

Techniques in Mother Courage and Her Children

Bertolt Brecht ((1941
Epic Theatre Principles

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Epic Theatre Concept

- Theatre that makes audiences think, not just feel.
- Aim: political awareness and social critique.
- Contrasts with Aristotelian emotional catharsis.

Alienation Effect (Verfremdungseffekt)

- Keeps audience detached to provoke analysis.
- Prevents emotional immersion.
- Examples: Songs interrupt action, placards summarize scenes, direct addresses.

Songs and Music

- Songs interrupt the plot to reflect on themes.
- Commentary on war, greed, and survival.
- Mother Courage's songs often reveal irony.

Placards and Projections

- Scenes introduced with placards telling the outcome.
- Removes suspense – focus on why events happen, not what happens next.

Characterization

- Characters represent social roles, not psychological depth.
- Mother Courage = war profiteer / survival instinct.
- Katrin = silent moral conscience.

Set and Staging

- Minimalist, visible stage elements.
- Scene changes in full view of audience.
- The wagon as a central symbolic prop.

Irony and Contrast

- Humor and tragedy mixed.
- Irony between Mother Courage's nickname and her losses.
- Contradictions highlight social critique.

Conclusion

- Brecht's techniques break theatrical illusion.
- Goal: audience leaves questioning society, not just pitying characters.
- Mother Courage = model of political theatre.