

ANTONIN ARTAUD

Key facts & central beliefs

- The term **Theatre of Cruelty**, expresses Artaud wanting his actors to be cruel to themselves :
 - I. Stretching the imagination until near breaking point, **challenging the body** to complete extreme moves
 - II. **Pushing the physical boundaries** to extremes
 - III. The body must go **beyond exhaustion** into a trance-like state where it no longer feels exhaustion or its pain & can thus achieve extraordinary things.
- Everything the actor does on an Artaudian stage must be **larger than life**. All must be in harmony – a huge acting space, large & extensive lighting, sound, costume, acting style, masks, giant puppets
- Similar to actors of the Classical Greek periods who had to convey narrative to thousands of people in vast amphitheatres, the actors must use **gestures that are huge & a voice that carries** sound over everything else.
- Artaud wanted to **get rid of words** from his theatre. He thought they were limiting
- The **barrier between the theatrical event & life must be broken down**. He challenged the traditional stage & audience divide. One example is having the audience seated round a dinner table and the actors performed on this.
- No space must be unused in the performance area.
- The physicality must be controlled, **ritualised** with **choreographed** moves requiring a high degree of teamwork.
- He was addicted to drugs. This may have enhanced his aims & vision for theatre.

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“The actor is an athlete of the heart”



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Artaud offers us a new way to envision theatre . His aim was to create a new experiential theatre where **the actor & audience experienced the pain & suffering** . He wants actor to wake his own double (his dream self, his psyche) He did this by taking his actors to the extremes of expression using their bodies, voices & interaction. He also explored how to use the space to express these on stage.

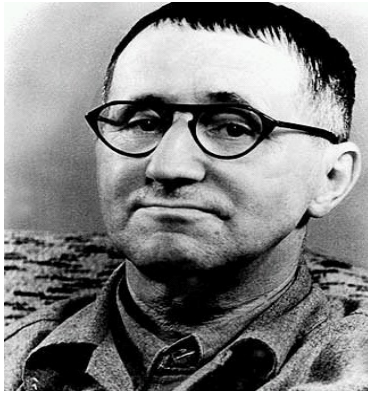
Ideas for theatre

- ❖ Artaud states that the theatre process must stir the audience. The event must carry the audience with it. His theatre aims to arouse the audience double aroused by experiencing **theatre that jolts them into emotional & awed spiritual responses.**
- ❖ His theatre is seen as **surreal**: Surrealism means outside of reality – like a dream state.
- ❖ Artaud never forbade **the use of words**, but he thought **they should be used in a different way; for their sound quality rather than for their meaning.** He did this in two different ways: Using words against their meaning (as was often done by the Surrealists) & then using words exaggerated & supercharged with emotional sub-text to enhance their meaning. Artaud believes that language & labels reduce things thus detracting from their essential mystery.

Key exercises used by Artaudian actors:

- ❑ **Create selves as animals.** Decide if you are predator or prey.
- ❑ **Using rhythm** – Breaking down an action into its parts & creating this rhythmically
- ❑ **Fantasy journey**
- ❑ **Exaggeration of the emotions:** finding the inner feeling & what the emotion makes them feel
- ❑ **Quick depictions** freeze in a depiction & then add a sound & unfreeze / act it out: e.g. A sausage under a grill, a teabag being lowered into a cup of hot water,
- ❑ **Finding a new way to express meaning:**
Create a scene: In silence, In gibberish, as movement

Bertolt Brecht



Biographical Information:

1898-1956.

- ☑ German Marxist playwright, poet and director.
- ☑ Political writer and director.

Why is he studied?

He spent his life evolving a theory and practice of theatre as a forum for political ideas.

Brecht aimed to appeal to less privileged classes, dealing with contemporary/ social issues such as war, stock-markets, poverty, unemployment and corruption in high places.

Terminology

related to Brecht;

'V' effect

Alienation/ Distancing

Bare/ stripped back sets

Destroying the illusion

Breaking 'the fourth wall'

Minimalism

Actors played multiple roles

Direct audience address

Epic Theatre

Political

Didactic

Gestus

Narration and song



What is Epic Theatre, and how does it work?

Epic Theatre is the term used generally to describe Brecht's theory and technique. His plays were 'epic' in that the dramatic action was episodic - a disconnected montage of scenes, non-representational staging, and the 'alienation effect'. All elements contribute to Brecht's overall purpose which was to comment on the political, social and economic elements that affected the lives of his characters.

Acting Techniques

Brecht believed that an actor should present a character in a way that wasn't an impersonation, rather, a narration of the actions of the character. He did this because he wanted to constantly remind his audience that they were watching a play.

