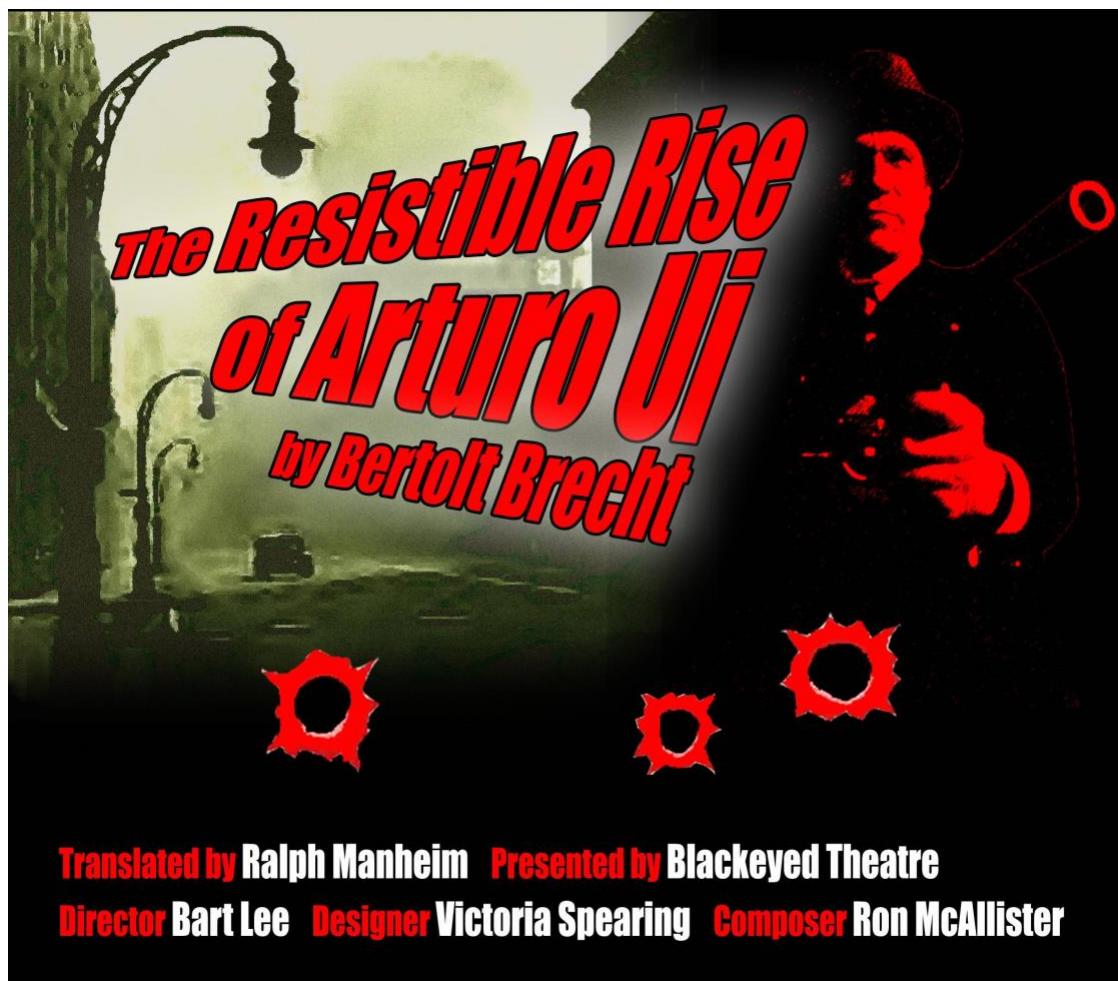




Blackeyed Theatre, The Castle, Wellingborough  
and South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell  
in association present:



EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK

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# Welcome!

Welcome to The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui Education Pack. The following pages have been designed to support study leading up to and after your visit to see the production presented by Blackeyed Theatre. Many of you will have studied Brecht for many a year, and for some of you this may be your first Brechtian venture, therefore the aim of this pack is to supply thoughts and facts that can serve as discussion starters, handouts and practical activity ideas. It provides an introduction to the theatrical approach of Brecht and is intended to give you and your students an understanding of the creative considerations the team have undertaken throughout the rehearsal process.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this pack please email me at [sarah@thecastle.org.uk](mailto:sarah@thecastle.org.uk). I hope you enjoy the pack and the production!

