

## BERTOLT BREHTI – EMOTIONAL ACTING

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### Abstract

Bertolt Brehti, there is no doubt that he was one of the most prominent personalities of drama and theater in the twentieth century. He was born in Augsburg, Bavaria, on February 10, 1898. At a very tender age, he began his *adventures* in the world of literature, excelling in writing poetry. He even published some of them in 1914, when he was quite young. Although he was a solid student at school, Bertolt had just been expelled from the Augsburg gymnasium for his refusal to write the essay on the theme: "*It is sweet and honorable to die for your country.*"<sup>1</sup>

In 1917, Brehti enrolled in the faculty of medicine at the Ludvig Maximilian University in Munich, in which case, in one of the student activities, he will participate in a famous theater seminar led by Artur Kuçeri<sup>2</sup>. Kuçeri, in fact, was well-known and had a reputation for being a kind of guru<sup>3</sup>. Thus, in Artur Kuçeri's seminar, Brehti was left with extraordinary impressions. In fact, his enthusiasm and inspiration went so far that Brecht began to criticize one of Kuçeri's favorite authors, Hans Johsti,<sup>4</sup> in particular a biographical drama of his about life in the nineteenth century. In fact, the young Brecht will go so far in his criticisms that, to argue them, he proposed to Kuçeri that he would write a much better play than Johst, even using the same theme. And thus, in fact, his first drama *Bali was born*.

### Keywords

Acting, Brecht, Emotion, Medium, Dramaturgy, Actor's Speech

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### Introduction

In 1918, Brecht was forced to interrupt his studies because he was drafted into the army and sent to the army as a medical technician during the First World War. During this time the young writer, I will not stand idly by, but will also write his second play, *Drums in the Night*, which is a story about a soldier who returns home from the war to meet his fiancée. but he realizes that she had not remained faithful to him, since she had married a *war profiteer*. This drama was the first staged work, but the most important thing in this whole situation is that, practically, with this work, his ideas, concepts and theories on the theater begin to herald new forms because Brecht in this work guides the public that not to succumb to too much emotion while taking part in the action of this drama. *Drums in the Night* premiered at the *Munich Kammerspille Theater* in 1922 to extremely favorable reviews, in particular from the well-known critic of the time, Herbert Ihering. Even, with this play, Brecht will also win *the Kleist Award*, which was the highest award in Germany for drama. Thus Bertolt Brecht, from his beginnings, was in the center of attention of the German dramatic and theatrical public, but also much wider in society. In 1922, the young and very talented playwright will marry the opera soloist, Mariane Zof, while their daughter, Hane Hiob, will be born just one year later, in 1923, and she will become one of the biggest and most famous German actresses in general.

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<sup>1</sup>Brehti, B. *Dialectic in the theater*. Pristina, Rilindja, 1973, pg. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Artur Kuçeri (1878 – 1960) was a literary historian and drama researcher. This, together with Mark Herman, can be considered the founder of drama. He was a professor at the University of Munich, where he organized the famous theater history seminar. His most famous students in this seminar were Bertold Brecht and Ervin Piskatori. Brecht attended his seminar in 1917, in which case, it is thought that he was inspired, so that in 1918 he wrote the play *Baal*.

<sup>3</sup>Guru is a Sanskrit word that means one who enlightens.

<sup>4</sup>Hans Johsti (1890 -1978) was a writer, dramatist and a supporter of Nazism in Germany after his birth. In 1933 he signed the *Gelöbnis treuester Gefolgschaft*, which was a kind of declaration of loyalty to Hitler. He was also an officer of the SS formations. He was arrested after the war and sentenced to 3.5 years in prison

Also, in 1923 the premiere of *Bali will take place*, i.e. the drama which B. Brehti had written for Artur Kuçeri's seminar. While, in 1924, with the recommendation of Max Reinhard <sup>5</sup>, he will move to Berlin, where, as he also believed, there were much more opportunities to continue his career as a playwright. Over the next few years, B. Brehti wrote a number of texts that were well received by the public and critics. Perhaps, the most popular of all was the drama *Stadiumi*, which, in reality, did not have much value, and which was a variant of the adaptation of the opera *John Guy*, which adaptation he made with the help of the composer Kurt Weill. In this case, this operetta, despite the fact that it did not stand out for many high artistic values, will nevertheless become the biggest theater hit in Berlin for the entire decade of the twenties. Also in this period, Brecht also published the first collection of poetry books, *The Ritual of the House*, this book also won the competition of the best poetry books.

