

Lessons from Theatre: The significance of Brecht for drama teaching



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IDIERI 7 Conference Theme

Borders and translations: Towards new paradigms and languages in drama education

This research explores areas of intersection between drama in education and the field of theatre



Traditional Dichotomy



Rationale

Recent thinking
advocates a fusion of
drama and theatre



- Indicates a need to look towards the theories of key theatre practitioners
- This research focuses on the work of Bertolt Brecht, identifying Brechtian principles in the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

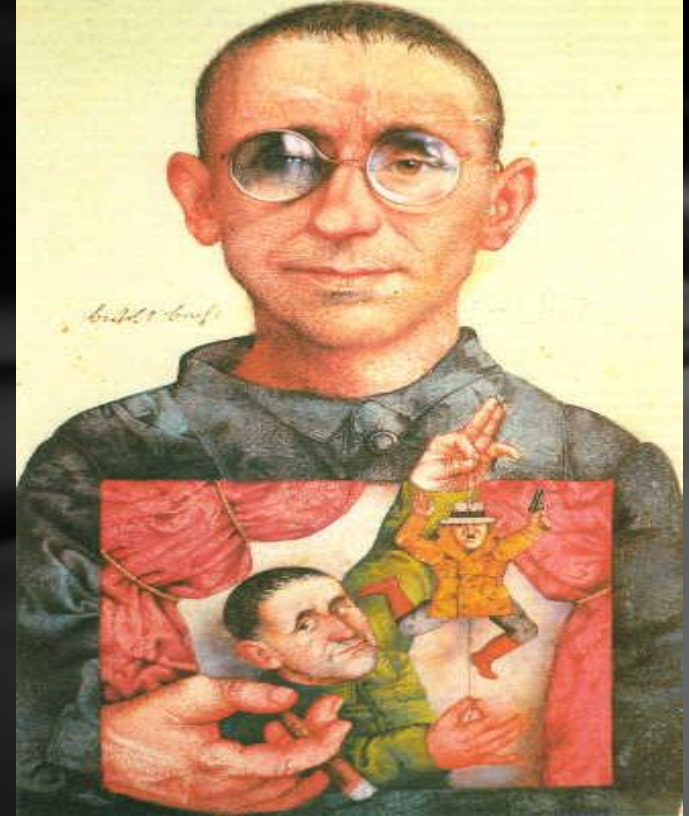
Poet

Playwright

Director

Theorist

Practitioner



'I wanted to take the principle that it was not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and apply that to the theatre' (Brecht, 1964).

Brecht's contribution to theatre

Epic theatre

- large casts
- episodic scenes
- multiple locations
- use of narrative over plot
- use of film projections, placards and charts

‘Verfremdung’

‘making strange’, ‘distancing’, ‘alienation’

Gestus

‘the realm of attitudes adopted by the characters towards one another... Physical attitude, tone of voice and facial expression are all determined by a social gest...’ (Brecht, 1964).

‘not this, but that’

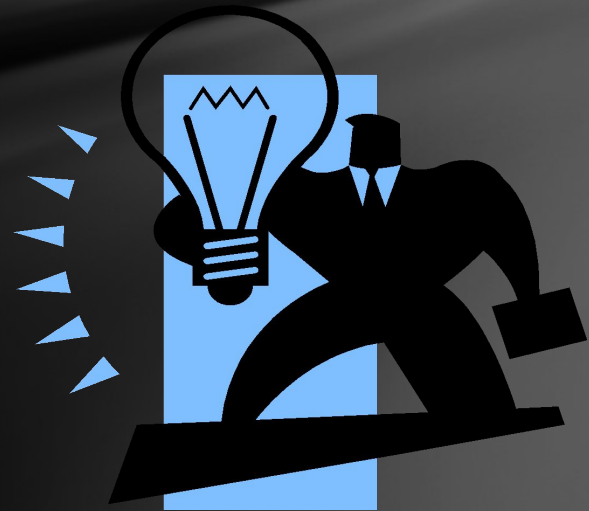
Montage



Berkshire-based company Scene Productions

Brecht's The Exception and the Rule

**distances the audience from the
action, enabling them to see
familiar situations in a new light**



Lehrstücke (learning plays)

- Aimed specifically towards education of target groups
- Concerned with learning for the participants
- 'not intended for performance to non-participatory spectators, but as a means of learning for the actors' (Patterson, 1994).

Dorothy Heathcote

'how it feels to be in someone else's shoes'

'attitudes, not characters, are the chief concern'

Teacher in Role Self Spectator

Episodic narrative

Frame



Frame

Role

Action

Self-observation

Reflection

Heathcote and Brecht

- drama as a catalyst for change
- to raise awareness in audience
- role over character
- episodic narrative over plot
- structural devices
- significance to social meaning
- visuals and written communication
- inspire critical attitudes

Brecht: 'not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it' (1964)

Heathcote: '... each day when I enter a classroom of adults or children I seek to use my art of teaching and the art of drama in the service of a process for change' (Bolton, 1999).

view familiar things in
an unfamiliar way...

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