Sarah Chiswell, Education Manager, The Castle, Wellingborough.

## Note from the Director

What does it mean to direct a Brecht play today?

Brecht brings to the table a methodology of rejecting methodologies, complex text, a fresh and innovative performance style and a large amount of historical fact and fiction entwined together as one. His way of telling a story was completely different to the popular theatre of his time and always carried with it a strong political message, in the case of Arturo Ui, a warning about the rise of Hitler.

Today Brecht is studied as a practitioner, mostly as a comparison to Stanislavski - almost as an opposite way of doing things, and yet his methodologies are actually much more commonplace and popular today than one would expect - for example the broken narratives of a Quentin Tarrantino film or the montage sections of Rocky Balboa training could be seen as having a Brechtian influence.

I think that directing a Brecht play means really investigating the alienation effect and how it can be used as a theatrical tool to get the message of the play across. Brecht's theatre seems to have its own style, its own way of doing things and yet research will tell you how Brecht "does it" or how Brecht "should look". The alienation effect, for me, is something that keeps evolving, keeps changing and keeps challenging. With this in mind I shall approach the casting, rehearsal and design process with the intention of finding new questions, new ways of bringing the play to life, focusing on the comedy in the text and using big monstrous physical performances to unearth the underlying horror.

As Brecht's writing is so specific many people wonder if it has the capacity to travel through time in such a way as say a Shakespeare play has. I believe that this play does have a lot to say about power struggles and the human desire for control and that this is a repeating and regrettable factor in the history of mankind.

Bart Lee, Director



Now in its fourth year, Blackeyed Theatre is a vibrant touring company, bringing exciting, high-quality, professional theatre to mid-scale venues throughout England. It aims to make challenging work more accessible for young people through its bold performance style and add value to the theatre experience through activities such as interactive workshops and post-performance talks. Previous productions include Valerie Windsor's *Effie's Burning*, Pinter's *The Caretaker* and Dennis Potter's *Blue Remembered Hills*, Stephen King's *Misery* and Yasmina Reza's *Art*.

*"Blackeyed Theatre's inspired and thought-provoking production of Blue Remembered Hills brought the text to life for our GCSE pupils. It is still talked about a year later and has helped in understanding the social, cultural and historical context as well as reinforcing the relationships between the characters. There has definitely been a marked improvement in their written analysis skills."*

*We were so impressed by this production we booked tickets for their recent production of Stephen King's Misery which left myself and the pupils in no doubt at all as to the outstanding quality of Blackeyed Theatre Co.*

*These two plays are among the best I have seen in 10 years of teaching!"*

Jane Harris - Head of Drama  
Marist Senior School  
Ascot, Berkshire

**Find out more by visiting:  
[www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk](http://www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk)**

To truly understand and appreciate Brecht, you have to see it. And for any student of Drama, seeing a quality production of a Brecht play is a rare but hugely valuable opportunity. Similarly, for teachers it's a comfort to know that performances based on Alienation and the Epic style are available to see first hand. Blackeyed Theatre chose Arturo Ui for this very reason. There is a dearth of quality Brecht productions available and accessible to students. What's more, these performances of Arturo Ui are being supported by participation workshops - A unique and fascinating insight into Brecht for GCSE, A-Level and FE students. And in the world we live in today, there surely could be no better time to stage this important play.

# Synopsis of Play

The play itself centres on the rise of Hitler. It is a dramatic retelling of historical events and Brecht's reaction to them. However to dramatise the story Brecht sets the action in the world of a small time American gangster "Arturo Ui", his hoodlums and their attempt to gain control of the "Cauliflower Industry".

The play is a comedy and yet this is used as a tool to heighten the monstrosities that are carried out. It is highly dramatic, highly theatrical and highly political.