### Brecht and his political views

In 1927, Brecht became obsessed with the works of Karl Marx, especially *Capital*, which he studied with great passion. While in 1929, the author definitely "embraced" communism as an ideology. And, his ideological determinations and his political views that determined these ideas, will soon be investigated in his future works. This was already very evident. It was in the wake of this ideological mash-up that his play, *The Rise and Fall of the Mahogany City* <sup>6</sup>, caused great consternation when it appeared on the stage of the Leipzig Theater in 1930. In fact, the play had incited the Nazis in the audience to stand up, protest and create an unprecedented uproar on that occasion.

In 1929, after having separated two years before from Mariane Zof, he will marry Helen Beigel, who will give birth to their son Stefan. The new couple will also bring Brecht's second daughter, Barbara, who also followed the path of acting. But the most important thing related to her name has to do with the fact that Barbara was actually the heir to Brecht's copyright.

During this period, B. Brehti created a lot, in particular with the idea that with his dramatic writer to exert a collective influence on theater viewers, creating a theater different from the traditional one, a theater for theater participants and not for a passive public in hall. While, in 1932, he worked on the script for the feature-length semi-documentary film, *Kuhle Wampe* <sup>7</sup>, which refers to the situation in the country: the great suffering and problems that had hit German society, in particular those related to the unemployment of exceptional in the country. The film *Kuhle Wampe* was a work of subversive humor through which much can be learned about the reality of the last years of the Weimar Republic.

In 1933, Bertolt Brecht's career was rudely and violently cut short as the Nazis came to power in Germany. The night after the Reichstag (German Parliament building) burned down, Bertolt Brecht made a very difficult but extremely wise decision when he decided to flee Germany to Czechoslovakia to settle in Prague. In his homeland, his books and plays will soon be banned by order threatening people who keep his works in their homes or anywhere else.

However, the great playwright did not find peace even in Prague, so he was first forced to flee from the capital of Czechoslovakia to Vienna, and then to Zurich, and then to Finland, on the island of Fin, where he lived for a while. in Vila Marlebak as a guest of the Finnish writer Hell Vullioki.

### Brecht and exile

During this period of exile, while Brecht was waiting for a visa to travel with his family to the United States of America, he would finish here his play *The Courageous Mother and Her Children* (1939), *The Good Man from Seçuani* (1941) and Arturo Uinë (1941).

In May 1941, Brecht finally obtained his American visa and moved to Santa Monica, California, where he had tried to become a Hollywood screenwriter, but his concepts did not challenge Hollywood producers. who could

<sup>5</sup>Max Rajnhardi is important for us, because this was the director who trusted him and discovered the talent of the great Albanian actor, Aleksandër Mojsiu.

<sup>6</sup> *The Rise and Fall of the Mahogany City* is Brecht's work that powerfully captures cabaret humor and cynicism. This work was banned at the time of Nazism in Germany, but, even today, it continues to be considered a very controversial and very provocative piece, not being considered as a work for short-term entertainment.

<sup>7</sup> *Kuhle wampe*, which in Albanian can be translated as *Dry Belly*, is a film directed by Slatan Dudovi, according to B. Brecht's script. *Kuhle Wampe* is the name for the camp near the lake in the hills of Berlin, intended for an extremely large number of unemployed, poor, homeless, during the period of the Great Depression (1929). This film was shot in 1932 and was immediately banned by the state authorities. Even after the end of the Second World War, it appeared very rarely. only in 1999 did the British Film Institute publish the restored copy. The action of the film concerns Ani and her family from the moment they are evicted from their apartment, being forced to live in the camp. It is well known that the last scene of the debate between the passengers on the tram was made by Brehti himself.

not understand Brecht's artistic visions (or, even as a result, seriously understand this author). His only work that achieved success in Hollywood was the film *Hangmen also Die (Even executioners die)*<sup>8</sup>, in 1943.

