

Key Vocabulary

Verfremdungseffekt	Translated into English (The Alienation Effect) this term means to perform in a way that the audience was stopped from simply identifying themselves with the characters in the play.
Lehrstücke	Learning Plays. Brecht wanted his audience to take something away and have learned something from the play – not just feel emotions.

Bertolt Brecht: 1898 - 1956



Epic Theatre

Bertolt Brecht saw Theatre as an active instrument for social and political change. Brechtian theatre aims to instruct and educate. Brecht was a poet, director and playwright, and through his theatre practice, he wanted to encourage audiences to reject the idea that their lives were predetermined and impossible to improve. Brecht evolved what became known as 'epic theatre', and this style of performance was in ideological opposition to the theatre of emotion under Stanislavskian rule. Brecht wanted the audience to question and become critical observers rather than passive audience members. He intended to destroy illusion and reveal truth through action. Brecht often referred to his audience as 'jury-like' as he wanted his audience to consider, reflect and make judgements. One of the main ways he made this possible for audiences was by interrupting the action and developing empathy for characters and their situations.

Brechtian theatre aims to distance the audience. It uses non-naturalistic theatrical conventions to create what he referred to as the 'Verfremdungseffekt.' It is often referred to as 'distancing' or 'to make strange'. Brecht wanted his audiences to 'look again' at something familiar, and therefore juxtaposition, contradiction, and montage were often at the heart of his productions. Through distancing his audiences, Brecht was able to get his audiences to both watch, understand and think. He also wanted to make his audiences laugh and saw Spass (fun) as a great tool to make his audience critical.

Brecht reminded the audience the performance that they were viewing was a construct, not a reality, and that, as with reality, it is open to change. As a result, he was keen to show the 'mechanics of theatre' to his audiences.

Bertolt Brecht was a theatre practitioner. He made and shaped theatre in a way that has a huge impact on its development. Many of his ideas were so revolutionary that they changed the theatrical landscape forever. Modern theatre owes a lot to his methods.

Techniques

Gestus

Typically a gesture that exposes the characters attitude or behaviour in a given moment. The gestus should communicate a moment of critical engagement from the audience.

Freeze frames

Use of freeze frames/tableaux. This is obviously unnatural in the simple sense of that word and should make the audience think about the frozen moment.

Placards

Placards can comment on the action, tell us what is about to happen or even ask thought-provoking questions to the audience.

Spass

Spass might be used in the form of a comic song, slapstick or physical comedy or even a stand-up routine.

Direct address

Often a moment in which the character needs to off-load a worry or give an opinion, and check where the audience are with their thoughts on what is happening.

Episodic structure

Involves many different characters and locations, covers a lengthy period of time and typically includes subplots in addition to the main story.

Narration

Objective Narration - someone who comments on the action or events.

In-character Narration - a character who narrates their own situation within the world of the play.

Multi-rolling

Actors play many different roles—frequent picking up and dropping character to prevent the audience from developing a deep emotional connection.

Plays

Mother Courage and her Children

The play is set in the 17th century in Europe during the Thirty Years' War. The Recruiting Officer and Sergeant are introduced, complaining about the difficulty of recruiting soldiers to the war. Anna Fierling (Mother Courage) enters, pulling a cart containing provisions for sale to soldiers.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle

The Caucasian Chalk Circle is a play by the German modernist playwright Bertolt Brecht. An example of Brecht's epic theatre, the play is a parable about a peasant girl who rescues a baby and becomes a better mother than her wealthy natural parents.

The Threepenny Opera

The Threepenny Opera is a "play with music" by Bertolt Brecht, adapted from a translation by Elisabeth Hauptmann of John Gay's 18th-century English ballad opera, The Beggar's Opera, and four ballads by François Villon, with music by Kurt Weill.

Fear and Misery of the Third Reich

Fear and Misery of the Third Reich, also known as The Private Life of the Master Race, is one of Bertolt Brecht's most famous plays and the first of his openly anti-Nazi works.

Key Vocabulary

Reinterpretation	Is the deconstruction of the text in order to create a new piece of theatre.
Deconstruct	The process by which a theatrical text can be analysed, and its components explored.

Their work reaches far beyond the stage. Education and community engagement play a vital role in Frantic Assembly's overall artistic vision, making theatre accessible to a broad range of young people and aspiring professionals. The company runs a vast network of workshops, residencies, and talks both nationally and internationally and has established a reputation amongst teachers to provide education work of the highest quality.



Techniques

Music

Frantic has always used music to ignite their work. Music provides a structure to build from and create complicated physical movement sequences.

Building blocks

Frantic often work with simple 'building blocks' of physical work. These simple sequences of movement then gradually become more and more complex.

The Three Universes

This is a guiding philosophy for movement sequences. The moment before, during and after the touch. Each must be different and interesting.

Round-By-Through

A technique for creating physical theatre sequences. Actors must abide by these simple three instructions when exploring physical theatre work.

Collaboration

Whilst Frantic do work on their own productions, they have been highly successful in collaborating and offering their unique approach to directors and companies.

Chair duets

Pair work that consists of sequences of movement using chairs. Actors gradually build their physical routine and experiment with music, pace and weight of movement.

Ensemble

The ensemble is at the heart of Frantic Assembly. The ensemble is an integral part of the story and can be used for larger movement sequences or to comment on the action.