## The Production you are going to see

Five actors play many characters, stepping in and out of the action to tell the story behind the historical events and to show the audience the political messages behind the writing. The play is set in a boxing ring, slugging out political messages as Brecht would have liked and also employs acting techniques including the use of realism to realise the play. The idea is also to show the work in progress, so you will see costume changes, as well as the mechanics of the theatre as the drama unfolds before you.

## List of Characters

The Announcer  
Flake, *businessman, director of the Cauliflower Trust*  
Caruther, *businessman, director of the Cauliflower Trust*  
Butcher, *businessman, director of the Cauliflower Trust*  
Mulberry, *businessman, director of the Cauliflower Trust*  
Clark, *businessman, director of the Cauliflower Trust*  
Sheet *shipyard owner*  
Old Dogsborough  
Young Dogsborough  
Arturo Ui, *gang leader*  
Ernesto Roma, *his lieutenant*  
Emanuele Giri, *gangster*  
The florist Giuseppe Givola *gangster*  
Ted Ragg, *reporter on The Star*  
Dockdaisy  
Bowl, *Sheet's chief assistant*  
Goodwill and Gaffles, *members of the city council*  
O'Casey, *investigator*  
An Actor  
Hook, *wholesale vegetable dealer*  
Defendant Fish  
The defence counsel  
The Judge  
The Doctor  
The Prosecutor  
A woman  
Young Inna, *Roma's familiar*  
A little man  
Ignatius Dullfeet  
Betty Dullfeet, *his wife*  
Dogsborough's Butler  
Bodyguards  
Gunmen  
Vegetable dealers of Chicago and Cicero  
Reporters

# Bertolt Brecht

(1898 – 1956)



Image source: [www.towson.edu/heartfield/images/Brecht](http://www.towson.edu/heartfield/images/Brecht)

# Brecht in Context

Theories of performance during the twentieth century were greatly influenced by the acceptance or rejection of previous trends in theatre and significantly the structure of society in relation to the current political landscape. The method of rehearsal and performance chosen by a director depended greatly on what he or she wanted to achieve with his actors and fundamentally the effect the production was to have on its audience. There are many directors who have influenced the building blocks of theatre development during the last one hundred years. Two of the most significant influences are the Russian director Constantin Stanislavski (1863 – 1938) and the German poet, playwright and director Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956). Both Stanislavski and Brecht were uninspired by the bourgeois theatre of their day and each sought for realism in their theatre making. However Stanislavski pioneered a Naturalistic approach whereas Brecht's intentions were political and produced a very different result. In order to achieve clarity of the passions and drives of Brecht and his theatre, a comparison with the methods of Stanislavski is a worthy investment as it illustrates the contrasts in theatrical approach.

## Stanislavski and Naturalism

Today we have a method of approach to acting for breaking down a play in rehearsal to achieve a naturalistic performance. Stanislavski created a system of actor training which became universally accepted. Stanislavski began as an actor with The Meiningen Players, the ensemble acting group under the direction of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen who believed that

The principle of creating an environment with which the actor could establish a natural relationship ... led inevitably to a far more natural style of acting

(Brown. 1980: 18)

In 1897, Stanislavski collaborated with Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and founded the Moscow Art Theatre, Russia's first professional ensemble theatre. One of Stanislavski's concepts was to lessen the importance of spoken word in order to investigate the emotional truth underlying the speech. At first Stanislavski created external naturalistic detail, like Meiningen had, for his actors with the hope that this would enhance a natural playing in the actor. However this was discarded and Stanislavski turned to an investigation of the emotional motivation behind the words.

To play truly means to be right, logical, coherent, to think, to strive, feel and act in unison with your role

(Stanislavski. 1980: 14)

It is this effect that Stanislavski termed psychological realism, and the majority of his productions were experiments in this investigation. Stanislavski guided his actors in the creation of an internal character where the main objective

was to encourage the actor to create an illusion of reality on stage, to become the character; to convince the audience to suspend disbelief and accept what they saw on stage as a slice of life, to empathise with the characters and believe that the actor and that the feelings being felt were real. Stanislavski called this ability to reach a heightened state of experience The Creative State of Mind, and he created a series of exercises, now universally known as The Method to enable actors to achieve this whenever they were preparing for performance. Stanislavski wanted powerful and convincing performances, he wanted his actors to experience the emotions and feelings of the characters, not simply *represent* or *show* them. Stanislavski believed that actors who recalled their own feelings and experiences and substituted them for those of their character were able to create a naturalistic illusion and consequently captivate the audience.