Unfortunately, Brecht, from his stay in America, was not able to repeat the successes he had in Germany. But also, after the war, problems of a different nature appeared to him - ideological ones. In 1947, at the beginning of the so-called "red scare", the well-known playwright was invited to testify about his communist views. In fact, this one, in the beginning, was part of the group of those intellectuals who objected to testifying about their political and ideological beliefs. But, in October 1947, he will appear before the committee on these matters of the US Senate, dressed in overalls, while smoking a cigarette, making constant references to the translator who translated his statements from German to English. Although he was very, very dexterous and wise in his statements, where in reality the McCartney commission would not be able to "catch" him red-handed, however Brecht considered this approach towards him and others as very irrational and as a retarded political climate, and, very soon after giving his testimony, he will catch a plane and travel to Switzerland, disillusioned with his post-war treatment in the US, not even expecting to see the premieres of some of his plays on Broadway.

Thus, on October 22, 1948, after more than fifteen years of exile, Bertolt Brecht will return to his homeland, Germany, settling in East Berlin, where he greeted the communist cultural establishment and where he immediately decided to stage his play *Mother Courage and Her Children* at *Deutsche Teatre*. Whereas, only one year later, Brecht, in Berlin, will establish his own company, *Berliner Ansambel*. While, in 1954, he will be rewarded with his own theater - Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. But, not much time will pass when Brecht will realize that East Germany was not the country he had imagined, and that it was far from his ideals on communism, so, not infrequently, this conflicted with his hosts German Democratic Republic.

Brecht wrote very few works in the last years of his life, and none of them achieved the fame and acclaim that his earlier works had. But, in this period, what we can prove is that he wrote a number of poems, among his most popular, including *"Buckower Elegies"*.

In Brecht's life, there are moments that even admirers of his work encourage him to look at him with a critical eye. let's say, during the period of the Stalinist purges in Moscow, this Bertolt Brecht, from the mid-thirties, will make a statement that did him no honor when he says, among other things, that: *"The more innocent they are , all the more they deserve to die!"*<sup>9</sup> Brecht has supported the dictatorial and violent regime of Walter Ulbricht, even cynically expressing to the critics of this regime that: *" If the people think badly, then change the people"*.<sup>10</sup>

While, when his lover, Karol Neher, will be arrested in the Soviet Union, Brecht, although he may have had the opportunity to influence, did not intervene in her favor. After that she was never seen<sup>11</sup>.

In any case, in 1955 Brecht will win the *Stalin Peace Prize*. In 1956, he got lung inflammation and, thus, from coronary thrombosis, his life will end on August 14 of the same year.

As James K. Lyon once said<sup>12</sup> about this great artist: „... *It seems that Brecht's death was what, perhaps, more than anyone else advanced his career, even more than any other act of his life.*"<sup>13</sup> To say, from the moment of his burial, the officials of East Germany, will not hesitate to with a dizzying speed his figure and the creativity of Brecht, from something that, in everyday life, while he was alive, could be considered sensitive , and why not problematic, to turn it into something like sacred and classics of German and world literature.. On the other hand, in West Germany, intellectuals, people of theater and drama, and publishers, also did not sit idly by, but his works were glorified, also as something very valuable for German culture in general, but also European and world culture, even, with the publication of these works, creating something that was named at the time as the *"Brechtian Industry"*<sup>14</sup> which reigns as such even to this day. In this process, despite the tendencies to cause incidents over time even after its extinction, Brecht, depending on how one looks at it, became one of the catalysts, but also the most influential creators in the development of theater in both Former Germany.

