

Woyzeck

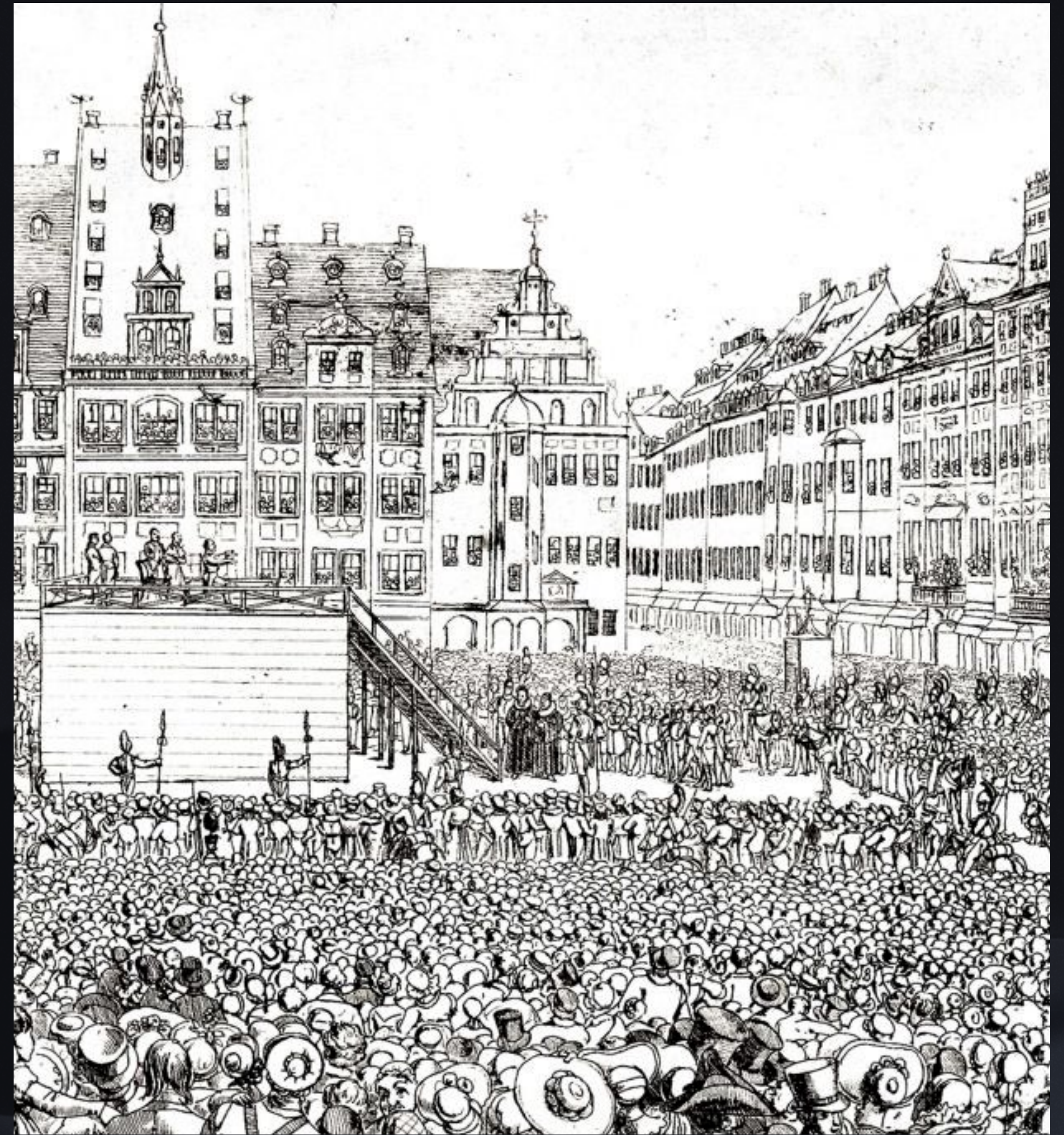
Vision Presentation

Vanessa Andrick 2.18.26

Background

Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*

- *Woyzeck* is an unfinished German play re-discovered by Karl Emil Franzos in the 1870s after Büchner's death from typhus at the age of 23 in 1837.
- First performed in 1913 in Munich during the Expressionist movement
- Based on the 1821 murder of Christine Woost by Johann Christian Woyzeck. Debate over his sanity as evaluated in Dr. Clarus's writings served as the main inspiration for *Woyzeck*



