dramatizing them.

The typical melody and musical structures in the show further serve Brecht's aims to present an 'accurate representation of our social lives' (1948: 1). The tone and content of the interviews lead the structure of each song, as certain words were effectively "sung" by the interviewees, which served as a point of departure for Cork's compositions (Blythe 2011: ix). Based on the local proletariat's voices, concerns and speech patterns, the music becomes a *gestus*. Cork's commitment to the accent, stutters and other expressive means of a local working class is both artistic and social. *London Road* challenges the flexibility of the genre and points towards new directions of musical theatre (Whitfield 2011: 314), innovative and socially committed. In Brechtian terms, *London Road* represents the voice of the Ipswich working class.

The residents' common expressive means further amplify their communal perspective, which is another *gestic* use of the music that binds together the 'shared sentiments in the interviews' (Blythe 2011: vi). By creating verses and choruses for the songs, Blythe shaped 'the material for narrative and dramatic effect further than before' (Blythe 2011: vi). Her

engagement with a libretto's internal structures further *alienates* the audience and invites their judgement. They consume *London Road* as entertainment and, simultaneously, judge its contents, as Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* both entertained and invited a critique of capitalism.

The singing style in *London Road* also reflects Brechtian aims. The almost reciting to music style resembles the *Sprechgesang* that is so much part of Wagner's writing for voice in his operas. The delivery of speech that is casual and quotidian to music also reminds of Yvette Guilbert's (1867-1944) *diseur/diseuse* technique, which developed in the German cabaret and involves 'mainly reciting to music, but sometimes acting' (Ruttkowski 2001: 47). Both the *Sprechgesang* and the *diseur/diseuse* cabaret song turn the focus towards the lyrics rather than the music, inviting primarily judgments rather than emotions. This facilitated 'a representational rather than a psychological' acting style (Blythe 2011: xi). Blythe expected that 'hearing the natural speech patterns sung in this way, would distance an audience from the "character" and the "story" but in a positive way so that it would alter the quality of listening' (Blythe 2011: xi). The unfamiliar and innovative musical style, which Brian Logan described as 'an incongruous clash of colloquial speech and choral singing' (2011) distances the audience from the drama.

Even though the real representation of social life within an entertaining form and a commitment to the working class serve Brechtian aims, *London Road*'s dialectics are unbalanced. The residents' voices are dominant: they sing eleven numbers, overpowering the sex workers, who are only represented in one number. Even the journalists sing four numbers. The unbalanced distribution of musical numbers is illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Numbers per social group.

Social groups/ Songs	Residents	Sex workers	Journalists
1.	'Neighbourhood Watch AGM' (Blythe 2011: 5-6)	'We've All Stopped' (Blythe 2011: 56)	'They Like a Good Moan' (Blythe 2011: 29-31)
2.	'London Road in Bloom' (Blythe 2011: 7-9)		'The Five Counts of Murder' (Blythe 2011: 42-44)
3.	'Everyone is Very Very Nervous' (Blythe 2011: 10-15)		'Cellular Material' (Blythe 2011: 48-53)
4.	'It Could Be Him' (Blythe 2011: 18-22)		'The Verdict' (Blythe 2011: 59-62)
5.	'Shaving Scratch' (Blythe 2011: 23-25)		
6.	'That's When it All Kicked Off' (Blythe 2011: 26-29)		
7.	'My Opinion' (Blythe 2011: 32-33)		
8.	'A Wicked Bloody World' (Blythe 2011: 38-39)		
9.	'Ten Weeks' (Blythe 2011: 47)		
10.	'Everyone Smile' (Blythe 2011: 72-78)		
11.	'London Road in Bloom' (reprise) (Blythe 2011: 78-79)		

The voice of the residents is also unequally represented in the nine spoken 'sitting room' interview scenes that have no equivalent for the sex workers (Blythe 2011: 9-10; 15-16; 16-18; 26; 33-14; 48-53; 53-56; 62-64; 64-65). As Brian Logan observed '[f]ew thoughts are spared for prostitutes living or dead, as public spirit blooms in wake of Wright's crimes, and the conventionally dramatic parts of this story are happening offstage' (2011). This merging of the real and the entertaining elicited responses such as: 'how did such a tragic event inspire a piece of musical theatre?' (Whitfield 2011: 314) and 'shameful admission that something good has come out of it: a reborn community and a renewal of civic pride' (Coveney 2011). Audiences

are ultimately invited to critically reflect on the musical's dialectical imbalance, in choosing to represent one social group over another.

