



Scene from Barbara Neureiter's 1990 production of *Das Liebeskonzil* staged in a barn in Trennewurth (Dithmarschen). Copyright © 1990 by the photographer, Sönke Dwenger.

creativity: *Oskar Panizza und die Folgen. Bilder und Texte zur Wiederaufführung seines Liebeskonzils* (1992, *Oskar Panizza and the Consequences: Pictures and Texts from the Revival of his Love Council*). This volume also contains a collection of erotic collages by the Brunsbüttel artist Jens Rusch, which he exhibited in conjunction with the Trennewurth performance. Some of these collages contain images from Werner Schroeter's 1982 film, while others incorporate sketches made by Panizza himself after he was institutionalized.

## Braunschweig 1991

One of the very first secondary school productions of *The Love Council* was staged by Albrecht (Ali) Schultze, who still runs an amateur theater, teatr dach, in the village of Meerdorf, Lower Saxony. As a teacher in Braunschweig's Wilhelm-Brack-Gesamtschule, in 1991 he directed a production of Panizza's play with twenty teenage students, which was so successful that it toured other cities in Germany and Switzerland. One of Schultze's innovations was to stage the scene in hell in a different room next to the main auditorium, thus providing added elements of intimacy and apprehension for the audience members, who are led there by the Devil and a female assistant. The choice of appropriate pop music added to the comic effect, as when the winged messenger in Act I, scene 4, arrives in heaven to report on the terrestrial cesspool of sin, to the accompaniment of "Let's Talk About Sex"



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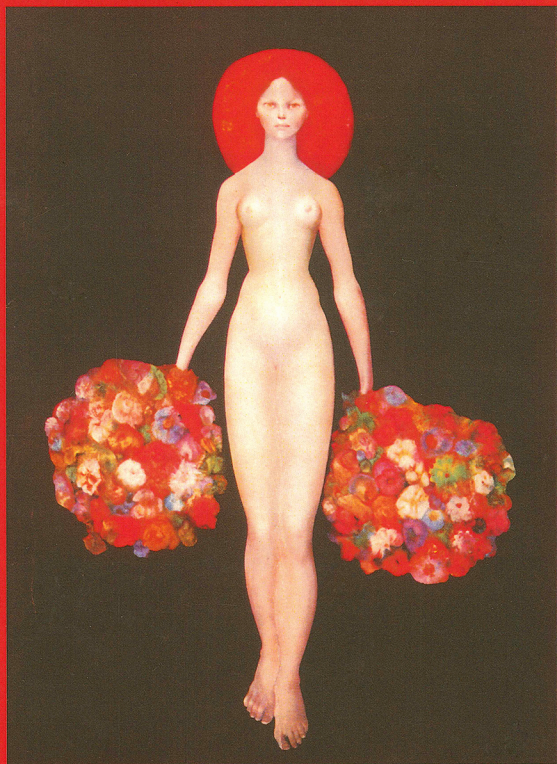
replied: "I don't know the play, but I still think that theater should be shown. I have no problem with that, and I'm sure the people of Trennewurth don't either and will come to the performance" (106). After the performance, he commented: "What was finally shown is almost understated, when you see our population explosion and then hear the Pope still speaking out against the pill" (96).

Unperturbed by sensationalist media coverage fanning ominous rumors, Barbara Neureiter's rural production went off without a hitch. Although the unheated Köhler barn was actually quite packed for the two performances, the main complaint seems to have been the cold temperature. However, the audience particularly "enjoyed the changes of scene on different levels and the look into the sinful world of powerful oppressors, dominatrices and bundles of money" (104). Bettina Rathje, a 25-year-old editorial secretary from Brunsbüttel, actually found the play transformational:

Since I've seen the play, I have another relationship — another perspective — to God. It used to always be God who watched over everything and was responsible for the world, who could separate good from evil. But in *The Love Council* it was no longer a God whom you would like to hold on to when you need help. I can't hang on to a coughing, miserable weakling who can't even take care of himself [97].

The following year, Uwe Böttjer published a lavishly-illustrated book that extensively documents the production of *The Love Council* in Trennewurth. It includes essays, interviews, newspaper reviews and scholarly articles dealing with Panizza, genius, madness and

# Oskar Panizza and *The Love Council*



A History of the Scandalous Play on Stage and in Court,  
with the Complete Text in English and a Biography of the Author

PETER D.G. BROWN

In 1894, German society was introduced to *The Love Council*, a scandalous new play by the playwright Oskar Panizza. The carnivalesque satire, dealing with the first recorded outbreak of syphilis in 1495, portrays the scourge as divine punishment for the rampant sexual excesses in the Vatican court of the Pope of the time, the notorious Rodrigo Borgia. Panizza was imprisoned for one year on 93 counts of blasphemy, the harshest sentence ever given to an artist in the Second Empire. This book contains a detailed history of the play on stage and the court proceedings that led to Panizza's imprisonment. A new English translation of the play is included, as well as a biography of its avant-garde, modernist author.

**PETER D.G. BROWN** is a SUNY Distinguished Service Professor of German at the State University of New York at New Paltz. This is his third book on Oskar Panizza. He has edited more than 100 books on German history and literature.

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