Lithograph of Johann Christian Woyzeck's beheading in 1824



Georg Büchner

About the playwright

- b. 1813 in Hesse, Germany, d. 1837 in Zurich, Switzerland.
- Büchner studied medicine in Strasberg, then Giessen, then Strasberg again after fleeing arrest for the publication of the revolutionary *Der Hessische Landbote*.
- Appointed anatomy lecturer in Zurich, where he lived and wrote until his death
- The majority of Büchner's work was never published

Büchner's Works

3 plays, 2 translations, a novella, a pamphlet, and a dissertation on fish

- *The Hessian Courier** (1834) — revolutionary proto-socialist pamphlet, almost arrested.
- *Danton's Death** (1835) — play about the execution of French Revolutionary Danton at Robespierre's order during the Reign of Terror. First piece of documentary theatre.
- *Lenz** (1835) — novella about *Sturm und Drang* poet Lenz's last days and madness.
- Translations of Victor Hugo's plays *Lucrezia Borgia** and *Maria Tudor** (1835)
- *Leonce and Lena* (1836) — satire about a marriage plot between two nobles and Romantic ideals
- *Mémoire sur le système nerveux du barbeau** (1836) — his dissertation, the introduction speech for which served as his audition to lecture in Zurich. Speech examines his philosophy on science.
- *Woyzeck* (1837) — unfinished fragment about soldier Woyzeck's murder of his common-law wife.

Cornerstones

General Beauty

Theatre on a knife's edge

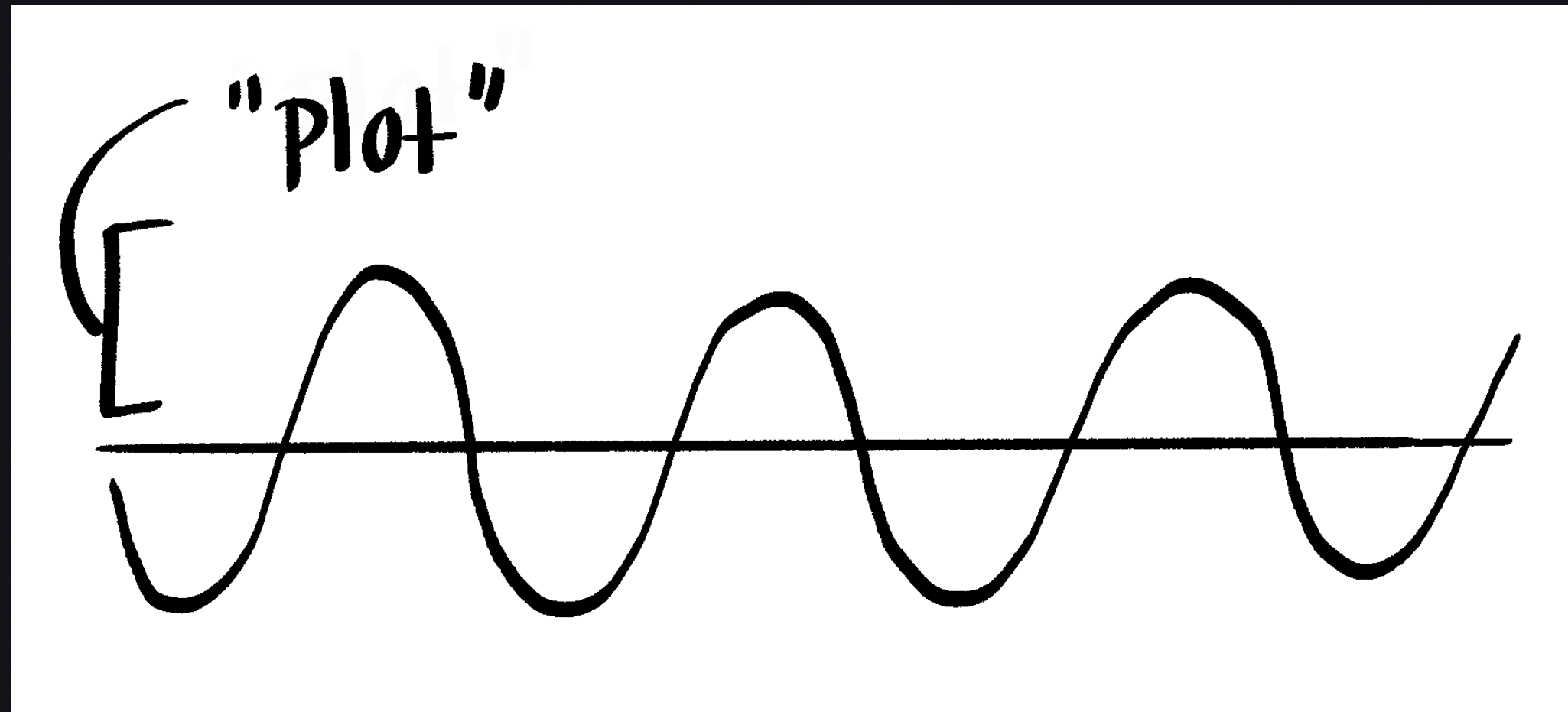
While *Woyzeck* will forever remain unfinished, it also remains one of the most influential works in theatre history. The revolutionary clash between early naturalism and expressionism seizes the imagination, inspiring generations of artists to find new ways to tell this story and impose the internal world onto the external one. The play asks still relevant questions about nature vs. “civilization,” the character of madness, the effects of exploitation of the lower classes, and where humanity lies.



