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The Good Person Of Szechwan: Der Gute Mensch Von Sezuan (Modern Classics)



Synopsis

Brecht's parable of good and evil was first performed in 1943 and remains one of his most popular and frequently produced plays worldwide. This unique bilingual edition allows students to compare the original German text with a translation by one of the world's leading playwrights, Tony Kushner. Three gods come to earth hoping to discover one really good person. No one can be found until they meet Shen Te, a prostitute with a heart of gold. Rewarded by the gods, she gives up her profession and buys a tobacco shop but finds it is impossible to survive as a good person in a corrupt world without the support of her ruthless alter ego Shui Ta. The English translation by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner is original and accessible. Contemporary, lively language makes it the perfect English version to elucidate and compare with the original text. This edition also includes a critical introduction and commentary notes on particular words and phrases.

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Customer Reviews

"First comes eating and then comes morality". One day three Gods come down to Earth in Szechwan China in the early part of the 20th century. They meet an indigent man, a water carrier named Wang and ask him to find someone who will put them up for the night. They are travelling the world in search of good persons. They find one. After getting refused repeatedly, Wang at last finds someone to host these gentlemen, a prostitute named Shen-Teh. At some expense to herself, as she is expecting a client, Shen-Teh selflessly lets them stay with her. Pleased they were able to

find a good person, they give her 1,000 silver coins. With this money Shen-Teh buys a tobacco shop. Immediately people start taking advantage of her. An entire family moves into the shop. People make claims, saying she owes them money. Facing swift ruin, Shen-Teh creates a fictitious cousin, Shui-Ta. She dresses up as him, and he's able to put people off in the way she can't. Shui-Ta can say no. Shui-Ta helps her out then leaves. Shen-Teh continues on, trying to make a living with the shop. On a rainy evening Shen-Teh meets a man Yang Sun. He is about to commit suicide. She speaks with him and prevents it. She falls in love with him. That's the basic plot setup. I'll just add that Shui-Ta is forced to come back again. Things just keep conspiring against good Shen-Teh. It's unconventional, as Brecht frequently is. Characters will break into song every once in a while. They'll talk directly to the audience. Stylistically, it's part fable/parable, part farce, part tragedy. I read the tone as semi-humorous, semi-serious. It's absurdist, but I agree with the idea that you can't have great comedy without a serious undercurrent and that comedy enhances a serious subject. I had a few minor quibbles - towards the end it got a trifle confusing, there are a lot of minor characters that I had some trouble keeping track of, and I found Yang Sun a tad cryptic.

I keep receiving books that are already open and not "new" as they are supposed to be. I received the book with bended lines on the side of the cover, as well as some corner of the pages. I'm tired of receiving books from that do not feel new and look super old.

The Good Person, is a play written in the early 1940s by German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. The play is, among many things, layered and has a flare for the imaginative with its constant referral to the unknown (gods) and metaphorical audience winks. I enjoyed the play, and though sometimes understanding material from eastern cultures can be difficult at times (I always consider Monkey by Wu Cheng'en), this doesn't necessarily require a predisposed knowledge of Szechwan history to grab onto the story. It has a great sense of humor, and it's one that I will be keeping on my shelf.

This play is amazing, particularly the epilogue which transparently calls out the play as an opportunity for the audience to consider what they would do to fix this broken world.

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