Frantic Assembly: Founded 1994

Founders: Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett, Vicki Middleton

Aims and Intentions

Mission

From a reckless leap into the unknown 25 years ago, Frantic Assembly has developed into one of the UK's most successful and best-loved theatre companies. Their ambition is to continue to learn and remain committed to making brave and bold theatre. At times it is physically dynamic and brutal. At others, it's proudly tender and fragile. But Frantic Assembly has always been about more than just the work on stage. It is about the ethos of collaboration, of empowerment, of that constant desire to improve. It is about telling stories in a voice we don't always hear and finding talent in places we don't always look at.

Their distinct creative approach has influenced contemporary theatre-making and foregrounded the use of movement directors and choreographers in new dramatic works. It has inspired writers to embrace new creative processes and opened up actors and dancers to new techniques. This is a matter of great pride for the company as they continue to do something different and to do it differently.

Frantic's flagship programme, Ignition, is an innovative, free vocational training programme for young people, particularly targeting those with little previous experience of, or access to, the arts. Ignition has been unlocking creative potential in young people across the UK for over 10 years and aims to make the future of British theatre better, fairer and younger.

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

EARLY TRAINING AND BACKGROUND

- Five time Olivier award winner, including best theatre choreographer.
- Also the winner of both tony awards for best director and best choreographer, which he is the only person to ever achieve both awards.
- Matthew received an OBE in 2001 for his contribution to the arts.
- His creation of the new adventures dance company is now the most successful and busiest dance company in the world.
- Matthew started his dance training at the comparatively late age of 22. He studied Dance Theatre and Choreography at The Laban Centre (now Trinity Laban) graduating in 1985 and spending a further year with the college's performance company Transitions. Matthew danced professionally for 14 years creating many roles in his own work.
- In 1992 Bourne created a version of The Nutcracker for Opera North; it became his largest and most successful production to date. The Nutcracker was the first of several classics to be given a Bourne makeover, with the choreographer adding a shot of modern irony, plenty of in-jokes, and a hefty dose of old fashioned feeling. By far the best known of the Bourne revamps is Swan Lake (1995), with its all-male chorus of swans, which became a phenomenal international hit



INFLUENCES

- Swan Lake - Tchaikovsky (the original choreographer of Swan Lake) was the influencer on Bourne's Swan Lake because he felt troubled due to his homosexuality. This made Bourne link with royalty who in the period of 1990 royal scandals were high and rebellion was occurring more within the royal family. He used that as a starting point to explore the psychology of a prince trapped by royal protocol.
- His influence was to produce work for people who struggled to vocally produce. People who had nerve issues with being on stage and public speaking was an issue for him so he wanted to focus on creating work that didn't involve the voice so everyone could express their passions.

STYLISTIC FEATURE EXAMPLES

- Eclectic in approach, using different style of dance such as ballet, contemporary and social dance.
- Works are popular often with witty humour and large ensemble numbers as they have been strongly influenced by musical theatre and Hollywood musicals. Sets and costumes are lavish and memorable.
- Collaboration is key in his working process. The dancers have great input into the choreography and characterisation and he builds working relationships with designers, composers and technical directors.
- Uses dancer's counts when choreographing rather than rhythms from the score.
- Wants to entertain the audience and reach as wide and diverse an audience as possible.
- Can be seen as a post-modern practitioner as he takes from the past and use the material to create a meaning relevant for a contemporary audience e.g. using past ballets and reworking them.



STYLISTIC FEATURES

There are 13 fingerprints of Matthew Bourne's style

- Overview of key features:
1. Eclectic dance styles
 2. Humour
 3. Large ensemble numbers
 4. Lavish set and costumes
 5. Entertain audience
 6. Reach wide and diverse audience
 7. Post-modern approaches
 8. Reworking past ballets
 9. Collaboration
 10. Dancers are actors
 11. Existing musical scores
 12. Music used ironically
 13. Dancer's counts used

HIS WORKS

- As Artistic Director of his first company, Adventures in Motion Pictures from 1987 until 2002 Matthew created many award-winning works for the Company including Spitfire (1988), The Infernal Galop (1989), Town and Country (1991), Deadly Serious (1992), Nutcracker! (1992), Highland Fling (1994), Swan Lake (1995), Cinderella (1997) and The Car Man (2000).
- In 2004 Matthew co-directed with Richard Eyre and choreographed with Stephen Mear the hit West End musical Mary Poppins for which he won an Olivier Award for Best Theatre Choreographer, and two Tony nominations when it opened on Broadway.



CONTRIBUTION TO THE INDUSTRY

- New Adventures Company: Matthews first dance company that was created in 2002. Play without words was the companies' first piece that went on to win best entertainment and choreography at the Olivier awards.
- Nutcracker! was another successful piece that was first shown at the Sadler Wells in 1992. It was the first ballet that aired on BBC1 in 20 years and then followed onto being made into a world tour.
- Bourne's Highland Fling (1994) and 10th Anniversary production of Swan Lake have also reached new audiences through extensive International touring, including seasons in Asia, Australia, Russia, Europe and the USA.
- Cinderella 1997, a second world war interpretation of the Disney classic. A heart-stopping and touching make on a classic that has won 2 Olivier awards.
- Carman first arrived from Matthew Bourne in 2002 in which it featured at the Theatre Royal in Plymouth. Rodion Shchedrin's Bolshoi Ballet version of Georges Bizet's opera Carmen (1875)