

What were bertolt brecht's key aims in developing

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Support your answers with evidence from his plays and theoretical writings.

By Brecht's Epic Theatre was a break from the prevailing form of theatre - what Brecht called Dramatic Theatre. Epic theatre was a clearly different type of theatre and Brecht sought to make it popular - taking emphasis away from the dramatic theatre that he hated so. He truly believed that naturalism was unrealistic, as it created an ineffective barrier between the actors and the audience; a fourth wall; that made therapeutic theatre suggestive, not questioning.

By defining his epic theatre he created a way to make watching plays a learning experience: "Today when human character must be understood as the totality of all social conditions' the epic form is the only one that can comprehend all the processes, which could serve the drama as materials for a fully representative picture of the world." Brecht wanted his Epic theatre to challenge the theatre of illusion that naturalism created. He wanted his audience to be alert and awake and to leave the auditorium with a challenge: to try and find the answers that his plays posed.

He was so determined that his style of theatre shouldn't be just entertainment that he went to extraordinary measures. In the performances of 'Drums In The Night' banners were placed in the auditorium, which said, "stop that romantic staring" and "every man is best in his own skin". This was to de-romanticism the act of watching - the audience were supposed to observe, not fall into illusion. It was so effective that a critic remarked: "Overnight the 24-year-old poet Bert Brecht has changed the literary face of Germany. Another effect he used to create the observing of the audience

was to use a narrator to break up the action. For example In 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' a narrator is used. This served to distance the audience from the action on stage. This technique of distancing became known as 'Alienation' or 'Verfremdungseffekt'. Although he did not 'discover' this technique until 1935, his theatre prior had been clearly similar. His 'discovery' confirmed that his idea was plausible.

He described how the device works: A child whose mother remarries, seeing her as wife not just mother, or whose teacher is prosecuted, seeing him in relation to criminal law, experiences a V-effect. " He began to use the phrase after visiting Moscow and seeing the Chinese actor Mei Lanfang, and commented how the actor possessed the ability to " stand aside from his part. " Brecht found this intriguing and adopted the method so that his actors play. Brecht had gained the idea of distancing the audience from the action from many sources.

He had a great love for Elizabethan theatre where the stage was almost bare with people standing around it, political and personal events told in swiftly changing scenes and action taking place in daylight. The influence of Elizabethan theatre could be seen in his first Epic production, Marlowe 'Edward the Second' - The soldiers in the production had white faces to show they were frightened. He also drew influence from the traveling fairs he watched in his teens. These used many simple techniques, which can be found in many of his productions.

These included a singer and narrator; stories with a moral purpose, aided by pictures; accompanying music; and stranger still, the audience's freedom to come and go, smoke and drink as they pleased. The way Brecht's plays were structured also differed greatly from dramatic theatre. The narrative in Epic theatre meant the play could begin anywhere, and have flashbacks; dramatic theatre had a beginning, middle and end. This also led to the development of montage in his plays. He used montage in 'Galileo' while he was in Hollywood, and this consisted of seemingly unrelated images, placed together to take on a new meaning.

Brecht believed that montage, " could connect dissimilar in such a way as to 'shock' people into new recognitions and understandings. All his radical ideas inevitably led to his staging being vastly different from naturalistic theatre. For example in 'In the Jungle of the Cities' the play was presented as a boxing match, set in an imaginary Chicago. Until then, the use of the 'fourth wall' had been commonplace and this different idea, gave his theatre ideology room to convey to the audience.

The cast in 'In the Jungle of the Cities' were raised up on a lateral within the ropes of the boxing ring and lit with harsh lights, like a prize fight. The use of an imaginary Chicago was deliberate: by displacing the action into an imagined world, the audience was distanced by the human conflicts. The curtain was used for the display of titles, captions and comments, all designed to distance. Props were not to be used unless necessary. Brecht believed an over-use of them would verge too far on naturalism, but allowed them to suggest time and place. E. G. , the cart in 'Mother Courage'.