## **Brecht and Social Realism**

Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956) was educated at the Universities of Munich and Berlin. In 1924 he joined the Berlin Deutsches Theatre, under the direction of Max Reinhardt. Brecht was disillusioned by what he observed as the middle classes passively watching theatre for entertainment. Brecht was making theatre in an era of revolution and wanted to create an active theatre, a theatre for the working classes, a theatre where people would be encouraged to think and critically discuss the world around them and discover a capacity for change. Brecht wanted a theatre that would educate as well as entertain and sought to change society through his changes to theatre.

Brecht was constantly in search of ways to overcome the numbing effect of theatrical convention

(Braun. 1982: 167)

Brecht rejected traditional methods of drama, including those practised by Stanislavski, as he wanted his audiences to react to scenes and characters on stage as if they were at a boxing match. He wanted to expose politics and institutions through a theatrical landscape that examined society. Brecht wanted his audience to think and to analyse and he wanted clarity.

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. 1978: 248)

Brecht trained actors and developed a theory and style called Epic theatre. In his plays he would follow small scenes with large, public ones, he would break up scenes with songs and change geographical location or decade, all in a bid to keep his audience awake and alert and able to critically judge the story and the moral questions presented. Brecht wanted his plays to expose and criticise the politics of the day and through this stimulate a debate through the revelations of characters and situations which could encourage an audience to observe familiar things in a new and clearer way.



To achieve this on stage, Brecht made sure everything on stage had a purpose, that there was nothing decorative. He would use signs and projections to accompany scene action with real life footage of familiar events. Narration, music and song would be used to comment on the stage action, and there would be no illusions as lighting was used to reveal the mechanics of theatre and as a reminder that the actors were telling a story. Brecht asked his actors to externalise all feelings and to show the attitude and behaviour of the character as an actor playing a part. In rehearsal, Brecht encouraged:

Actors speaking in the third person  
Actors speaking in the past tense  
Actors articulating the stage directions

(Fredman & Reade. 1996: 242)

Brecht wanted to detach the actor from the character and the character from the audience and encourage each to keep their critical judgement intact. He used distancing devices such as the above to create a frame around the action, and in a bid to prevent the spectator from identifying with characters on the stage. This formed part of Brecht's alienation effect,

A way of making the audience constantly aware that they were sitting in a theatre watching a play about which they were required to think, rather than be carried away on a wave of emotion or sympathy for a particular character

(Brown. 1980: 18)

Brecht manipulated performance to highlight how society can change, and this in turn instigated a critical attitude in the audience. For Brecht, theatre served as a means to comment critically on society. He was interested in social reality, whereas Stanislavski was interested in physical and emotional truth on stage and creating a natural and convincing performance. Due to his Communist activities, Brecht left Germany in 1933, finally settling in California in 1941. In 1948 he returned to Germany where he founded the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht was morally pessimistic and his theatrical innovation illustrates this in its incessant commentary on a failing society as he searched for something so much more than the creation of a performance.

#### Sources:

Braun E (1982) The director and the stage Methuen  
Brown J M (1980) Directing Drama London: Peter Owen  
Drain R (ed) (1996) Twentieth Century Theatre – A sourcebook Routledge  
Fredman R & Reade I (1996) An essential guide to making theatre Hodder & Stoughton  
Stanislavski C (1980) An Actor Prepares Methuen  
Willet J (1980) Brecht on Theatre Methuen

Berliner Ensemble production 1962  
Martin Wuttke stars as Arturo Ui



[www.artsalive.ca](http://www.artsalive.ca)

The differences between the Dramatic Theatre and Epic Theatre

## **Dramatic Theatre**

- Plot
- Implicates the spectator in a stage situation
- Wears down his/her capacity for action
- Provides him/her with sensations
- The spectator is involved in something
- Suggestion
- The spectator shares the experience
- The human being is taken for granted
- The human being is unalterable
- Eyes on the finish
- One scene makes another
- Growth
- The human being as a fixed point
- Thought determines being
- Feeling

## **Epic Theatre**

- Narrative
- Turns the spectator into an observer
- Arouses his/her capacity for action
- Forces him/her to take decisions
- The spectator is made to face something
- Argument
- The spectator stands outside, studies
- The human being is the object of the inquiry
- The human being is alterable and able to alter
- Eyes on the course
- Each scene for itself
- Montage
- The human being as a process
- Social being determines thought
- Reason

### **Thought:**

If it is possible for human beings to change their behaviour, does theatre have a role to play?

