BELHAVEN COLLEGE THEATRE PRESENTS

The winner of the 2007 Christians in Theatre Arts New Play Contest

By Paul D. Patton
Directed by Joseph Frost

Kurt Gerstein

Oct. 11th – 13th and 17th – 20th

Center for the Arts
Flexible Theatre
835 Riverside Drive
Jackson Miss., 39202
The Belhaven College Theatre Department Presents

The World Premiere of

Kurt Gerstein
Written By Paul D. Patton
Directed by Joseph Frost

Assistant Director
Bonnie Grubbs
Scenic, Lighting, and Costume Design
Kris Dietrich
Technical Director
Will Hankins
Stage Manager
Faith Whitacre
Assistant Stage Managers
Corey Searles & Moriah Whiteman
Projections Design
Clarence ‘Doc’ Davis
A Note from the Director
Kurt Gerstein has become widely known as the *SS officer with a conscience*. After his surrender to French authorities, Gerstein wrote a report in which he recounted his eye-witness experience of the operations of the Nazi extermination camps and other information he had obtained. In addition to being one of the first testimonies concerning the heart of Nazi workings, it also proved one of the most vital. Despite great opposition, his conviction that he must pursue any end to stop the Nazis remained strong. The beginning of a letter to a friend was found among his papers before he was transferred to prison in France:

"Dear Friend Ubbink
You are one of the first to whom I shall send greetings. Let me congratulate you from the bottom of my heart on the liberation of your country from our brood of vipers and criminals. However dark our fate may now be, those terrible people could not be allowed to win. Ask your people if, now at least, they believe what went on in Blezec, etc. I thank God that I did everything in my power to cut through this abscess on the body of humanity."

Under the name Gastein, Gerstein was buried in the Thiais cemetery, although his grave was within a section that was raised in 1956.

On June 6, 1950, SS Obersturmbannführer Dr. W. Pfannenstiel verified the basic facts of Gerstein’s report before the Land-Court of Darmstadt in the Federal Republic of Germany. On August 17, 1950, Gerstein was declared a Nazi offender by a denazification court in Tuebingen who posthumously condemned him:

"Taking into account the extenuating circumstances noted the court has not included the accused among the main criminals but has placed him among the ‘tainted’. . . "

Gerstein’s wife, with the help of Baron von Otter and other significant friends, obtained a pardon for her husband by the Premier of Baden-Württemberg on January 20, 1965.

Sources:
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
<http://www.gerstein.dk/aftermath.htm>
<http://www.annefrank.dk/Gerstein/new_page_4a.htm>
About the Playwright

Paul D. Patton has been writing plays since the late-1970's. In 1981, he and his wife founded Trinity House Theater in the Detroit area, writing as playwright and pastoral advisor in that venue for the next seven years. His plays and radio scripts have won various awards and enjoyed numerous productions in theaters in Michigan and Virginia. His short play, "The Celebrity," was recently published by Heuer Publishing. He is an associate professor of Communication and Media at Spring Arbor University.
Interview with the Playwright

Q: How did you first come into contact with the story of Kurt Gerstein?

Paul D. Patton: [A] friend of mine when I lived in Virginia, Bill Potter, cultural analyst and civil war expert, was always on the alert, looking for story ideas for me. He found Pierre Joffroy’s penetrating biography of Gerstein on the “discard” table at William and Mary’s Library in Williamsburg. I read it twelve years ago and hoped to have a stage adaptation finished within a year or two. But the project kept evolving and kept getting put off. I finally put a lid on it last winter. I think the J-theater’s play (In Washington, D.C.) on Gerstein, “Either/Or”, A much smaller cast, had the author working on it for fifteen years.

Q: What drew you to the story? What lead to your decision to write a play based on the story?