Traditional form: Naturalism, Expressionism

The first work/significant influence on evolution of these forms

- German Romanticism (from photo-romantic Sturm und Drang) theatre presented open “dramatic structures born out of human experience.” Relationships between society, individual, environment.
 - The form, content, and language of *Woyzeck* are so distinct that it is better categorized elsewhere.
 - Büchner pre-dated *naturalism* and *expressionism*, but *Woyzeck* fits as the first in these traditions.
- Naturalism: late 19th to early 20th century movement prioritizing (in theatre) the illusion of reality, with a special focus on biology/environment’s influence on character (inspired by Charles Darwin’s writings). Asking “why” about social phenomena by applying science to the world of art.
- Expressionism: Early 20th century movement in drama, art, cinema, and music prioritizing internal subjective experience and feelings. Often intense, bold, and strange due to freedom from limitation to perfect representation of literal reality. Deeply emotional and psychological.
 - Yes, two forms is appropriate due to clash between “real” scenes and *Woyzeck*’s visions



Sarah Kane's diagram of plot vs. story for *Woyzeck*

Predominant Elements:

Plot, theme

Plot: "Scenes" are extremely short, clipping along extremes of plot.

Theme: Deprivation of humanity from the working class ("morality" is for the rich, the poor are ruled by baser nature)



Billman

World of the play: Woyzeck's view of reality

Metaphor:

