

Name:



Bertolt Brecht

Biographical Information.

- ▶ • 1898-1956.
- ▶ • German Marxist playwright, poet and director.
- ▶ • Political writer and director.

Well known facts:

- ▶ spent his life evolving a theory and practice of theatre as a forum for political ideas.
- ▶ Brecht aimed to appeal to less privileged classes, treating contemporary issues such as war, stock-markets, poverty, unemployment and corruption in high places.

Terminology related to Brecht; 'V' effect

Alienation

Bare stages

Breaking of an illusion

No fourth Wall

Minimalism

Actors played multiple roles

Direct audience address

Epic Theatre

Political

Didactics

Gestus

Narration and song



Brecht- Drums

Theory behind Staging/Acting

Epic Theatre is the term used generally to describe Brecht's theory and technique. His plays were 'epic' in that the dramatic action was episodic - a disconnected montage of scenes, non-representational staging, and the 'alienation effect'. All elements contribute to Brecht's overall purpose which was to comment on the political, social and economic elements that affected the lives of his characters.

Acting Techniques
Brecht believed that an actor should present a character in a way that wasn't an impersonation, rather, a narration of the actions of the character. He did this because he wanted to constantly remind his audience that they were watching a play.

Breaking the Fourth Wall
'The Fourth Wall' is an imaginary wall separating the audience from the action on the stage. In realistic productions this wall remains intact and the performers do not acknowledge that they are being watched. The audience are observers who are conditioned to believe that the world of the play is 'real'. It is a suspension of disbelief. Like most theories of realism, Brecht wanted to disrupt the notion of the fourth wall. 'Breaking the fourth wall' involves the characters directly addressing the audience, whether they break character or perform with an awareness of being watched.

Verfremdungseffekt/ Alienation Technique.
It is a technique which 'estranges' the audience and forces them to question the social realities of the situations being presented in the play. Brecht achieved this by breaking the illusion created by conventional plays of the time. He believed that the 'suspension of disbelief' created by realistic drama was a shallow spectacle, with manipulative plots and heightened emotion.

Gestus is a theatrical technique that helps define the emotion within a character and the context they are in. It is the combination of a gesture and a social meaning into one movement, stance or vocal display.

Narration and Song
The purpose of song in his plays is not to heighten the emotion of the scenes, but as a means to commentate or narrate what is going on.

1: Who did Brecht want his theatre to appeal to?

2: What is meant by the term 'The fourth wall'?

3: What is used as a 'means to commentate or narrate what is going on'?

4: Is this statement true or false based on the information above? Explain your answer.

Actors played only one role throughout creating a truly believable character.

The above statement is

5: Look at the grid below and match up the definition to the word using a line or highlighted colours.

Gestus	Speaking directly to the audience breaks the fourth wall and destroys any illusion of reality.
Symbolic props	A sign or additional piece of written information presented onstage. It might be as simple as holding up a card or banner. Multimedia or a PowerPoint slideshow can also be used for this effect.
Placard	The scenes stand alone and are constructed in small chunks, rather than creating a lengthy and slow build of tension.
Multi-roling	This is used to remind the audience that what they're watching is a presentation of a story. Sometimes they will tell us what happens in the story before it has happened.
Episodic	When an actor plays more than one character onstage. The differences in character are marked by changing voice, movement, gesture and body language but the audience can clearly see that the same actor has taken on more than one role.
Direct address	A clear character gesture or movement used by the actor that captures a moment or attitude rather than delving into emotion.
Narration	Often one item can be used in a variety of ways. A suitcase might become a desk, or a car door or a bomb.

6: Open the **Practitioner grid (PDF file)** in the same section as this week's task set in the cloud and answer the questions below.

A: Stanislavski wanted to 'try to show a truthful expression of life on stage'. What did Brecht want to do?

B: What type of staging would you need to consider using if your performance was in the style of Brecht?



Well done you have completed your task for this week.

Please remember to **load your response back into the cloud** with your name in the file name please and your teacher code, so we can identify it.

Teacher code_class code_name_task name