

History of drama – modernism



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History of Drama Modernism Throughout modern times many different eras of theatre have come and gone. One of the most significant to appear would be Modernism which arose between the 1880s-1930s. Consisting of a combination of three main styles; futurism, dada and expressionism, this quite recent era had a huge affect on contemporary theatre. Apart from its 3 branches of theatre, the improvement of staging was largely evident and some of the masterminds of theatre emerged during the Modernism era. Out of all three branches, the earliest to appear during the Modernism era was Expressionism. Expressionism mainly consisted of the distortion of human nature by false values.

Emphasis and embellishment of a human situation was also a large part of performances. An example of an expressionist performance would be *The Hairy Ape* by Eugene O'Neill. The second of the three branches is Dada. This took place during World War I, and added a greater diversity in performances. There was no barrier between art forms, logic was replaced with illogic and reason was replaced with chance.

Most performances consisted of short plays, poems, dances and musical skits. The third and final branch of Modernism took places in the 1920s through the 1930s, this was known as futurism. From futurism, came the manifestation of *Variety Theatre*. Unorthodox methods of performance were a main part of futurism, this included anything from; collages to bruietisme and even kinetic sculpture. The Modernism era saw a rise to many great playwrights, actors and theatrical characters.

Some of which had direct influences on each of the branches of Modernism. Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller were both German born and German raised during the early 1900TMs. They were fully exposed to WWI and in the midst of all the fighting and depression; they looked for some form of entertainment or happiness. In this search, they discovered ??? Dada???. Apart from the Germans, an Italian playwright also had a huge influence on Modernism. Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, was the one to come up with Futurism.

Apart from the introduction of three new branches of theatre and the recognition of several individuals, the biggest influence the Modernism era would have on theatre evolves around staging, The introduction of three dimensional stages occurred thanks to Modernism, which was a welcomed change from the two dimensional back drop that was mostly used. Lighting also became a intertwined part of a dramatic performance. The use of lights starts to affect the mood or emotion of the scenario being preformed. Simplicity in costume was also a factor unearthed by Modernism, giving the audience the ability to focus more on the performersTM actions and dialogue, not extravagant costumes. From what we know, Modernism was a great part of theatrical history and influenced the theatre of today greatly.

This is thanks to its three branches of theatre which emerged during the era, its great playwrights and theatrical icons, also who could forget its great influence on the staging of contemporary performances that we have all come to enjoy.