Source: Fredman R & Reade I (1996) *Essential Guide to Making Theatre* Hodder & Stoughton

### **Extract from The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht**

(John Willett)

The Resistible Ascent of Arturo Ui

**‘... a parable play, written with the aim of destroying the usual disastrous respect which we feel for great murderers.’**

Set in Chicago 1938-9

The five men who control the wholesale greengrocery trade in Chicago face an economic crisis. They bribe Dogsborough, their respected Mayor, to grant a loan. The Press get wind of this, but Ui the gang leader, who wants to ‘protect’ the wholesalers and is blackmailing Dogsborough, murders the one witness. With his lieutenants Giri, Givola and Roma, Ui then establishes a system of ‘protection’, and sets fire to one of the wholesalers’ warehouses. For this crime a half-wit picked up by Giri is tried and, with the judges’ connivance, found guilty. The gangsters fall out over Dogsborough’s testament, which names Ui as his successor, and when Roma opposes Ui’s plan for extending operations to the suburb of Cicero, Ui has him treacherously shot down by the others. Then Dullfeet of Cicero, whose newspaper has criticised the lawlessness in Chicago, is likewise murdered after every appearance of friendship. So the wholesalers of Cicero, too, are scared into asking (unanimously) for Ui’s protection, and Ui concludes by sketching sweeping plans for the future.

Sixteen scenes with (new) rhymed prologue. Mainly blank verse, but with patches of prose. Shakespearean scene endings; one song. One scene includes the whole of ‘Friends, Romans and countrymen’; another is a parody of the garden scene from *Faust I*. Each scene finishes with the stage direction ‘AN INSCRIPTION APPEARS WHICH RECALLS CERTAIN EPISODES OF THE PAST’.

Collaborator: Steffin.

Written March – April 1941. First produced Stuttgart 10 November 1958 by Peter Palitzsch; by Palitzsch and Wekwerth, scenery Von Appen, music Hosalla, with Ekkehard Schall as Ui and Berliner Ensemble, 23 March 1959: at Lunt-Fontanne Theatre, New York, 11 November 1963, by Tony Richardson, with Christopher Plummer as Ui.

Published in *Sinn and Form* (Potsdam), Zweites Sonderheft Bertolt Brecht, 1957, and *Stucke IX*.

Notes in the latter. ‘In order that the play may retain all its (regrettable) significance, it must be produced on the Grand Scale, and preferably with obvious hark backs to the Elizabethan theatre ... pure parody however must be avoided, and the comic element must be to some extent revolting. The actual presentation has got to go at top speed ...’ Notes ‘Aus dem Arbeitsbuch’ in *Sinn and Form* edition. Texts of ‘inscriptions’ to go between the scenes, in *Stucke*.

Source: Willett J (1959) *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* Methuen (p52-53)