<sup>8</sup>On May 27, 1943, Jan Kubis and Jozhef Gabik, a member of the Czech resistance movement in Prague, undertook a successful assassination attempt on Rajnharda Hajdrihu, the head of the Reich Security Service (SD) and the "governor of Bohemia and Moravia". ; in which case he dies, as a result of the wounds received on June 4. Meanwhile, on July 5, Jan Fleming successfully completes the training at the spy school "somewhere in the west of Canada", while Brecht, together with Fritz Lang, at the same time starts work on the script entitled *Hangmen also Die* ), inspired by the assassination attempt on Hajdrihu.

<sup>9</sup>Harvud, Ronald, Istorija pozorišta, Clio, Belgrade, 1998, p. 370.

<sup>10</sup>Yes there.

<sup>11</sup>Yes there.

<sup>12</sup>K. James Lyons (1960 - 2007), was an American actor and scholar.

<sup>13</sup>[www.theatredatabase.com/20th\\_century/bertolt\\_Brecht\\_001.html](http://www.theatredatabase.com/20th_century/bertolt_Brecht_001.html) (viewed on 15 05. 2012)

<sup>14</sup>Yes there.

### Brecht and the Effect of Distancing

Brecht, in order to achieve his artistic and ideological objectives, used techniques which, as he believed, would remind the viewer that the show is a photograph of reality and not just reality. Brecht has called this *the effect of distancing* (Verfremdungseffekt), which will be discussed below in this study, about which, below in this study, we will talk more widely. Thus, if we were to identify the actions that Brecht used in his works, then we can say that they are:

- direct direction of the actor towards the audience,
- recitation of the text in the third person or in the past tense,
- loud recitation,
- unusual lighting effects (in the show),
- exploitation of dreams, and so on.<sup>15</sup>

And, if we analyze the aforementioned actions that Brecht used in his dramatic works, then we can conclude that, by emphasizing the construction of dramatic, theatrical events, he strongly hoped that the theater audience would understand that, in fact, reality itself is a construct which can be subject to change.

In this context, we think we can also talk about *historicization*<sup>16</sup> as one of his favorite techniques in dramatic creativity. We can easily decipher this from the very fact that his plays often deal with historical characters as well as historical events. Through this, Brecht strongly believed that, in this way, the public will manage to keep a distance from certain events and characters that have happened and that it will manage to identify the facts by drawing parallels between the problems of people in the past and those of today. Even, with this aim, we think that, in one of his first theater performances, Brecht used a panel with the inscription "*Don't stare so romantically*"<sup>17</sup> ( *Glottzt nicht so romantic !*). Thus, Brecht wrote plays with a strong theoretical basis, from which a powerful political theater was created in which (this is the claim even today of the directors who stage his work) the audience takes an active part by interpreting the significance of the problem.

In the writings that he published sometime between 1920 and 1922, when he also performed the task of theater critic, Brecht, so to speak, constantly criticized the theater as a monotonous event and that it is not playing the role it should to have, perhaps, *the entertainment of the public*. "*Theatre without contact with the public is meaningless*", I will write this. Brecht concludes:<sup>18</sup>

"It means that our theater is meaningless. The theater today has no contact with the public for the reason that it does not know what the public wants from it. What the theater was once able to do, it can no longer do today, but even if it could, people would no longer want it. However, the theater continues to do what it can no longer do, something that is not even required of it. In all those imposing and heated, well-lit buildings that extort a lot of money and in all that is done there, there is not even five cents of fun anymore ,"

### Brecht and Aesthetic Concept

The entire dramatic opus of Bertolt Brecht is built on this ideological and aesthetic concept. But, being himself persecuted by the Nazis, he *devotes a significant number of his dramatic works to this* very evil of humanity that creates the great tragedies of the twentieth century: the horror of the Nazis' terrorist power and the resistance to it. Ordinary people did great evil by sacrificing themselves. *Rifles under the hood, The horrors and misery of the Third Reich, Artur Ui, Visions of Simon Mashar, Shvejku in the Second World War*, are among the main titles of his work that have these events as their subject. Meanwhile, the principles of *epic theater* and the techniques of the unusual were the bases of his later works, *dramas and stories*, which were considered Brecht's *classic works*, as the saying goes: *The Life of Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, The Good Man from Sechuani, the Owner Puntil and his servant Mati, the chalk circle of the Caucasus*; and, finally, *historical dramas* such as the drama *Life of Galileo Galilei, Mother of courage and her children*, these works that talk about the existential and essential issues of human existence itself and that also had to do with the reality that the author himself was living. So to speak, the dilemmas and position in society of the great and martyred physicist Galileo Galilei remind us, so