Paul D. Patton: What drew me to the story was how it forces me, and hopefully the audience, to push out the convenient constraints on our understanding of the providence of God; to ponder Gerstein’s story is to again wander through the sometimes dis-easing depths of the book of Ecclesiastes—the book of the bible I’m increasingly believing is the best book of the bible for the post modern cynic to explore. I’m hoping that the story of Gerstein allows for a bit of the same redemptive provocation.

Q: What specific challenges were present as you were writing about a historical event as opposed to an original concept?

Paul D. Patton: Some of the specific challenges of writing about an historical event include how to designate direct quotes from the script—how does the audience know what are the quotes and what is the product of the writer’s imagination? Another is the always-dicey challenge of balancing poetic license and historical accuracy, especially, for instance, when it’s clear that a certain meeting/conversation took place, but the playwright wasn’t like a “fly” on the wall, holding a microphone.

Q: What is it you value most about the script?

Paul D. Patton: Probably the glimpses into Kurt Gerstein’s conscience, especially the interrogations of his alter-ego, Soren Kierkegaard (whom KG quoted extensively). Additionally, the interrogations focus on the fact that Gerstein also quoted the bible extensively another valuable component, as one who has worked as a counselor through the years with several marriages in crisis, is the price of Gerstein’s burden on his marriage. Of course, all of this is dwarfed by the sheer enormity of the human capacity for cruelty, articulated in Nazi “strategic planning” and acted out in death camps.
Special Thanks

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Joseph Frost (Director) is the Chair of Theatre at Belhaven College, and holds an MFA in Script and Screenwriting and an MA in Communication: Theatre Arts from Regent University. His acting resume includes a wide range of work on stage and screen, with award winning work in the independent feature film The Proper Care and Feeding of An American Messiah as well as on stage as Hamlet, and professional work at Red Clay Theatre and New Stage here in Jackson. As a playwright, Joseph’s works have been staged around the country, including Belhaven College productions of his plays Braids, The Great Play, and The Memory Trilogy. He was the featured playwright of Malone College’s Playwright’s Showcase in 2006. Another Weekend, Joseph’s screenplay adaptation of his play Oz, recently wrapped shooting in California and is currently in post-production. Joseph’s directing experience includes the world premieres of Sandra Holcombe’s Grass Huts in Heaven, his own plays Disease and Braids, his 5 person adaptation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, as well as Chekov’s Uncle Vanya, Ionesco’s The Lesson, and last season’s Belhaven production of Sophocles’ Antigone. Joseph is a member of Christians in Theatre Arts (CITA), Vice President of the board of the Fondren Theatre Workshop, and is the founding artistic director of The Floodlight Theatre Company.

Kris Dietrich (Scenic, Lighting, and Costume Designer) has worked at numerous professional and educational venues across the U.S. including the Durango Shakespeare Festival and the Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts Camp both in Colorado, Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA, Clinton Area Showboat Theatre in Clinton, IA, and the Stagedoor Manor Performing Arts Camp in upstate New York. Kris has a passion for theatre and design and looks forward to the new design opportunities he will have at Belhaven. He is a University of Missouri at Kansas City graduate and had the privilege of being taught by the distinguished Scenic Designer John Ezell.
Will Hankins (Technical Director) is the technical director for the Department of Theatre. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Drama/Technical Direction from the University of Virginia. While at UVA, he served as the technical director on two KCACTF award-winning productions: The Way of the World and Private Lives. He also served as assistant technical director and master carpenter for Heritage Repertory Theatre: University of Virginia. In the summer of 2004 and 2005, Will was the production manager and technical director for Encore! Theatre and the Richmond Shakespeare Festival in Richmond, Virginia where he worked on the following productions: A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, The Comedy of Errors, and Romeo and Juliet. The 2005 production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream was digitally recorded for local (and possibly national) broadcast by the public television station in Richmond. Will currently serves as a member of the production committee for Encore! Theatre. Additionally, he is a member of USITT and SETC. Will’s technical experiences, along with his special skills in vacuum-forming, welding, upholstering and molding/casting are a vital asset to Belhaven’s technical theatre core.