From stage to screen:[viii] achieving Brechtian aims with anti-Brechtian means

A comparison of the stage and screen versions illuminates structural differences in the dramaturgy. The typical Brechtian device of an episodic structure has been abandoned. The restoration of the chronological order (Table 2) invites audiences' emotional involvement, which is further achieved by the typical use of music as underscoring and leitmotif. Paradoxically, the anti-Brechtian devices that are used to involve the audience achieve a different Brechtian aim and restore the dialectics of the piece.

Table 2: Scenes/Numbers Breakdown

STAGE VERSION Act One

1. Opening in Community Centre
   ‘Neighbourhood Watch AGM’
   ‘London Road in Bloom’
2. London Road sitting rooms (we were labelled)
3. Market
   ‘Everyone is Very Very Nervous’
4. London Road sitting rooms (are the sex workers only in danger?)
5. London Road sitting rooms (cops interrogating us)
6. Stella’s coffee shop
   ‘It Could Be Him’
7. The County of Suffolk pub
   ‘Shaving Scratch’
8. London Road sitting rooms (cops in the neighbourhood)
   ‘That’s When it All Kicked Off’
   ‘They Like a Good Moan’
9. LIDL car park
   ‘My Opinion’
10. London Road sitting rooms (suspect lived next door)
11. London Road police cordon
12. Outside Ipswich Magistrates’ Court ‘A Wicked Bloody World’

SCREEN VERSION Act One

1. Opening with title ‘In 2006 five women were killed in Ipswich’
2. London Road sitting rooms (we were labelled)
3. News reportage gives details about the five murders. Murderer still free.
4. Sitting rooms. Jane and Dodge describe the problem with the girls.
5. Dramatized sections showing the sex workers in action.
6. Market
   ‘Everyone is Very Very Nervous’
7. Stella’s Coffee Shop/Alleys/Bus
   ‘It Could Be Him’
8. The suspect- taxi driver
   ‘Shaving Scratch’
9. London Road sitting rooms (cops in the neighbourhood)
   ‘That’s When it All Kicked Off’
10. London Road sitting rooms (suspect lived next door)
11. Outside Ipswich Magistrates’ Court
    ‘A Wicked Bloody World’

STAGE VERSION Act Two

13. Outside Ipswich Crown Court
‘The Five Counts of Murder’
14. Neighbourhood Watch Christmas Party
‘Ten Weeks’
15. London Road sitting rooms (media in London Road)
‘Cellular Material’
16. London Road sitting rooms (London Road is clean now)
17. Iceni Project Rehab Centre, Ipswich ‘We’ve All Stopped’
18. London Road sitting rooms (waiting for the verdict)
19. Courthouse Café
20. Outside the Courthouse
‘The Verdict’
21. London Road sitting rooms (Steve Wright found guilty)
22. London Road outside (women having difficulty to trust men)
23. London Road sitting rooms (feeling sorry about the prostitutes?)
24. Alfie’s garden in London Road
25. Outside garden No 79
26. Dodge’s back garden in London Road
‘Everyone Smile’
‘London Road in Bloom’ (reprise)

SCREEN VERSION Act Two

12. London Road Sitting Rooms
    ‘Ten Weeks’
13. Murderer’s dark house
    ‘The Five Counts of Murder
14. Community hall
    ‘Neighbourhood Watch AGM’
15. Outside Murderer’s House
    ‘Cellular Material’
16. London Road sitting Rooms (London Road is ‘clean’ now)
17. Gas tower staircase
    ‘We’ve All Stopped’
18. Outside the Courthouse
    ‘The Verdict’
19. ‘London Road in Bloom’
20. Outside Courthouse (women having difficulty to trust men)
21. London Road sitting rooms (feeling sorry about the sex workers?)
22. The Competition
    ‘Everyone Smile’
    (A sex worker in slow motion walks amongst the celebrations unnoticed. She interacts only with a little girl, who offers her a balloon. She takes it and climbs the stairs of the gas towers. The residents dance in slow motion. She waves at the little girl an releases the balloon into the sky.)

