

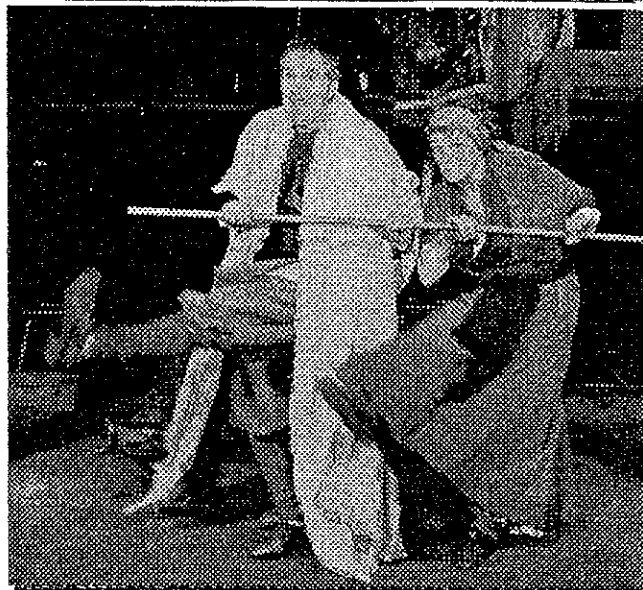
Mother Courage

by Don Grigware

Oh, the futility of war! "Bertolt Brecht," as one patron stated, "is not for everyone!" This may be true, but even those who are not diehard fans of his work will not be able to deny the outstanding production values of the reenactment of *Mother Courage and Her Children, A Chronicle of the Thirty Years' War* (English translation by Eric Bentley) by The Antaeus Co at their newly refurbished Warehouse space in NoHo. It is bristling with 17th century fun and theatricality.

Big ideas, as Stella Adler always said, are bigger than life and should be put forth as such. War is not a small matter. How people connive and survive through war is no meager matter either. It is a theme for the ages: for the Thirty Years' War, or for the current war in Iraq. Soldiers thrive on it and "when war gives you all you earn, it may claim something in return" states Brecht emphatically at the very top of the show. Anna Fierling or Mother Courage (a tour-de-force performance by **Anne Gee Byrd**) operates a business, knows how to survive and 'uses' her 3 children to stay alive, but not without devastating loss. She must pay the price, more than once. By play's end she faces the road alone, as the war drags on interminably.

Big ideas require a larger scope. The space should be big and so should the performances. We not only see the stage here in the converted warehouse, but the wings,



Anne Gee Byrd & Harry Groener in *Mother Courage*; photo by Elaina McBroom.

the costume wracks, the actors' dressing tables and the actors themselves as they repose and listen to the action between exits and entrances.

Director **Andrew J. Robinson** knows the classics and guides his company like a master sergeant. His players like soldiers are trained to win, but along the way, they fully enjoy playing the game. Byrd's grande turn is aided by exuberant work from **Harry Groener** as The Cook and **Philip Proctor** as The Chaplain. **Rhonda Aldrich** makes Yvette deliciously lascivious. **John Apicella** and **Geoffrey Wade** as soldiers burning for the fight set the tone and Emily Eden, Nathan Patrick and John Sloan are the dutiful offspring. **RECOMMENDED**

Thur-Sat 8pm, Sun 7pm thru May 22.
The Antaeus Co 4900 Vineland Av in NoHo.
\$20-\$25. Call 818-506-5436 for reservations.