Diseases and Surgery of the Skin

Sabra Sullivan, MD, PhD, FAAD

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Cast

Brandon Holman

Kurt Gerstein

Ensemble:

Tiana Alderson
Rachel Bowman
Erin Brownfield
Kerri Courtney
Sarah Coury
Alex Grubbs
Tyler Hogan
Lex Quarterman
Brandon Whitlock

Elfriede
Regina
Otter, Miner, Doctor
Orsenigo, Old Woman, Arnulf
Gunther, Himmler
Soren Kierkegaard
Helmut, Interrogator, Goebbels
Fritz, Karl, Ubbink
Pastor Rehling, Weigelt, Ludwig
Crew

Properties Mistress: Erin Brownfield
Costume Design Research Assistants: Mel Smith, Sarah Coury

Projection Technician: Doc Davis
Sound Board Operator: Christopher Loecher
Light Board Operator: Jonathon Dixon
Master Electrician: Annie Lowery
Electrics Crew: Tiana Alderson, Leah Englund

Construction/Paint Crew: Kerri Courtney, Scott Gaines, Brandon Holman, Christopher Loecher, Lex Quarterman, Deanna Smith

Head of Wardrobe: Kaelen Zirbel
Stitchers: Kristi Colvin, Becki Haynes, Annie Lowery, Marie Warner

Dresser/Wardrobe Crew: Becki Haynes, Marie Warner

Publicity Coordinator: Rachel Payne
Program Copy: Staci Skiles
Publicity Crew: Brighton Goode, Marla Hershberger

Box Office Manager: Helen Spann
Box Office Staff: Jonathon Dixon, Amy Smith, Kaelen Zirbel

House Manager: Leah Englund
Cast/Crew Biographies

Tiana Alderson (Ensemble) is a sophomore Theatre major from southern California who has cherished her time here in Jackson and especially at Belhaven. The experiences here have helped her growth in performance and in learning general theatre knowledge. She wants to thank her loving family who has supported her from day one. She would also like to thank Joe Frost, our wonderful director, for giving her this opportunity. To the stage management crew and my fellow cast mates, I love you all.

Rachel Bowman (Ensemble) is a senior Theatre Ministries major originally from Spring Hill, KS. She has appeared in several Belhaven productions including Antigone, Great Theatre of the World, and Twelfth Night. She would like to thank Joe for allowing her one last opportunity to perform on the Belhaven stage. Rachel would also like to thank her parents for their support, her husband, Clint, for being the love of her life, and her son, Christopher, for being the greatest one-year-old in the world.

Erin Brownfield (Ensemble/Properties Master) is a sophomore from Texas majoring in Theatre Performance. Before coming to Belhaven, she graduated from the Physical Theatre Program at the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre in CA. She enjoys movement and juggling. Her favorite roles so far have been Kristen in Toward the Light and Peter Pan in Peter Pan. She is very honored to be in this production and would like to thank God for giving her a passion for theatre, and her family for their love and support.

Kerri Courtney (Ensemble) is a sophomore Theatre major from Richland, MS. She is happy to be returning to the Belhaven stage. Kerri was last seen at Belhaven as Fruma Sarah in Fiddler on the Roof. Kerri has been performing in theatre for over ten years. Some of her favorite roles include Mollie in The Mousetrap, Babsy in The Creature Creeps, and Tamra in Quiet on the Set. Kerri would like to thank those who have given her the firm foundation on which she stands and the courage and confidence to do what she loves. Nothing would be possible without you.

Sarah Coury (Ensemble) is a junior Theatre major from Chicago. She has enjoyed her time here at Belhaven tremendously and is excited to be in her first “Joe show.” Past credits at Belhaven include Hood of Sherwood, Fiddler on the Roof, Great Theatre of the World, and Twelfth Night. Sarah sends much love and best wishes to her family, friends, and her sweetest guanaco.