The film opens with the Brechtian title 'In 2006 five women were murdered in Ipswich, England' (Norris et al. 2015), putting the murders in the focus, which stays with the audience throughout the film. A dramatized section depicting the sex workers' activity in London Road (Norris et al. 2015: 0:04:40-0:07:10) provides enough information to empathize with the victims' narrative in the film. Such empathy was undermined in the stage version, as the sex workers appeared only in one number, one hour into the performance and staged in the shadows. Interestingly, the chronologically ordered narrative, a traditionally anti-Brechtian device, counterbalances the representation of the marginalized class.

The screen version highlights the silence surrounding the representation of the sex workers, which contrasts with the residents' cheerful agony. A ghostly leitmotif over slow-motion blurry imagery represents the victims' perspective, reminding the audience that the women's voices are absent. The narrative of the sex workers has been supported in three key points in the film: a) After the number 'Shaving Scratch', which refers to the serial killer's profile, and before the taxi driver drops off Jane in London Road, three sex workers appear in a blurry image waiting for a customer at the side of the street (Norris et al. 2015: 00:16:00). b) During the description of the murders in the number 'The Five Counts of Murder', there is a dark long shot in the murderer's house, which could be the place in which the sex workers were killed, and a shot of a sex worker from behind (Norris et al. 2015: 00:41:00). c) The resident Grahame Cooper outside the Courthouse, after the sentencing of the murderer, looks at the flowers laid for the victims and says: 'Do you know I've almost got this mental picture of when those girls got up to Heaven… - and they said something like (*Pause.*) 'D'you mean it's over? (*Beat*) d'you mean it's **finished**? D'you mean they can't **hurt** me anymore?', while a woman walks slowly into frame and looks at him from a distance (emphasis in original, Norris et al. 2015: 01:11:00).

When the silenced group is eventually given a voice in 'We've All Stopped Now', this is the climax of their marginalized status. The melodic line of the song rises and falls erratically from high to low sounds. This indicates the emotional distress of the surviving sex workers and calls attention to their victimhood and vulnerability. The harmonies highlight the multiplicity of emotions and voices within the group, which at times included as many as thirty women from Ipswich and neighbouring areas (Blythe 2011: 57). As it works in docu-musicals, when characters sing 'they escape victim status and become active in a different way', performing their addiction with 'a self-knowledge and self-confidence' (Paget 2011: 283).[ix] However, the film does not improve the quality of representation. The interviews took place in the Iceni Project Rehabilitation Centre, which evidences that the women have been tackling the addictions that led them to sex work. In the film, they sing in the staircases by the isolated gas tower, which further sustains a dark and isolating perspective, a stereotypical representation of marginalized groups. Sarah says, 'I've got well' (Blythe 2011: 57), meaning that she has been dealing with her addiction while keeping some regular customers (Blythe 2011: 57). This is the only clear indication of social progress in the story. In the final scene, Sarah watches the residents' celebration unnoticed, which further emphasizes her marginalized status. Nevertheless, at the end of the screen version, the sex workers' interviews are played, turning the focus to the real victims of the story.

