

BERTOLT BRECHT

WHO – Bertolt Brecht was born in **Germany** in **1898** and died at the age of **58** in **1956**. He was a **playwright, a director, an actor** and developed many **original ideas and theories about theatre** and acting which means he is considered to be a **theatre practitioner**. His plays are still performed around the world and his theories are still used in performances of other plays.x

WHERE AND WHEN - After serving as a medical orderly in the First World War and appalled by the effects of the war, he went first to Munich and then to Berlin in pursuit of a career in the theatre. That period of his life came to an end in 1933 when the Nazis came to power in Germany. Brecht fled and during this period the Nazis removed his citizenship, so he was a stateless citizen. In 1941 Brecht lived in the USA but returned to Europe in 1947 after being accused of being anti-American. By the time of his death in 1956, Brecht had established the **Berliner Ensemble – Theatre Company** and was regarded as one of the greatest theatrical practitioners.

WHAT - Brecht made many changes to the theatre of his day. He disagreed with the fact that an audience should be swept along with the emotion of a production. **Before Brecht, the theatre of the day would use realistic story lines and high emotion, it would expect the audience to believe in the characters and the situations.**

Brecht felt that the theatre should be something that made the audience feel more than simple emotion –he wanted it to make the audience **think or learn** something and to **make a change for the better** as a result. Brecht disliked the way that the theatre tricked the audience in to thinking that what they were watching on stage was real life. He decided to try to remind the audiences that they were sitting in a theatre just watching a story being told. Brecht trained his actors to remember that they were not ‘becoming’ the characters but simply **presenting the character** to the audience.

WHAT IS EPIC THEATRE?

Brecht called his own style of theatre ‘**epic**’ contrasting it with popular ‘**dramatic**’ theatre. You can sum up his style in **three** words: **Didactic, Alienation & Gestus**.

Didactic - Brecht wanted his audience to ‘**THINK**’. He wanted his theatre to show audiences that they should take the position of spectators and learn lessons from it. His plays are **didactic (educational)** because they aim to **teach the audience or send messages about certain aspects of society, politics or economy**.

Alienation - Brecht believed that while the audience believed in the action onstage and became emotionally involved they lost the ability to think and to judge. **He wanted his audiences to remain objective and distant from emotional involvement** so that they could make considered and rational judgements about any social comment or issues in his work.

To do this he used a range of theatrical devices or techniques so that the audience were **reminded throughout that they were watching theatre; a presentation of life**, not real life itself. He called this **Epic Theatre**. The act of distancing the audience from emotional involvement he called the **Verfremdungseffekt**.

Gestus – This is a clear character **gesture or movement** used by the actor that captures a moment or attitude rather than delving into emotion. **Every gesture was important**. Brecht and his actors studied photographs of the plays in rehearsal to ensure each moment worked effectively. Could the audience tell by the actor’s gestures alone what was happening in the scene?

Brecht didn’t want the actors to be the character onstage, only to **show them as a type of person**. For example, the boss who is corrupt and smoking a fat cigar as his workers starve is representative of every boss who profits through the exploitation of others. For this reason Brecht will often refer to his characters by **archetypal names**, such as ‘The Soldier’ or ‘The Girl’.

DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS

Brecht’s ‘**Verfremdungseffekt**’ is often translated to the **Alienation or Distancing Effect**. This means that the performers make familiar things strange to the audience, which in turn makes them an **active audience** who have to think about what they are watching.

Examples of Alienation Techniques

Breaking the Fourth Wall – This involves the characters directly addressing and acknowledging the audience.

Songs – These were used to remind the audience that they are watching a performance (it is not normal for people to burst into song). The lyrics and music would jar (not fit together in style) further distancing the audience.

Spas – This translates as fun. Brecht knew the power of making the audience laugh and then making them question why they are finding serious things funny. This is sometimes called Tickle and Slap.

Design – The audience were reminded that they were in a theatre watching a performance as the house lights were left on, all of the set was visible from the start and the actors did all of the set changes. Costumes were symbolic and also changed on stage. The actors often played the instruments used for the songs on stage too.

Placards – Signs were held up to tell the audience the title of the scene and what was going to happen in them, this was to take away suspense and emotion and allow the audience to think about the scene instead.

Narration – This reminds the audience that they are watching a presentation of a story. Sometimes the narrator would tell the audience what happens in the story before it happens.

Direct address –The actors speak directly to the audience, sometimes in the form of questions, this reminds the audience that what they are seeing isn’t real and forces them to think about what they are watching.

Multi Rolling & Split Role –The actors play more than one part in the performance, changing characters in front of the audience’s eyes or in the case of Split Role take it in turns to play the same character.

Speaking the Stage-Directions – More frequently used in rehearsals but can be effective in performance to create the V Effect. It helps distance the actor from the character they are playing.

Episodic – He wrote his plays so each scene stands alone.

