Honest Theatricality:
Theatricalism on Stage

British & American Drama and Performance

10

ROUND 1
Background

Post-War Era

Lesson WWII left behind
- Humanity is now capable of annihilating itself

Questions WWII left behind
- How could rational societies do such irrational destruction?
- How could genocide be explained or justified?
- Who will be responsible?

Artistic Mirror to Unrest

Bread and Puppet Theatre

Arts, the Societal Mirror
- World War period was a time of global unrest for the world
- Artists mirrored the unrest in peculiar style

Artistic Movements
- Showed their relationship to emerging political, social, and economic ideologies;
- Also rebelled against realism

ROUND 2
Epic Theatre

Epic Theatre 서사극

* Epic = a series of event, celebrating the feats of legendary hero

Origin & Term

- Began in **Germany** in the 1920s

- **Share expressionists' desire** to transform society but thought their methods vague and impractical

- **Concept & term** first developed by German theatre producer **Erwin Piscator**

- Later, German dramatist **Bertolt Brecht** developed this concept in his plays and Theatre

Epic Theatre 서사극

Piscator's *Rasputin* (1927):
Projected text on the right

Erwin Piscator (1893-1960)

- German theatre director & producer

- Exponent of 'epic theatre' as political theatre

- Emphasizes the socio-political content of drama, rather than emotional manipulation of audience or on the assimilation of audience

- Used documentary materials and multimedia for the political concerns

Epic Theatre 서사극

The Good Soldier Schweik (1928)

portrait of antihero Schweik

- Piscator's **landmark production of EPIC**

- Stage play adaptation of the **antiwar novel** by Czech writer **Jaroslav Hašek**

- Theme of **'Pacifism'**

- Lowly soldier exposes the foolishness & cruelty of people in authority

- **Conveyer belt** used → **'antihero' Schweik** walks through phases of life

- Schweik's journey is a **modern epic** → audience see dimensions of his adventure

Epic Theatre 서사극

Movie poster for
The Good Soldier Schweik

The Good Soldier Schweik (1928)

- Stage transforms into **arena for battling ideas**

- **Conveyer belt** moves actors → allows actors dressed as soldiers to march off to war without actually moving

- Projection of photographs, news headlines and text, motion picture films on the stage and auditorium walls…

- Other devices: audio recordings, actors emerging from the audience, giant military maps as stage scenery…

- Prevent audiences from losing themselves in the illusion of theatre → instead, making them **focus on socio-political ideas**

A Good Soldier Schweik on stage

Stage design for Piscator's 1928 stage play production of *The Good Soldier Schweik*, showing backdrop projected images
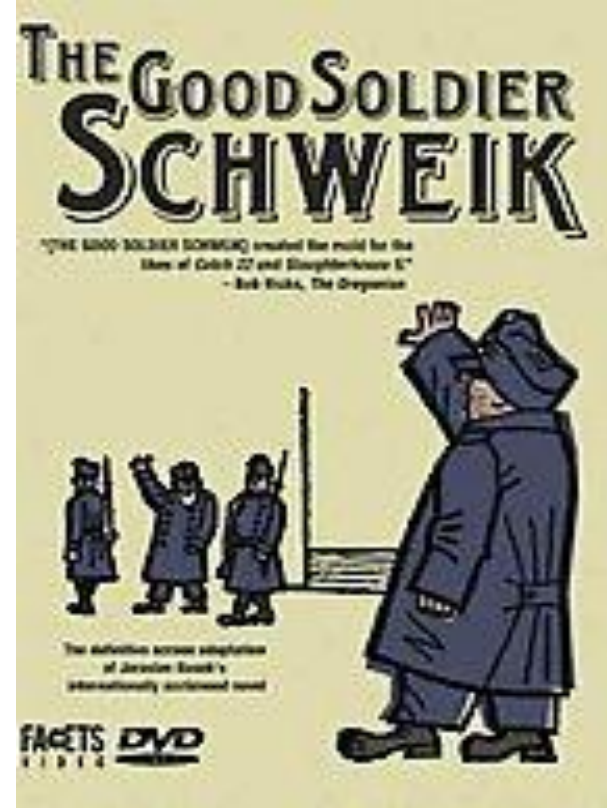
Stage design for 2010 production of *The Good Soldier Schweik*