The anti-Brechtian linear structure engages broader screen audiences, whereas certain dramaturgical and directing choices resemble the popular screen genre drama-doc. Drama-docs alternate real witness interviews with dramatized sections to provoke tension and create a dynamic and dramatic affect (Rolinson n.a.). The interview sections comprise edited interviews with witnesses, and the dramatized sections include re-enactments of real events by actors. Cutting between interviews and dramatized sections interrupts the audience's emotional engagement and presents the witnesses' different perspectives, inviting judgements from the

audience. In *London Road,* interviews are alternated with dramatized sections. Some interviews are turned into songs and as is typical in docu-musicals, when interviews of the 'real person' are alternated with performers who sing, this shift alone *alienates* audiences (Paget 2011: 283). In *London Road,* this is further supported by interviewees looking straight into the camera lens, moving in and out of frame and unusual camera angles that draw attention to the film's 'theatre machinery'.[x] Brecht considered the revelation of artificiality to guarantee the audience's critical engagement with the story. However, in *London Road* the interviewees are often performed by popular actors, which reminds audiences that they see actors rather than the real interviewees. This affects the film's immediacy and invites audiences to consider the 'reality' of the characters from a double *alienating effect*. Nevertheless, the flexible drama-doc structure offers a clearer view of the residents as subjective and often biased witnesses. The close-ups invite audiences to consider the residents' lack of sympathy for the murdered women. Songs like 'London Road in Bloom' and 'Everyone Smile' enable a display of disturbingly playful and celebratory feelings about the murders. In 'It Could Be Him', two teenagers sing 'this is exciting because nothing really happens in Ipswich' (Norris et al. 2015: 00:14:55-0015:00), which has little emotional effect in an interview setting, where the words were originally spoken. However, the dislocation of the text into a playful chase in the supermarket, where the customers dance and laugh rhythmically, gives further access to the residents' multiple reactions and emotions. It facilitates the multi-dimensional portrayal of the residents and highlights the lack of a similar portrayal of the sex workers.

The film's linear drama-doc narrative turned the stage musical into a 'forensic thriller' (Bradshaw 2015), which, unexpectedly, also served Brechtian aims. The intention to engage audiences through fear is clear in the film's opening title that contains the word 'murder' (Norris et al. 2015: 00:00:39), followed by the TV news announcing 'the nightmare […] two more bodies found […] one more method of killing […] the multiple murderer' (Norris et al.

2015: 00:02:36-00:03:06) and then Julie worrying about her daughter's safety.[xi] Horror films and horror documentaries,[xii] which entail 'real horror', are very popular among broader audiences.[xiii] Bruce Kawin writes that 'within the frame of fiction, the horror film's images and events touch on the genuine fear and revulsion that may be inspired by our imagination and apprehension' (2012: 207). The shot between Santa Claus's legs in the chorus number 'Everyone is Very Very Nervous' indicates the murderer's perspective. The number 'It Could Be Him' is shot from the victims' perspective. The suspense inflicting underscoring further amplifies the horror effect.

The horror effect is heightened in 'Saving Scratch' (Blythe 2011: 23-25) by dislocating the text from a crowded bar to a taxi, in which a frightened woman suspects the driver, who gives her enigmatic glimpses through the mirror.[xiv] The film generates a sense of horror by reference and implication (Kawin 2012: 207), enabling audiences to follow its gradual disclosure. The suggestions about the murderer's identity invite audiences to make their own hypothesis. As 'the paradox of horror (attraction and repulsion) derives from the curiosity/fascination duality', a combination of intellectual and emotional engagement (Kawin 2012: 40), the horror narrative brings the sex workers to the centre of attention, as the residents knew the murderer killed only sex workers (Blythe 2011: 15). Interestingly, the focus on the surviving sex workers not only serves the dialectical side of the work but also its entertaining potential, as it invites audiences to experience the suspense of the story.

Conclusion

I have used Brechtian concepts to analyse the stage and screen versions of *London Road* to show how specific musical theatre devices affect the audience's emotional/rational duality. I have highlighted the paradox of a cinematic narrative that, surprisingly, offered a more balanced representation of the two conflicting classes. Such choices and implications are

further complicated by the musical genre, given music's *gestic* character. The representation of the marginalized class of the sex workers becomes a matter of both quantity (how many numbers are sung by the sex workers) and quality (how positively are they represented). Audiences see a local working class, who want to get rid of a local marginalised class. The focus on the residents, who considered the marginalized class responsible for the criminal activity in the area, undermined the Brechtian aim for dialectical theatre rather than a one-sided representation of a real event. Even so, the merging of the verbatim with the musical with its particular use of song, melody and musical structures, musical dramaturgy and singing style served the Brechtian aim to represent real life in an entertaining way. Finally, this analysis indicates that Brechtian philosophy can examine how the use of Brechtian devices in a postmodern era may undermine fundamental Brechtian aims.