Alex Grubbs (Ensemble) is a senior Theatre major who is thrilled to work on Kurt Gerstein. Alex’s past credits include Biloxi Blues, The Boar, Shadowlands, and Fiddler on the Roof as well as directing a one-act written by Kurt Gerstein’s playwright, Paul D. Patton. He is interested in seeking a graduate degree in acting or directing. He lives in Jackson with his wife and thanks her for her support and direction.

Bonnie JoAnn Grubbs (Assistant Director) is a junior Theatre Performance major originally from San Antonio, TX. Her past roles include Joy in Shadowlands, Mollie in The Mousetrap, Cassie Cooper in Rumors and Brooke/Vicki in Noises Off! Bonnie has also stage managed many productions including Belhaven’s The Memory Trilogy. She now resides in Jackson with her husband, Alex, and their two pet rats Sir Toby Belch and Neville Longbottom.
Tyler Hogan (Ensemble) is a senior Theatre Ministries major from Dover, DE. He has been performing and directing physical theatre for seven years and has traveled with the Joshua Squad, Gratuitous B Productions, PUSH Physical Theatre, and a number of church and para-church organizations. He’s very excited to work with Joe Frost again and is very grateful to be apart of this production during his last year at Belhaven.

Brandon Holman (Kurt Gerstein) is a transfer Theatre Ministries major from Centralia, WA. He has come to Belhaven to live life for God and to use theatre as a tool in ministry. His past credits include All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten and The Foreigner. He would like to thank his parents for their support and the cast and crew for their help and support.

Lex Quarterman (Ensemble) is a freshman Theatre major. An American, he was born in Portugal, raised in Ukraine, and has now come to attend school in the foreign land of Belhaven. He appreciates and has enjoyed being under the direction of Joe Frost. He is also grateful to the stage management crew and his cast mates for their support and hard work.

Corey Suzanne Searles (Assistant Stage Manager) is a junior Theatre Production major. She grew up in the theatre, although most recently she has only been working “behind the scenes,” she also loves the spotlight. The past two summers, she had the opportunity to intern for Summer Dinner Theatre. Corey is very excited to be working with this amazing cast and crew. The collaboration of Kurt Gerstein has been one of the most amazing things she has ever witnessed. She would like to thank the cast and crew, Joe, Bonnie, Faith and Moriah, Cassie, Eric, her family and God.

Faith Whitacre (Stage Manager) is a Theatre major whose past credits include Memory Trilogy, Fiddler on the Roof, and The Marriage Proposal. She says thank you so much to Joe, my beautiful ASM’s, and this incredible cast. It has been such a pleasure working with you and being apart of this process. Thanks also to Will and Kris for letting me do this and putting up with my barrage of questions — thank you for your love and patience.

Moriah Whiteman (Assistant Stage Manager) is a sophomore Theatre Performance major who finds it exciting to call this her first technical theatre experience. Some of her favorite roles include Abigail in The Crucible and Helena in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It has been a great blessing and learning experience to work under Joe and Faith. Through Kurt Gerstein she hopes everyone will remember that Christ is our deliverer and is always in control.

Brandon Whitlock (Ensemble) is happy to be in his third Joe Frost show after appearing in Antigone and Uncle Vanya. He has also appeared in Fiddler on the Roof, Memory Trilogy, and Great Theatre of the World. Elsewhere he has been in Art, The Important of Being Ernest, and Pirates of Penzance among others. He is a junior Theatre major with a creative writing minor.
Upcoming Events

November 28 & 29, 2007
One Acts
Wednesday & Thursday, 7:30 pm, Flexible Theatre

February 20-23, 27-March 1, 2008
Servant of Two Masters
by Carlo Goldoni,
adapted by Dr. Louis Campbell
7:30 pm, Flexible Theatre

April 10-12, 16-19, 2008
The Glass Menagerie
by Tennessee Williams
7:30 pm, Flexible Theatre

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