Breaking the Fourth Wall

'The Fourth Wall' is an imaginary wall separating the audience from the action on the stage. In realistic productions this wall remains intact and the performers do not acknowledge that they are being watched. The audience are observers who are conditioned to believe that the world of the play is 'real'. It is a suspension of disbelief. Like most theories of realism, Brecht wanted to disrupt the notion of the fourth wall. 'Breaking the fourth wall' involves the characters directly addressing and acknowledging the audience, whether they break character or perform with an awareness of being watched.


Verfremdungseffekt /DistancingTechnique.

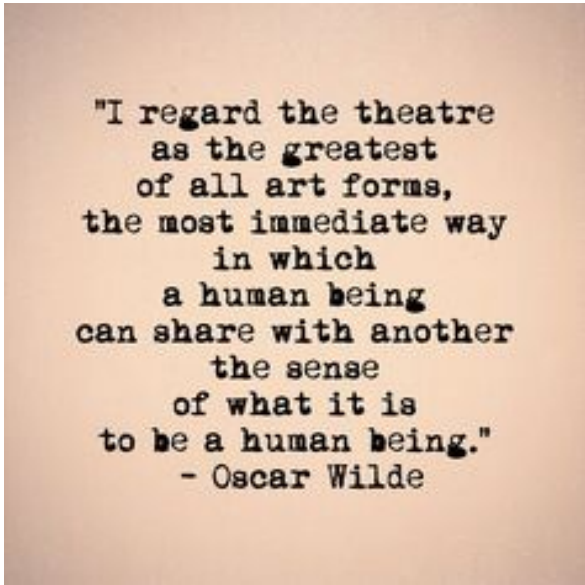
It is a technique which 'estranges' the audience and forces them to question the social realities of the situations being presented in the play. Brecht achieved this by breaking the illusion created by conventional plays of the time. He believed that the 'suspension of disbelief' created by realistic drama was a shallow spectacle, with manipulative plots and heightened emotion.

Gestus is a theatrical technique that helps define the emotion within a character and the context (situation) they are in. It is the combination of a gesture and a social meaning into one movement, stance or vocal display.

Narration and Song

The purpose of song in his plays is not to heighten the emotion of the scenes but as a means to comment on or narrate what is going on.

PERFORMANCE & TECHNICAL SKILLS		KEYWORDS & DEFINITIONS	
Emphasis –voice & movement	Status – how important is your character within the scene/ play? How will you show this?	Stimulus	Your starting point and approach to artistic development
Projection – voice and body – are you loud enough/ owning the space?	Staging – choosing and using the appropriate staging – make sure you can recognise the different kinds of performance spaces	Social skills	Compromise, share ideas, listen to others’ suggestions
Focus – being disciplined/ where do you want your audience to look?	Character/ use of both vocal and physical characteristics – how do you use your skills to play a character different to yourself?	Research	Independent research to bring to rehearsal – where will you find your information?
Accurate interpretation – are you being faithful to the piece?	Using the space/ physical contact/movement/ Spatial awareness/ audience	Lighting	How to use it to create an atmosphere within your performance – how lighting affects mood
Use of space	Coordination – do you know your Downstage Left from your Upstage Right?	Sound	Sound effects -Live & Pre-recorded / Music – to add effects/ atmosphere
Unison/ Sync – speaking, moving as one	Voice – manipulation/ accent/volume/ pitch/tone/rhythm/pace/volume/choral/ soundscapes	Health & Safety	Rehearsal space & performance space – have you done a risk assessment? Is it safe? What precautions need to be taken?
Musicality – vocal technique	Blocking – positions on stage	Set Design	Backdrops & props /naturalistic or abstract
Facial expression – are you using yours appropriately?	Stamina – can you keep going?	Advertising	Promoting your performance e.g social media, posters, word-of-mouth
Quality – how GOOD is your piece? How do you know?	Emotional Engagement – are you invested in the character?	Costume	Selecting appropriate performance clothing -
Timing – cue lines, etc	Stage Combat/ safely performing physical actions.	Props/ Properties	Are yours symbolic? Do they represent something?
Body Language 	The ability to reproduce movement accurately	Rehearsal Schedules	Planning & working to deadlines
	Whole body participation and/or isolation of certain body parts – what effect does this have?	Professional Conduct	Punctuality, attendance, contribution to rehearsals
	Gestures or traits appropriate to a character.	STYLES OF PERFORMANCE	
	Awareness of, and relationship to other characters and performers / proxemics	Naturalism (Stanislavski, Katie Mitchell) Epic Theatre (Bertolt Brecht, Kneehigh) Physical Theatre (Frantic Assembly, Berkoff, Lecoq, DV8, PUSH) Verbatim (Paper Birds, Mark Wheeler)	