References

Anon. (2019), 'London Road film review', https://www.timeout.com/london/film/london-road. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Bennett, M., Hamlisch, M., Kirkwood, J., Dante, N., and Kleban, E. (1995), *A Chorus Line*, New York: Applause.

Blythe, A., & Cork, A. (2011), *London Road*, London: Nick Hern Books.

Bennett, S. (1997), *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception* (2nd ed), London ; New York: Routledge.

Bradshaw, P. (2015), 'London Road review – gripping, macabre verbatim musical about real-life serial murders', https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jun/11/london-road-film-review-gripping-macabre-verbatim-musical. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Brecht, B. (1948), 'A short organum for the theatre', (Anon transl.), http://www.tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/139-Brecht_A_Short_Organum_for_the_Theatre.pdf. Accessed 1 September 2019.

----- ([1964] 1988), *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic* (John Willett trans.), London: Methuen.

----- ([1928] 2000), *The Threepenny Opera* (John Willett and Ralph Manheim trans.), London: Methuen Drama.

Bullen, E., and Kenway, J. (2004), 'Subcultural capital and the female 'underclass'? A feminist response to an underclass discourse', *Journal of Youth Studies*, *7*:2, pp. 141–153, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1367626042000238686. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Calkin, J. (2015), 'London Road: How the Ipswich murders inspired an acclaimed musical', https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/11635588/London-Road-how-the-Ipswich-murders-inspired-an-acclaimed-musical.html. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Corrall, N. (2002), ‘Why horror?’, *Horror, the Film Reader*, (Mark Jancovich ed.), London: Routledge.

Costa, M. (2011) ‘*London Road*: Murder, they sang’, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/apr/10/london-road-alecky-blythe interview. Accessed 2 November 2018.

Coveney, M. (2011) ‘First Night: *London Road*, National Theatre, London’, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/first-night-london-road-national-theatre-london-2268140.html. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Eddershaw, M. (1996), *Performing Brecht: Forty years of British performances*, London and New York: Routledge.

Edwards, J. (2011), ‘The 2011 Critics’ Circle Theatre Awards’, http://criticscircle.org.uk/2011-critics-circle-theatre-awards/. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Faber Music Website, ‘Adam Cork’, http://www.fabermusic.com/composers/adam-cork. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Freshwater, H. (2009), *Theatre & Audience*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hischak, T. (2008), *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, film and television,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kawin, B., (2012), *Horror and the Horror Film*, London, New York and Delhi: Anthem Press.

Kirle, B. (2005), *Unfinished Show Business*, Illinois: SIU Press.

Littlewood, J., and Theatre Workshop ([1963] 2014), *Oh! What a Lovely War*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Logan, B. (2011), ‘*London Road*: Review’, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/apr/15/london-road-review-cottesloe. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Luckhurst, M. (2008), *Verbatim Theatre, Media Relations and Ethics*, London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. ([1948] 1987), *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Samuel Moore trans.), Marxist Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf. Accessed 1

September 2019.

Martin, C. (2010), 'Introduction', *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage* (Carol Martin ed.), Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Martin, C. and Bial, H. (2005), 'Introduction', *Brecht Sourcebook* (Carol Martin and Henry Bial eds.), London: New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, S. (2003), 'Introduction', *Understanding Brecht*, London and New York: Verso.

National Theatre Live, 'About Us', http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-us. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Murray, C. (1990), *The Emerging British Underclass*, London: IEA health and Welfare Unit.

Norris, R., Blythe A. and Cork A. (2015), *London Road,* London: BBC Films, National Theatre and British Film Institute.