A blood red woodcut



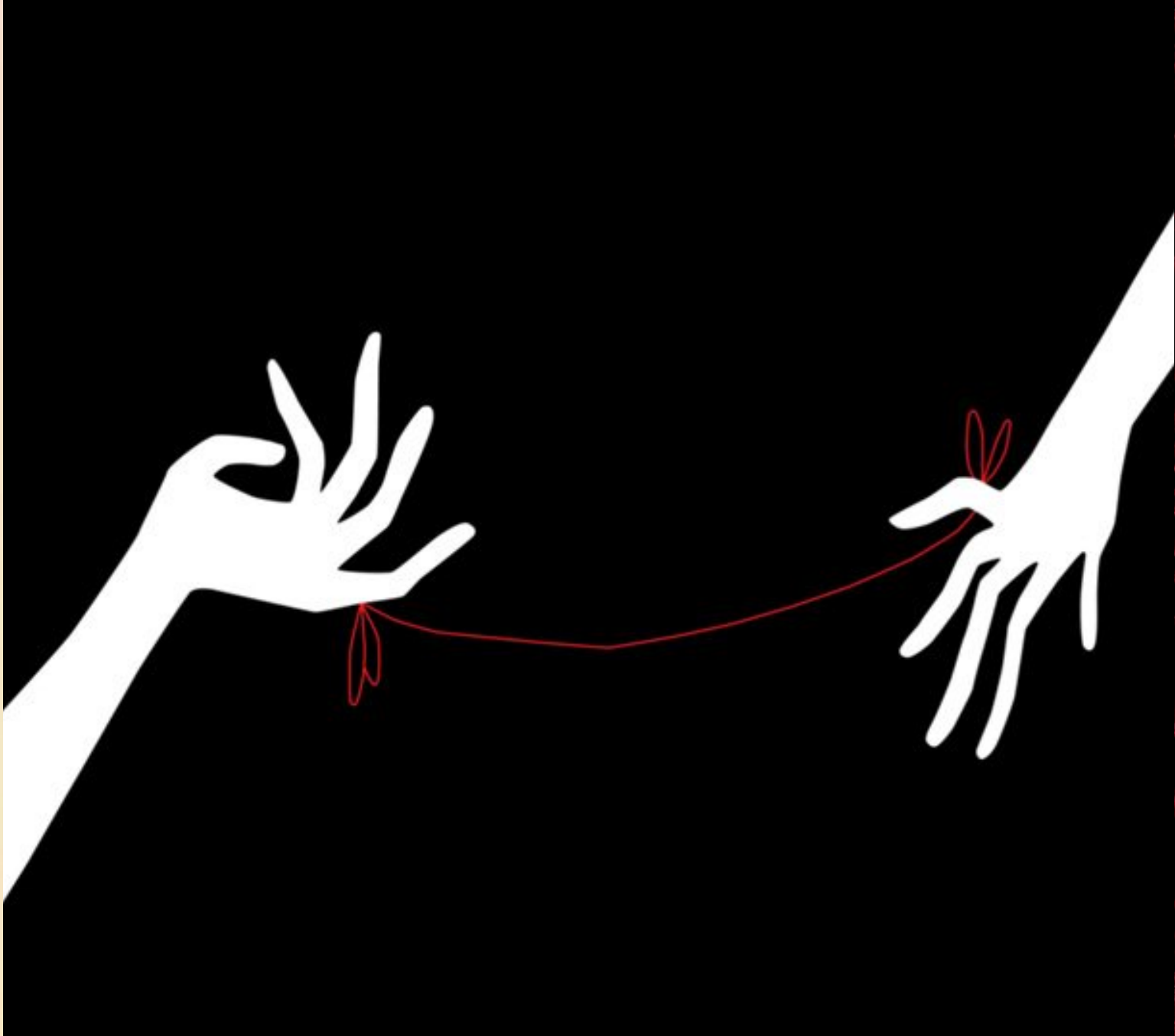
Production

Space

The Nocturne Theatre in Glendale, CA

- 380 seat in-the-round theatre
- 2 voms with playable space above, 2 staircase entrances to lobby opposite
- Groundplans uploaded to Drive
- Partial rake?