Film version,
Der Brave Soldat Schweik, (1963)
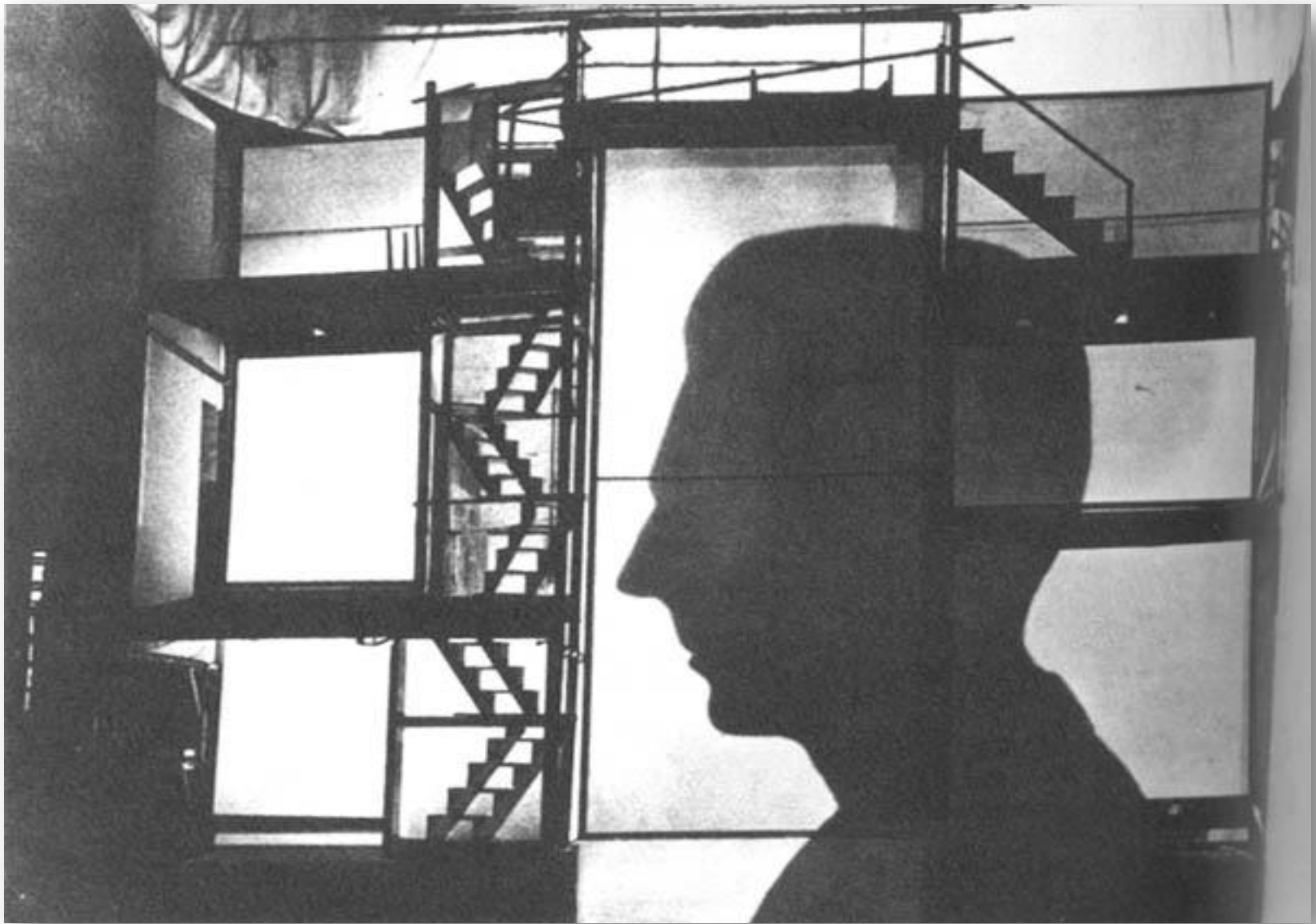

Chinese edition

DVD edition

Theatre poster

Picture of Good Soldier Svejk on sign, Prague, Czech Republic

Picture of the Good Soldier Svejk, Prague, Czech Republic

Piscator's *Rasputin* (1927): projected text on the right

Scene from *Hoppla wir leben*, directed by Erwin Piscator, Berlin, 1927

Epic Theatre 서사극

Bertolt Brecht

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)
- Worked with Piscator in the 1920s
- Used Piscator's techniques of Epic
- Developed **his own form of epic theatre**

Brecht's Epic Styles
- **Episodic structure**
- Deal with **history**
- Cover **a long period of time**
- Frequent **shift** of **locale**
- **Intricate plots**
- **Many characters**

Epic Theatre 서사극

Alienation effect
in modern theatre

Brecht's Alienation Effect 이화효과

- **Goal of epic** theatre is to **instruct**

- Theatre could create **an intellectual climate** for social change

- **"theatre should teach the audience"** and **"the audience should be involved not emotionally but intellectually"**

- **Audience** should remain **emotionally detached** or **"alienated"** from dramatic action

- We call this **Alienation Effect**

Epic Theatre 서사극

Mother Courage and Her Children: wire pulley device are seen. No attempt is made to disguise it

Brecht's Epic Techniques

*To prevent emotional involvement, Brecht's works are **highly theatrical***

- **Narrators comment** on dramatic action → **audiences** always **know that they are in a theatre**