Top Tips to make you a better performer!		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👂 Observe other people – take note of how they behave in certain situations. Look at their body language, their facial expressions, and how they change their voices depending on their mood. All great actors are great people-watchers! Be an active observer – focus on one thing at a time – really watch and think about what you see! 👂 Research the style, practitioner, topic you are studying in Drama – use youtube, google, Instagram, the library. Get one step ahead! 👂 Speak Drama’s language! It is vital that you know how to use the vocabulary on this sheet appropriately. It will help you when you have to give feedback, and when you have to analyse your own performance. Learn the words and be able to explain them! 👂 Remember to abide by the rules of the performance space – we must be aware of how we behave, as participants and observers. Safety is paramount at all times! We watch quietly, we do not impose on another groups’ performance space. 		
<p>Expand your knowledge and understanding! – useful websites/podcasts/videos etc...</p> <p>One Stop-Shop – www.essentialdrama.com – featuring interviews and links to important practitioners, companies, styles, etc.</p> <p>BBC Bitesize - https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/subjects/zbckjxs - covers everything from creating to evaluating, and lots of handy videos.</p> <p>Techniques, Practitioners, Video Links - https://www.bgsperformingarts.com/drama.html</p> <p>Kneehigh - http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/page/about_kneehigh.php</p> <p>Frantic Assembly – https://www.youtube.com/user/franticassembly</p> <p>National Theatre - https://www.youtube.com/user/ntdiscovertheatre</p>		
<p>Giving feedback?</p> <p>Use these prompts to help you:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👂 I really liked it when you Because that showed..... 👂 Physically/ Vocally, your characterisation was good because... 👂 I thought it was effective the way that you..... 👂 Could you try....? 👂 Have you thought about....? 👂 I understood the message of the piece because.... 	



Constantin Stanislavski

Biographical Information.

- Lived- 1863-1938.
- Nationality- _____.
- Occupation- Actor, D _____.

Well known Facts;

- Co-founder of the _____ Art Theatre.
- Developed a **System of Acting**.
- Most Studied practitioner in schools and colleges.

Acting Methods

Buzz words related to Stanislavski:

Super-o _____

Through-l _____

Subtext

Inner truth

Na _____

Realism

_____ 'If'

Given _____

Units and objectives

Emotional _____

Sense memory

T _____ - R _____

C _____ of A _____

Using your imagination to create real emotions on stage

In order to believe in the *given circumstances* of the play, Stanislavski actors use the **magic if**: "What if this was really happening to me?" Actors also use their imagination to create their character by asking themselves questions like: "Where have I come from?" "What do I want?" "Where am I going?" "What will I do when I get there?"

You can also use the magic if to make up details about the props you use on stage. This is where your 'sense memory' comes in, e.g. I know I'm not really drinking hot coffee, but IF I WERE...

Action versus Emotion

Stanislavski actors try to find the *super-objective* of the play (i.e. the theme or driving force of the play). Then, they break down the script into objectives (what the character wants to accomplish), obstacles (what's in his or her way) and actions (what are the different things the character can do to try to reach his objective). The *Through-Line* links all the units together into the super-objective. Using these acting methods helps you concentrate on the action rather than the emotion by making each objective an active verb. Here are a few examples of active verbs that can be objectives: **To help, to demean, to praise, to leave, to keep, to convince, to hurt.**

Emotional Memory

Stanislavski students learned to access their own memories to call upon emotions needed to play certain scenes and acting roles—also known as **affective memory**. By remaining 'in character', even when engaging in mundane physical actions, an actor can improve the truthfulness of a performance. During the rehearsal process, an actor should move from 'activity' – a simple piece of stage business – to finding a set of **physical actions** which will lead to a more complex psychological portrayal of character.

Relaxation and Concentration

Actors who study this acting technique learn to relax their muscles and not use any extra muscles than the ones needed to perform a particular action. They also work on concentration so they can reach a state of *solitude in public* and not feel tense when performing on stage. One way they learn to do that is by concentrating on a very small area at first and then widening the circle of concentration until it includes the entire stage—this is called **Circles of Attention**

Character-building techniques

Students of Stanislavski learn how to find their characters' inner objectives, but also how to build a character "from the outside in" through physicality and voice. **Tempo-rhythm** links the mind, body and spirit together in harmony. People have an inner tempo rhythm and an outer tempo-rhythm. The voice is one of the means actors have to communicate what their 'mind is creating clearly, deeply and invisibly'. The voice is an instrument that needs exercising in order to release its full capacity.

