

Elias Becker

Theatre History II

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Brecht and Socialism in Theatre

For my Theatre History II final I decided to record a podcast on Bertolt Brecht and how his life growing up informed his political views, and therefore influenced his art over the course of his life. I go into great detail about the historical events during his life and how they lead him to Marxism, and how from a young age he dipped his hands in the arts with poetry before moving onto theatre. I discuss how these political beliefs he had led to his theatrical concepts and methods, and how they are relevant to Socialist Realist Theatre during his time and in the current day. I end the podcast with my own opinions on Brecht's methods and how effective they are nowadays in terms of the way theatre currently exists in our sociopolitical climate. The podcast is roughly 20 minutes long and was a very great and enjoyable way to communicate the research on Brecht that I had done.

Brecht's creation of the Epic Theatre is a popular topic in theatre history because it was the start of the theatrical trend to address political and social issues directly through theatre arts, as it is theatre that has loosely connected scenes that disconnect people's feelings toward the characters in favor of address the audience with arguments and analysis of topical issues. It's intended to be a sort of wake up call, and it was the first of it's kind to do this. Because this kind of theatre was triggered by the first World War, which was also a turning point in history, it also makes sense to talk about it as a very relevant moment in theatre history as well. A type of theatre that completely disregarded entertainment or the typical facets of storytelling in favor of harsh realities was fr different than other things that had been done before.

This heavily relates to my interests in general due to the fact that I am a double major in Theatre Arts and International and Global Studies, with a minor in Humanities. Anything having to deal with history, war, responses to politics and social issues, the arts, and how it is still relevant today is right up my wheelhouse. More specifically, I myself identify with Marxism and tend to enjoy plays that address issues of capitalism and bourgeois rather than those that lack any sort of sociopolitical context at all. I myself in the future hope to actively participate in and have a career in theatre surrounding activism and sociopolitical issues, I see theatre as a way of expressing feelings on topics and calling for action or change, just as Brecht did. So learning about him has definitely given me a greater understanding of Socialist theatre. I hope to direct some of Brecht's plays one day in the future, either in their original setting and context or in different ones that relate to current day issues. I also hope to one day write my own works in theatre, plays, musicals, etc that emulate similar characteristics of epic theatre and address the social and political issues that I so deeply care about and want to advocate for. Like Brecht, art is my voice in these instances.

I think this is a very relevant topic to the world in general in terms of theatre because of the current states of the world, what with all of the international conflicts going on consistently—but also because it is interesting to compare to modern day performance. I feel as though Brecht had a very good idea in attempting to take the entertainment out of theatre for some productions so that they could be more formal, but also most of commercial theatre nowadays is pure entertainment with little to no serious underlying message, at least not that relates to current day, pressing issues. So for the every day person to compare the two, I am hoping it will put the way in which the theatre industry has been capitalized off of into a better perspective and could hopefully spark some of its own change.

Overall this podcast project was very enjoyable to do and was very rewarding, and it has inspired me to maybe continue theatre-related podcasts in the future if I have the time. Talking about these things is a constant for me, and having my knowledge on these subjects to be documented, shareable, and audible would be a great idea.

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