



# Feature Stories

## Features

East March 04, 2004

### War Plays on NY Stages Still Proliferate with Insight, Passion

By Leonard Jacobs



Photo By: George Sisting

Above 96th Street on the East Side, the Classical Theatre of Harlem elects to produce Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage and Her Children" – a universally acknowledged giant of 20th century drama that offers an epic depiction of what war can do to one woman and, by no coincidence, to society at large.

Downtown, the Public Theater offers not one but two productions using war as context and pretext – "Biro," Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine's story of a boy from war-torn Uganda, opening April 6, and "Embedded," a satire written and directed by newly minted Academy Award winner Tim Robbins, running now through March 28. The latter play, about the men and women on the front lines of the seemingly unending Middle East conflict, is a satire fueled by the left-leaning political passions for which Robbins and Susan Sarandon, his partner, are identified.

And in Midtown, the Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of "Proof," David Auburn, is readying his adaptation of "The Journals of Mihail Sebastian," running at the Theater at 45th Street March 6-April 4. Produced by the Keen Company and starring actor Stephen Kunken, the piece is based on the diaries of an acclaimed Romanian man of letters who chronicled, in excruciating detail, day-to-day life as a Bucharest Jew during World War II.

March 20 marks one year since U.S. and U.K. forces invaded Iraq, and it is now 30 months since Sept. 11. And plays about war – its effects, its aftermath, its unceasing destruction – continue to be abundant on the New York stage.

Not that Auburn is surprised. In a Back Stage interview, he stated that Mihail Sebastian's story is not limited to that of a Jew who successfully endured the Holocaust. As he perused the 700-odd pages of journal entries, published for the first time in 1996, he began to appreciate Sebastian as a "chronicler" of an important historical moment.

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