Paget, D. (2011), *No Other Way to Tell it: Docudrama on film and television,* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Radosavljević, D. (2013), 'Verbatim Theatre: engaging the audience', *Theatre-making: Interplay between text and performance in the 21st Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 119-149.

Robey, T. (2015), 'London Road Review: 'a bold, high-wired act'', http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/london-road/review/. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Rolinson, D., 'Drama Documentary', *BFI screen online*, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1103146/. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Ruttkowski, W. (2001), 'Cabaret Songs', *Popular Music & Society,* 25: 3-4, pp. 45-71.

Taylor, L. (2013), 'Voice, body and the transmission of the real in documentary theatre', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 23: 3, pp. 368-379.

Tepper, J. (2015), 'How the 'real people' of *A Chorus Line* changed Broadway', *Dramatist*, 17: 4, pp. 38-43.

Tomlin, L. (2013), *Acts and Apparitions: discourses on the real in performance practice and theory, 1990–*

2010, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Tudor, A. (2002), 'Why Horror? The peculiar pleasures of a popular genre', *Horror, the Film Reader* (Mark Jancovich ed.), London: Routledge.

Tulloch, J. (2005), *Shakespeare and Chekhov in Production & Reception: Theatrical events and their audiences*, Iowa: University of Iowa Press.

Van Alphen, E. (1997), *Caught by History: Holocaust effects in contemporary art, literature, and theory*, Stanford: CA Stanford University Press.

Weill, K. and Albrecht, E. (1961), '"Gestus" in Music', *The Tulane Drama Review,* 6: 1, pp 28-32, MIT Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1125003. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Whitfield, S. (2012), 'Two different roads to new musicals in 2011 London: *London Road* and *Road Show*', *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 5:3, pp. 305–314, https://doi.org/10.1386/smt.5.3.305_1. Accessed 1 September 2019.

Zavros D. (2017), '*London Road*: The irruption of the real and haunting utopias in the verbatim musical', *Twenty-first Century Musicals: From Stage to Screen* (George Rodosthenous ed.), London: Routledge.

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Evi Stamatiou is a Ph.D. candidate at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Senior Lecturer in Theatre/ Programme Leader BA (Hons) Acting at the University of Chichester. She is an award-winning actor, writer and director that works across stage and screen with more than 16 years of international experience. Since 2011, she trains actors at UK conservatoires and universities. You can see more at www.evistamatiou.com.

Contact: Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, 62-64 Eton Avenue, London, NW3 3HY, UK.

E-mail: evi.stamatiou@cssd.ac.uk, e.stamatiou@chi.ac.uk

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4691-3377

[i] Karl Marx's term *lumpenproletariat*-- the lowest social class, which owns no property and earns money through crime and includes prostitutes, beggars and criminals (1987: 8)—would not be a good term to use because contemporary socioeconomic structures are more complicated. Charles Murray's term 'underclass' has been used to describe people out of work who struggle with addictions and other problematic behaviours (1990: 23). However, it is not appropriate either because it ascribes the class a lesser value. It has also been criticized by feminist scholars for ignoring how gender impacts the social and economic difficulties of young women (Bullen and Kenway: 2004).

[ii] Cork had extended experience of composition and sound design for theatre: he received a Tony award in 2010 for his music and sound score for *Red* (Donmar/Broadway) and an Olivier Award in 2011 for *King Lear* (Donmar). He was nominated in 2010 for the Tony Award for Best Score (Music and Lyrics) for *Enron* (Broadway/West End) (Faber 2016).

[iii] The film was co-produced by Cuba Pictures and BBC films. The DVD was released by Picturehouse Entertainment in October 2015. The film was distributed by the National Theatre Live programme, which aims to broaden and diversify its audience by broadcasting live productions in cinemas across the UK and around the world (National Theatre Live 2019).

[iv] In 'theatre of the real', theatre-makers edit, shape and reframe nonfictional material to create the dramaturgy, text and performance. Verbatim theatre, documentary theatre, tribunal theatre and autobiographical theatre are all considered 'theatre of the real' (Martin 2010: 120). Documentary materials have been used in musicals since Joan Littlewood's and Theatre Workshop's *Oh What a Lovely War* (1963).

