

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Epic theater came about through the work of Bertolt Brecht, and originated in Germany between WWI and WWII, and partly in America during the Great Depression when many theorists began to see drama as an important resource for bringing about social change.

Other forms of political theater that developed at this time included agitprop meaning arousing anger and propagandistically putting forward a political agenda.

A second form of political – based theater first appeared in Berlin during the 1920s and 1930s when cabarets emerged featuring political poems, songs, and short sketches.

A third form of theater to appear at this time was street theater in which actors would gather in outdoor public places to perform short satires and farces.

The final cause of an epic theater play is to make the audience question the world and then make appropriate changes.

When empathizing in epic theater, the goal is to have the audience identify with the characters of the play by becoming involved in their situations and subconsciously being put in their place.

Empathy is caused by both
the conditions of a
performance and the text of
the play.

Brecht says plays should show us things as they once happened in a particular time and place which makes them relative. This process is called historicizing.

Verfremdungseffects –
alienation effects used in Epic
Theater created by casting
aside all the conventions of
production and all typical
devices of the well-made play.

In Epic Theater, no more scenery than is necessary is used, and it is a highly presentational type of theater.

Brecht wants to remove all devices that create the illusion of reality in Epic Theater.

He believes that capitalism creates more evils than it alleviates, and there world the world is a ever-changing social contract that only exists in the manner people allow it to.

An epic play takes place over a long period of time and often travels through a variety of locations and involves many activities.

An epic play is a story that is told in verse by a storyteller who narrates a serious of adventures involving a great deed of historical importance.