<sup>15</sup>Yes there.

<sup>16</sup>Yes there.

<sup>17</sup>In fact, Brecht's theory of drama and theatre, even today, continues to have a strong influence on contemporary dramatic and theatrical trends, although there are opinions that the effects of epic theater begin to fade after a few performances. But, some of the innovations that he brought to the theater have already become common for the creators of the time that followed him..

<sup>18</sup>Lazić R. Rečnik dramatic direction, Belgrade, Gea, Academy of Arts, 1996.

to speak, of the dilemmas and position of the physicist, Brecht's contemporary, Robert Oppenheimer<sup>19</sup>. Then the fate of *Mother Courage* may be the fate of *the little man who, like Anna Firling in the religious war*, without any thought or wisdom, will go into Hitler's wars of conquest to *participate* and profit. something no matter how small it is.

The drama *Mother Courage and Her Children* was created, like *the Life of Galileo*, in the very twilight of the Second World War. In both of these, the event takes place in the first half of the seventeenth century - *Mother Courage and her children* on the battlefields of the Thirty Years' War in Sweden, Poland and Germany, while *the Life of Galileo* in the Italy of the Medici and Pope Urban, in Padua, Venice, Florence and Rome. And, while *Mother Courage and Her Children* is a story of the devastation caused by a "religious" war, carrying with it more signs and features of the Middle Ages than of the new centuries, the life of Galileo Galilei speaks of the birth of a new era, respectively for its dawn, the period of taking off science in the history of mankind.

## Conclusion

Brecht was a German theater lover, playwright and poet. He brought many theories, including the modern theory of acting speech. He made great contributions to the field of dramaturgy, dramaturgical criticism, and stage speech.

Growing up in the Weimar Republic, he had his first successes as a playwright in Munich. He then moved to Berlin in 1924, where he wrote "The Threepenny Opera" with Elisabeth Hauptmann and Kurt Weill. He began his lifelong collaboration with the composer Hanns Eisler. Brecht wrote "Didactic Lehrstücke". He became a theorist of epic theater, which he later preferred to call "dialectical theater".

On his father's recommendation, Brecht tried to avoid military conscription by taking advantage of a gap that allowed medical students to postpone their studies. He then enrolled in a medical course at the University of Munich (1917). There he studied drama with Artur Kutscher, who inspired in the young Brecht an admiration for the iconoclastic playwright and cabaret star Frank Wedekind. From July 1916, Brecht's newspaper articles began to appear under the new name "Bert Brecht".

"Brecht remains a playwright whose language is felt physically and all around." That year he married the Viennese opera singer Marianne Zoff. Their daughter, Hanne Hiob, born in March 1923, was a successful German actress. In 1924 Brecht worked with the novelist and playwright Lion Feuchtwanger, whom he had met in 1919; on an adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* that proved to be a milestone in Brecht's early theatrical and dramaturgical development. Brecht's *Edward II* was his first attempt at writing a collaboration, and was the first of many classical texts he was to adapt. As the first debut of this collaboration, he later assessed it according to his conception of "epic theatre".

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<sup>19</sup>Long after he had written this play, B. Brecht wanted to equate the fate of Galileo with the fate of Robert Oppenheimer (1904 - 1967). Oppenheimer was the child of a German capitalist of Jewish origin, an immigrant and a textile importer in New York. As a seventeen-year-old, he achieved exceptional results in Greek, Latin, but also physics and chemistry.

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