Montage – He re-ordered the scenes in his plays from a traditional linear narrative. He liked to place scenes next to each other in contrasting styles, length and content so the audience had to stay alert.

PHYSICAL THEATRE KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER		KEY TERMINOLOGY		Frantic Assembly are an internationally renowned theatre company who use simple techniques they call 'Building Blocks' to devise their plays.			
What is Physical Theatre? At its simplest, you could define Physical Theatre as a form of theatre that puts emphasis on movement rather than dialogue. There are a huge number of variations as the genre covers a broad range of work but essentially Physical theatre is anything that puts the human body at the centre of the storytelling process. As a result pieces are often abstract in style using movement in a stylised and representational way. <i>(BBC Bitesize)</i> Physical Theatre is a form of acting that tells a story through the way bodies are positioned and the way they move forming different shapes with little or no Dialogue. Physical Theatre uses our bodies for our effects rather than using props, scenery or even sound effects at times. Physical Theatre can include a wide variety of styles and approaches – it can include dance-theatre, movement theatre, clown, puppetry, mime, mask, and circus' <i>(WJEC/Eduqas – Devising Textbook)</i>		*Mime – Is when actors perform in silence with exaggerated facial expressions and body language. It can work with dialogue, but with actors miming any props or set required for the scene. *Gesture & Body Language – Gestures are non-verbal ways of communicating. A gesture is usually done with your hands but you can use other body parts. Gestures and Body language (the position of your body) are vital when communicating through movement. Status* – The idea of who has the power in a scene can be explored through levels or by distance (proxemics) or strength of contact, or a combination of all of these with voice work. Proxemics* – Comes from the word proximity. In drama it means how close or far you are from your co-performers. It can be very powerful - for example, the threatening gangster who speaks to his victim from a distance of perhaps a couple of inches. Movement* - In any kind of Physical Theatre movement is the main way of communicating the story. The genre's power comes from how expressive and creative the movement is. Stillness – If the stage is full of characters moving, immobility can have a powerful effect. Mask Work - The impact of a mask is visual and without the facial features to show emotion, movement becomes an even more central performance instrument. Dance Work – Don't be afraid to include dance in your work; you don't have to be an experienced dancer. 'Dad dancing' can work well in a comedy for instance! Motif – This is the repeated use of a tableau, movement or patterns which have meaning and reminds us of the central theme of the work. Music – Music is vital in Physical Theatre as it complements and reinforces the visual storytelling. Ensemble/Chorus – An ensemble or chorus is a group of actors working together (often as one) physically and vocally. Physicalising Emotional States – Body Language, Proxemics, Facial Expressions and Vocal Sound will immediately suggest particular emotions to the audience. Sound Collage/Soundscape – The layering of sounds by performers. Ritual – A movement sequence using precision, repetition, cannoning, Synchronicity, etc – to create an almost ceremonial feel. Animalistic Behaviour – Using animalistic behaviour in your characterisations or chorus work can be very powerful. For example – two girls discussing another girl in a nasty way using cat or snake like vocal and physical skills. Puppets –Puppetry involves the manipulation of puppets, often resembling a human or animal figure, that are animated by a human(s) called a puppeteer(s). The play War Horse used 3 actors to bring Joey the horse to life both vocally and physically. One of our lessons explores a similar process where the 'Paper Person' is controlled by 3 puppeteers using Focus, Breath and Weight to bring life to the inanimate object.					
Minimalistic Set & Props Physical Theatre tends to use very little set or props to allow performers space and freedom to tell the story as physically as possible. Body Props - In Physical Theatre performers often mime items of set or objects – or even become them – this can be done by a solo performer or as an ensemble/chorus and can be referred to as Body Props. Bamboo Canes – Both Complicité and Imaginary Body Theatre Companies have used Bamboo Canes as their only set/props to create all manner of objects, locations and emotions in their plays. Door Frames – Steven Berkoff's original production of The Trial used 10 free standing door frames/screens as the only set for the production. "Our set of ten screens became the story and as the story could move from moment to moment so could our set – no long waits for a scene change but as a flash with the magician's sleight of hand. We could be even quicker than the story. A room could become a trap, a prison, expand and contract and even spin around the protagonist Joseph K. This enabled us to recreate the environment – both physical and mental – of the book" <i>(Steven Berkoff)</i> Limiting Space – The Theatre Company Off Balance devised their version of Robin Hood on a 2m x 2m slab of wood. Their creative solutions to performing the story in such a small space are truly inspiring.							
		The person with their hand on top is in control, gently leading their partner around the space, trying to keep their hands flat and the pressure constant. You should take your partner on a journey exploring all levels.		Partners sit opposite knee to knee. A choose three ways to adjust B's appearance. B choose three ways to adjust A's appearance. Continue to add more moves, and avoid a predictable rhythm		Partners sit in chairs, both facing forward. Partners take turns placing their hand on to their partner or moving their partner's hand, swapping and adding to the sequence. Repeat until the moves are clear and memorised.	
		Round 		By 		Through 	
		The term ROUND is chosen to represent any move that involves passing closely ROUND the body of the partner		BY comes after the first two moves. The space between A & B is 'squeezed out'. A or B 'slots in' to stand closer BY their partner		THROUGH is the idea of passing through the upper body / arms of the partner	

DRAMA — THEATRE IN EDUCATION (TIE) - KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

What is Theatre in Education (TIE)?

