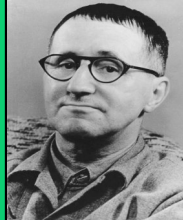


A Brechtian challenge...

Brecht was not the biggest fan of naturalistic theatre (where audiences emotionally attach to the characters on stage and the story that is realistically told). He famously said that in naturalistic theatre, audiences...

“hang up their brains with their hats in the cloakroom”.

In this statement, what do you think Brecht was trying to say about audience members of naturalistic theatre?



Bertolt Brecht & Brechtian Theatre



What is a Theatre Practitioner?

A theatre practitioner is someone who is an expert in their field/style of Performance. It is person or theatre company that creates practical work or theories to do with performance and theatre. A theatre practitioner may be a director, playwright, dramatist, actor, designer or a combination of these roles.

So, who was the famous Brecht and what did he do?

Born in 1898, Brecht was a German playwright whose ideas are still very influential to theatre today. He wanted to make the audience think, and used a range of devices to remind them that they were watching theatre and not real life. All of his performances had a very important message, these messages were often political or relevant to society.

Key words

Politics, Message, Intentions, Historical/Social/Political Context, Epic Theatre, V effect, Placards, Fourth Wall, Narration, Gestus, Still image, Multi-roling, Minimal staging, facts and statistics.

Brechtian devices and definitions

Nursery Rhymes—Brecht used well known nursery rhymes and changed the lyrics to deepen the audience's thoughts and have an impact on how they felt about certain political/cultural/historical views.

Placards—Used to break emotion, they usually display thought provoking facts and statistics and are help up by the character or characters in the play, to detract the audience's attention from the emotion.

Breaking the emotion and forth wall—Brecht believed that there should not be any connection or emotional attachment between the audience, characters and storyline. At these points, Brecht would break the emotion by breaking the 'fourth wall'. This would be done by direct address to the audience, cross cutting, placards, still image or narration (to name a few).

The V effect/alienation technique—This was used to distance the audience from emotional attachment. Brecht wanted his audience to be aware that it was not real life and that it was a performance, performed by actors.

Additional techniques

Gestus—clear character gesture or movement used by the actor that captures a moment or attitude rather than delving into emotion.. For example, a soldier saluting as he marches across a stage is a gesture.

Multi-roling—Switching characters on stage so that audience and actors do not get emotionally attached to the characters and the story.

Costume changes carried out on stage and minimal staging to remind audience that the actors are just actors representing the character(s) and to remind audience that they are watching a play.

Often actors who weren't in the scene would remain on stage, to remind them that it was not real life.

BRECHT WANTED HIS AUDIENCE TO THINK AND TO QUESTION THE WORLD THAT THEY LIVE IN!