[v] *A Chorus Line* (Bennett et al. 1995) was based on real interviews with dancers and was created through the use of verbatim practices and 'workshopping', which at the time was an innovative process for creating a musical (Tepper 2015: 38). The lyricist and the composer created the songs after listening to the taped interviews and talking to the dancers. Some of the interviewees also performed in the show, which added to the authenticity of the musical (Tepper 2015: 40). The film version of *A Chorus Line* (Universal 1984) did not please the stage version's fans (Hischak 2008: 149), which points towards the particularities of adapting 'musicals of the real' from stage to screen.

[vi] The use of verbatim practices in screen musicals has its own history. The genres 'docu-operas' and 'docu-musicals' are mergers of musical and factual forms (Paget 2011: 280). For the libretto of the first docu-opera, *Nixon in China* (1987), the librettist Alice Goodman used documents of the meeting between President Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong. Much of the libretto is 'verbatim or near-verbatim' (Paget 2011: 281). In the UK, Brian Hill and his company Century Films have a record in docu-musicals, including *Drinking for England* (1998, about the consumption of alcohol in England in a range of social classes), *Feltham Sings* (BAFTA-wining, 2002, about youth detention centres), *Pornography the Musical* (2003, about women who work in the adult film industry) and *Songbirds* (2005, about women's prisons) (Paget 2011: 283).

[vii] There is a divide between scholars regarding the set of limitations around reception theory in theatre studies (Freshwater 2009: 14-31), with many drawing on concepts from film and media studies (Bennet 1970; Tulloch 2005). This essay does the same and also draws on concepts from musical theatre studies, as a discussion of an adaptation of a musical from stage to screen is necessarily interdisciplinary.

[viii] The screen adaptation of *London Road* was considered 'a unique triumph on the movie screen' (Bradshaw 2015). It has been called 'utterly gripping' and praised for its 'amazing musical technique' and the 'high-wire fascination' it creates when it comes together on screen (Robey 2015). Like the stage version, however, its genre could not be easily categorised. Reviewers called it a 'filmed adaptation of a highly unusual slice-of-life musical drama' (Anon. 2015), a 'very moving cine-opera in a reportage verbatim style,' a 'film oratorio' and a 'forensic thriller set to music' (Bradshaw 2015).

[ix] Paget discusses one of the songs in Brian Hill's docu-musical *Drinking for England:* 'The song gives Tony the chance to own another aspect of his 'real' self. The self-mockery of the song's words means he performs his drink addiction with a self-knowledge and self-confidence that are, to say the least, unexpected' (2011: 283).

[x] Brecht was influenced by Erwin Piscator's Epic and the Russian ex-Futurists who thought that art should show their audiences how it is made: 'Art should be considered a form of production, not a mystery; the stage should appear like a factory with the machinery fully exposed' (Mitchell 2003: xvi).

[xi] 'JULIE. It was- It was absolutely awful. They wrecked- wrecked off my evenings. Y'know, There are on my streets. Y'know, my children are out at night. I've got- I' ve got teenage girls. I've got- I've got a fourteen-year-old' (Norris et al. 2015: 00:05:50).

[xii] The horror documentary has been discussed as a distinct form, because of the boundless feelings 'real horror' may cause to an audience due to their inability to consign the evil to fiction (Kawin 2012: 204).

[xiii] There are no universal or general explanations for why horror is a popular genre; it rather depends on the audience's socio-historical moment (Tudor 2002: 50).

[xiv] In the playful atmosphere of a bar where many residents were interviewed, resident Mark says: 'I uhm. I I I've studied serial killers since I'm in my mid-teens and it doesn't mean I am one but err…' (Blythe 2011: 24). In the screen version, this line is moved out of the playful atmosphere of the bar, and the words are delivered by a taxi driver who looks persistently into the female passenger's eyes through his car mirror (Norris et al. 2015: 00:18:03-00:18:11).