## Chronological Table

1. 1929 – 1932. Germany is hard hit by the world crisis. At the height of the crisis a number of Prussian Junkers try to obtain government loans, for a long time without success. The big industrialists in the Ruhr dream of expansion.
2. By way of winning President Hindenburg's sympathy for their cause, the Junkers make him a present of a landed estate.
3. In the autumn of 1932, Adolf Hitler's party and private army are threatened with bankruptcy and disintegration. To save the situation Hitler tries desperately to have himself appointed Chancellor, but for a long time Hindenburg refuses to see him.
4. In January 1933 Hindenburg appoints Hitler Chancellor in return for a promise to prevent the exposure of the *Osthilfe* (East Aid) scandal, in which Hindenburg himself is implicated.
5. After coming to power legally, Hitler surprises his high patrons by extremely violent measures, but keeps his promises.
6. The gang leader quickly transforms himself into a statesman. He is believed to have taken lessons in declamation and bearing from one, Basil, a provincial actor.
7. February 1933, the Reichstag fire. Hitler accuses his enemies of instigating the fire and gives the signal for the Night of the Long Knives.
8. The Supreme Court in Leipzig condemns an unemployed worker to death for causing the fire. The real incendiaries get off scot-free.
9. and 10. The impending death of the aged Hindenburg provokes bitter struggles in the Nazi camp. The Junkers and industrialists demand Rohm's removal. The occupation of Austria is planned.
11. On the night of 30 June 1934 Hitler overpowers his friend Rohm at an inn where Rohm has been waiting for him. Up to the last moment Rohm thinks that Hitler is coming to arrange for a joint strike against Hindenburg and Goring.
12. Under compulsion the Austrian Chancellor Englebert Dollfuss agrees to stop the attacks on Hitler that have been appearing in the Austrian press.
13. Dollfuss is murdered at Hitler's instigation, but Hitler goes on negotiating with Austrian rightist circles.
15. On 11 March 1938 Hitler marches into Austria. An election under the Nazi terror results in a 98% vote for Hitler.

Source:

**The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**

By Bertolt Brecht

Translated by Ralph Manheim

Published by Methuen

## The Parallels

<b>Dogsborough</b>	Hindenburg
<b>Arturo Ui</b>	Hitler
<b>Giri</b>	Goring
<b>Roma</b>	Rohm
<b>Givola</b>	Goebbels
<b>Dullfeet</b>	Dollfuss
<b>Cauliflower Trust</b>	Junkers (or East Prussian landowners)
<b>Vegetable dealers</b>	Petty bourgeoisie
<b>Gangsters</b>	Fascists
<b>Dock Aid scandal</b>	'Osthilfe' (East Aid) scandal
<b>Warehouse-fire trial</b>	Reichstag Fire trial
<b>Chicago</b>	Germany
<b>Cicero</b>	Austria

Source:

**The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui**

By Bertolt Brecht

Translated by Ralph Manheim

Published by Methuen

**National Actors Theatre production 2002**

**Directed by Simon McBurney**

**Al Pacino as Arturo Ui**



Image source: [arts.guardian.co.uk/.../story/0,,952571,00.html](https://arts.guardian.co.uk/.../story/0,,952571,00.html)

## **Production Checklist**

**I wanted to take the principle that it was not just a matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and applying that to the theatre**

*(Brecht in Mitter/Shevtsova. 2005: 52)*

Brecht wanted to encourage his audiences to think about the society presented in his plays and the choices presented to his characters. He wanted them to think about the society they lived in and how it worked, and more importantly, how it could work. The following list is a collection of distancing techniques Brecht developed to remind his audience that they were in a theatre and to stimulate thought rather than emotion.

**Production techniques for an objective theatre:**

- Examination of a political oppression
  - Empty space
  - Scenes introduced by placard or projection
  - Functional rather than decorative props
  - Set changes observed by audience
  - Lights used to show action, or time passing rather than create atmosphere
  - Lanterns and operators in view of audience
  - Music used to comment on or juxtapose action
  - Songs used to tell story
  - Each scene and song able to stand alone and deliver their own message
  - Scenes inform each other but do not grow from one another
  - Each scene and song displays human nature rather than character development
  - The actor as a storyteller
  - Re-examination of the familiar through rehearsal – use of past tense, speaking in third person, vocalising stage directions and swapping roles to evaluate characters helped distance actors from the emotions of the characters and continue to be surprised by the decisions their characters make
  - Duality of actor and character
  - Characters given titles and presented as representations
  - Presentational acting style; performers demonstrate rather than imitate
  - Narrative and circumstance as a priority over character
  - Address the audience
  - Interrogation that leads to sharpened observation
  - Examination of history of the past and present
  - Ensemble to deliver Gestus – the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships prevailing between people of a given period
- (Neelands / Dobson. 2000: 106)

## **Activities**

## 1. Theatre critic

### Task: Write a review of the production

Tips: Preparation:

- Read the play before coming to watch it.
- Bring a notebook and make notes on key themes, design, delivery of political message and presentation of characters.