Theatre in Education (TIE) is theatre created for a **particular age group or specific target audience**. The aim of Theatre in Education is to **educate the audience about a topic, issue or debate** – while also entertaining them and inspiring them. TIE can also bring stories from history or literature to life.

How Theatre in Education Started

The ground-breaking TIE movement was pioneered in 1965 by the **Belgrade Theatre Company** in Coventry. It was developed for young people and used theatre and drama to create a range of **learning opportunities for young people to explore political, ethical and moral issues** in a safe environment. Actor-teachers from the Belgrade Theatre Company would **tour local schools** where they would **perform short pieces of theatre and lead workshops** that allowed students to **explore important issues and ideas in active and creative ways**. The target audience isn't always school-aged. Present day the company also put on plays which explore shared heritage and religion.

Other Famous TIE Companies

Founded in 1982 **Big Brum** is another famous TIE company. They are based in the West Midlands and they run educational programmes which **tour primary, secondary and other educational settings**. Big Brum works across all ages, backgrounds and abilities, using theatre and drama to **help young people make meaning of their lives and the world around them**.

The **National Trust** is not only Europe's **largest conservation charity**, it also runs an award winning schools programme led by experienced facilitators and theatre practitioners, with workshops, plays and interactive drama for primary and secondary students.

Forum Theatre

Augusto Boal (a Brazilian Theatre Director) developed 'Forum Theatre' during the 1960s. He understood how **Theatre could be a powerful tool to educate and empower people to make changes to their current situation**.

Forum Theatre is best described as interactive Theatre. One of the characters in the play or scene has some kind of dilemma or problem that they are trying unsuccessfully to overcome. Audience members are allowed to stop the action and make suggestions as to what the character could do. The scene is replayed several times with different audience members' suggestions being tried until the problem is successfully overcome. Forum Theatre developed further when Boal invited a female member of the audience onstage to show the actor what she wanted to be acted out. This was because she became so frustrated and angry with an actor who did not understand her suggestion. This event led to the birth of the spect-actor!!!!

"Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build a future, rather than just waiting for it." Augusto Boal

Key Features of Theatre in Education

- **Target Audience** — Who the play is aimed at e.g. different school year groups, university students, car drivers, the Elderly, young offenders, prisoners.
- **A Relevant Topic** — Something sensitive that could effect the Target Audience.
- **A Strong Message** — A clear aim and educational objective running throughout. TIE often explores issues from various viewpoints, so we can see the effect of an action upon a range of people.
- **Educational Information** — The inclusion of facts and figures to educate the audience.
- **Small Versatile Casts** — TIE tours between venues and is low budget so actors must multirole, operate technical equipment and sometimes play musical instruments.
- **Costume** — The costumes are simple and symbolic/representational, especially if actors have to multi-role.
- **Basic Set & Props** — The production design must be portable so the design must be simple and representational/symbolic.
- **Basic Lighting and Sound** — Often TIE companies use the venues house lights but some companies tour with a small portable lighting rig.
- **Audience Participation** — The audience are often spoken to directly (breaking the fourth wall) and asked to participate in parts of the performance — there is often a workshop after the show.
- **Forum Theatre** — A form of audience participation developed by Augusto Boal where the audience can suggest ways to change the outcome of the performance.
- **Balance between Theatre & Education** — One of the hardest things in TIE is finding the right balance between the theatrical experience and educating the audience.
- **Visual elements** — Use of Projectors/PowerPoint/Placards to emphasise the message.
- **Episodic** - Smaller scenes that can stand alone.
- **Use of Narrator/Narrating** — A storyteller. It could be someone who lives outside the world of the play or a character in the story.
- **Direct Address** — Characters acknowledge and talk to the audience, often asking for their advice.
- **Multi-roling** — Actors playing more than one part.
- **Stereotypes** — Characters in TIE are often stereotypical (caricatures) in order to make an immediate point to the audience.
- **Monologue** — A continuous uninterrupted speech by one actor. It could be to another actor or the thoughts of the character said aloud.
- **Movement & Physical Theatre** — Mime, physical theatre and movement work are often favoured over naturalism.
- **Music & Dance** — Music is a great way of quickly creating the correct atmosphere and dance is popular in TIE with younger target audiences.

Steps to Devising a piece of TIE

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| 1. Decide on the target audience | 5. Setting — Consider where the play takes place |
| 2. Decide on the topic of the scene | 6. Write/devise the scene/play |
| 3. Agree the key message/educational information | 7. Audience participation |
| 4. Research the topic | 8. Evaluation |