Costumes

Period-ish

- “Different enough” principle
- Interested in accurate silhouette and construction but with our restricted production color palette
- Provincial Germany (Leipzig, Saxony? Hesse?) Military uniforms, women’s dress, doctors, townspeople
- Largely 1 costume per actor, but perhaps costume change for Woyzeck and Marie heading into the last scene
- Must be able to be bloodied



Sound/Music

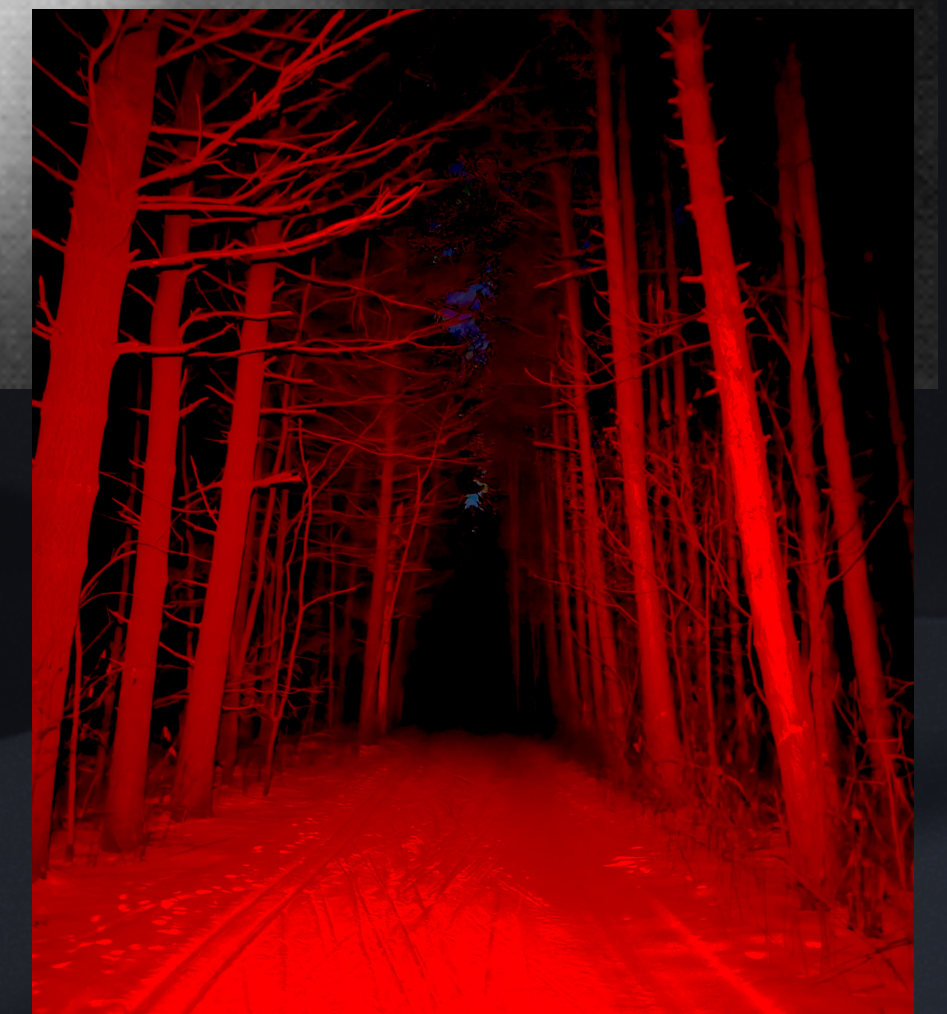
Expressionism in music

- Berg's opera *Wozzeck* was inspired by Büchner's *Woyzeck*, composer Schoenberg
 - Atonality/dissonance, tone-color melody, speech singing
- There is also diegetic music and sound in the show (drums, inn)
 - Live band? Housed over one of the voms or near booth
- Period instruments: piano, early brass, flutes, clarinets, accordions, strings
 - Uncanny sound of the musical saw? Live foley?

Lighting

Experimental use pioneered in Germany

- German Expressionist filmmakers were the first to experiment with lighting
 - Wagner on the German stage
- Use of lighting to distinguish expression of Woyzeck's internal world from reality and the natural world
 - Red (consistent references to red throughout imagery in the text), stark white, shadows



“Container”

“A good murder, a real murder, a beautiful murder—as good a murder as you’d ever want to see. We haven’t had one like this for a long time”