Writing the review:

- Begin the review with an introduction that provides a synopsis (but don't give too much away!) and set your expectations.
- Discuss the following production elements in relation to your expectations of Brechtian conventions (see checklist p14):
  1. The Acting
  2. The Directing
  3. The Design (Set / Costume / Lighting / Sound)
  4. The actor / audience relationship - What conventions are used in the production to distance the audience?
- Does the production fulfil your expectations?
- Would you recommend the production?

## 2. Theatre design

### Task: Design your own set and create your own model box

Tips:

- Consider the actor / audience relationship and how design plays a huge part in this. You could use theatre in the round, or a site-specific approach for example.
- How would you reveal the mechanics of theatre?
- What colours would you use? Brecht was German, but the play is set in America. You could use the colours of the German flag to as a visual message of where the actual horrors took place: black, red and yellow.

## 3. Direct a scene

### Task: Direct the Prologue with 5 actors

Tips:

- Read the whole play
- Model the actor as a storyteller, encouraging the actor to show the character rather than become it. (See poem p19)
- Read the opening speech of Shakespeare's Richard III

## The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui

By Bertolt Brecht

Translated by Ralph Manheim



Published by Methuen

## Prologue

*The Announcer steps before the curtain. Large notices are attached to the curtain: 'New developments in dock subsidy scandal' ... 'The true facts about Dogsborough's will and confession' ... 'Sensation at warehouse fire trial' ... 'Friends murder gangster Ernesto Roma' ... 'Ignatius Dullfeet blackmailed and murdered' ... 'Cicero taken over by gangsters'. Behind the curtain popular dance music.*

The Announcer:

Friends, tonight we're going to show –  
Pipe down, you boys in the back row!  
And, lady, your hat is in the way! –  
Our great historical gangster play  
Containing, for the first time, as you'll see  
The truth about the scandalous dock subsidy.  
Further we give you, for your betterment  
Dogsborough's confession and testament.  
Arturo Ui's rise while the stock markets fell.  
The notorious warehouse fire trial. What a sell!  
The Dullfeet murder! Justice in a coma!  
Gang warfare: the killing of Ernesto Roma!  
All culminating in our standing last tableau:  
Gangsters take over the town of Cicero!  
Brilliant performers will portray  
The most eminent gangsters of our day.  
You'll see some dead and some alive  
Some by-gone and others that survive  
Some born, some made – for instance, here we show  
The good old honest Dogsborough!

*Old Dogsborough steps before the curtain.*

His hair is white, his hair is black.  
Corrupt old man, you may step back.

*Dogsborough bows and steps back.*

The next exhibit on our list  
Is Givola –

*Givola has stepped before the curtain.*

- the horticulturalist.  
His tongue's so slippery he'd know how

To sell you a billy-goat for a cow!  
Short, says the proverb, are the legs of lies.  
Look at his legs, just use your eyes.

*Givola steps back limping.*

Now to Emauele Giri, the super-clown.  
Come out, let's look you up and down!

*Giri steps before the curtain and waves his hand at the audience.*

One of the greatest killers ever known!  
Okay, beat it!

*Giri steps back with an angry look.*

And lastly Public Enemy Number One  
Arturo Ui. Now you'll see  
The biggest gangster of all times  
Whom heaven sent us for our crimes  
Our weakness and stupidity!

*Arturo Ui steps before the curtain and walks out along the footlights.*

Doesn't he make you think of Richard the Third?  
Has anybody ever heard  
Of blood so ghoulishly and lavishly shed  
Since wars were fought for roses white and red?  
In view of this the management  
Has spared no cost in its intent  
To picture his spectacularly vile  
Manoeuvres in the grandest style.  
But everything you'll see tonight is true.  
Nothing's invented, nothing's new  
Or made to order just for you.  
The gangster play that we present  
Is known to our whole continent.

*While the music swells and the sound of machine-gun mingles with it, the  
Announcer retires with an air of bustling self-importance.*

## Showing has to be shown

A poem by Bertolt Brecht

Show that you are showing! Among all the varied attitudes  
 Which you show when showing how men play their parts  
 The attitude of showing must never be forgotten.  
 All attitudes must be based on the attitude of showing  
 This is how to practise: before you show the way  
 A man betrays someone, or is seized by jealousy  
 Or concludes a deal, first look  
 At the audience, as if you wished to say:  
 'Now take note, this man is now betraying someone and this is how he does it,  
 This is what he looks like when jealousy seizes him, and this  
 Is how he deals when dealing.' In this way  
 Your showing will keep the attitude of showing  
 Of putting forward what has been made ready, of finishing off  
 Of continually going further. So show  
 That what you show is something you show every night, have often shown before  
 And your playing will resemble a weaver's weaving, the work of a  
 Craftsman. And all that goes with showing  
 Like your continual concern to  
 Make watching simpler, always to ensure the best  
 View of every episode – that too you should make visible. Then  
 All this betraying and dealing and  
 Being seized by jealousy will be as it were  
 Imbued with something of the quality of a  
 Daily operation, for instance of eating, saying Good Morning and  
 Doing one's work. (For you are working, aren't you?)  
 And behind your stage parts you yourself must still be visible  
 As those who are playing them.

Source: Brecht B (eds Willett J & Mannheim R) (1976) Poems 1913 – 1956 London: Methuen



Image source: [www.leonardrossiter.com/lr-arturoui.jpg](http://www.leonardrossiter.com/lr-arturoui.jpg)

## Discussion Points

**Task:** You could use the above poem as a checklist for Activity 3 (p16) Direct a scene.

**1. Brecht wanted his theatre to be like a boxing ring. He wanted to stir critical judgement in his audiences and stimulate debate in order to encourage change. This play deals with events leading up to WW2. What is its relevance today and how effective is the desire to create that critical debate?**

**2. What role does theatre have to play in each of the following?**

- Does society shape us or do we shape society?
- Is it possible to change people's perceptions and behaviour?
- Is war an inevitable part of the human condition?

**3. How has Brecht influenced current trends in theatre making?**

Discuss with reference to the following practitioners:

Constantin Stanislavski – different European approach

Jerzy Grotowski – different European approach

Vsevolod Meyerhold – political contemporary

Erwin Piscator – political contemporary

Augusto Boal – South American, political agenda for theatre

## **Glossary**

Epic

For Brecht, the term does not mean a literary genre (he talks of the epic drama and novel) but the critical attitude of the narrator to the fable. He tells the story and comments on the plot but does not identify with it. In this way, the reader or spectator is allowed to observe and to form an opinion while maintaining a critical distance. Brecht speaks of *epic theatre* from 1926 onwards, contrasting it particularly with naturalist and expressionist tendencies. He is to call it a *theatre of the scientific era*, transmitting practical knowledge and teaching materialist thought capable of exercising some influence over reality. Distancing is the key element.

### Didactic (-play)

Complementing his Marxist studies, Brecht writes a number of didactic exercises which do without both theatre and audience. Intended for amateur troupes of the Communist Youth, their object is to experiment with collective behaviour in order to link political action and moral reflection. The actor spectator learns while teaching to cease being a consumer and to become productive.

### Distancing (German *Verfremdung*)

A term of Hegelian origin used freely by Brecht after 1936 to designate certain epic procedures to suppress well-known and obvious features of character and stage procedure. With the latter thus rendered unfamiliar and surprising, the spectator is prevented from any instinctive identification and from confusing the drama with reality. To the extent that he then recognises a situation as historic, the world will appear to him capable of transformation: 'Henceforth the theatre presents the world so that the spectator will take possession of it.' *Distancing effects* include interludes and songs to interrupt the plot, placards anticipating later events, prologues and epilogues, admonitions to the audience, gestures, metaphors, music, scenery, etc. Many of these effects are already to be found in Asian theatre and medieval farce.

### Social *gestus*

The sum of the movements, behaviour, facial expressions, language and intonation employed by an individual in relation to others and which reveal both his personality and his social position. 'Words and gestures can be replaced by other words and gestures without in any way altering the social *gestus*'.

Source: Thoss M (1994) *Brecht for Beginners* Writers and Readers

### **Further reading:**

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