- **Lighting instruments not hidden but visible** to the audience

- Each scene has **opening titles** which indicate what is to happen

- **Songs** for **underlining political message**, rather than emotional assimilation
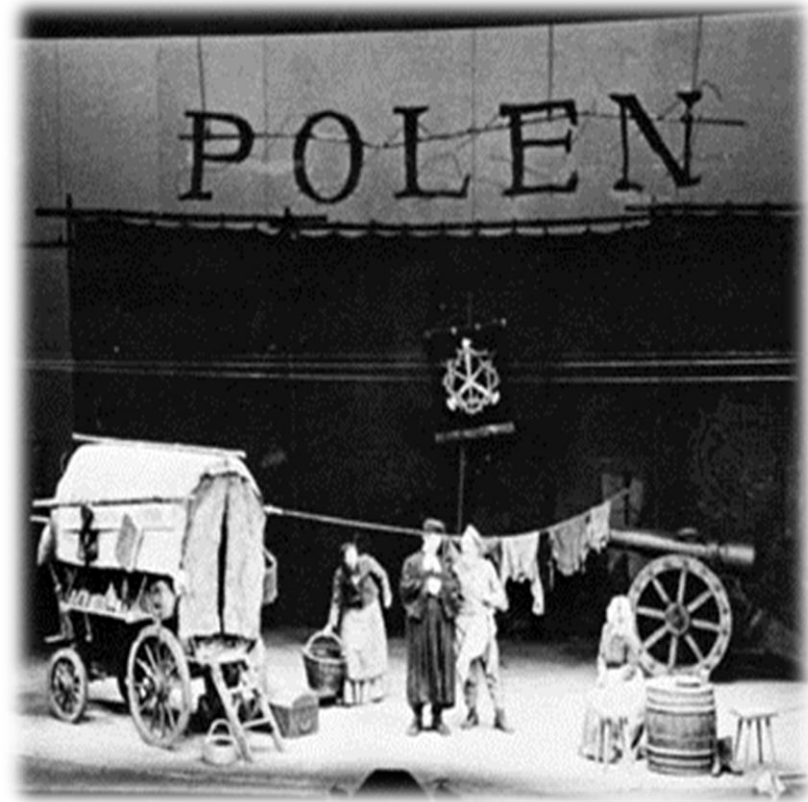
Epic Theatre 서사극

Mother Courage & Her Children

Mother Courage & Her Children

- Brecht's **landmark 'epic' theatre (1949)**

- Story of **Anna Fierling**, known as **Mother Courage**, who operates a traveling canteen from which she sells supplies to soldiers: she loses her children because of her **greed & opportunism**

- Political message: Mother's loss and war were created by the profit motive

- Argues for a **change in the capitalist economic system**

Epic Theatre 서사극

Mother Courage & Her Children
See the title on the stage

Mother Courage & Her Children

- Epic Theatre techniques used

- **Titles** in each scene reveal the coming action and force the audience to think about political implications

  Title of Scene 1: "Spring 1624. In Dalarna, the Swedish Commander Oxenstierna is recruiting for the campaign in Poland. The canteen woman Anna Fierling, commonly known as Mother Courage, loses a son"
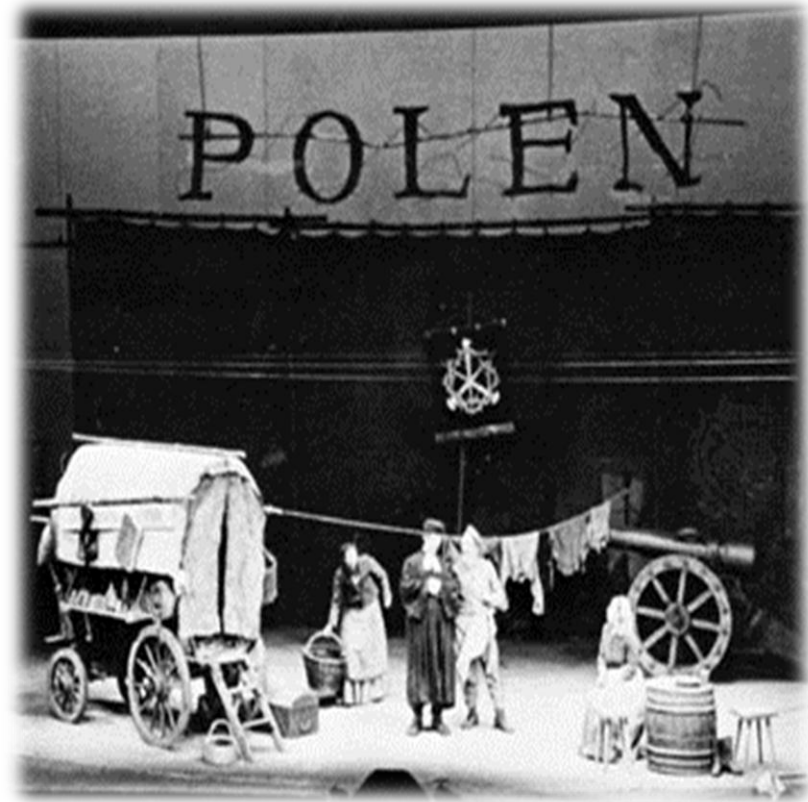
- **Songs** comment on thematic implications of dramatic action

  "Song of the Great Capitulation" in Scene 4: describes a person who begins life with high ideals but quickly learns to compromise

ROUND 3
Theatricalism

Theatricalism 극장주의

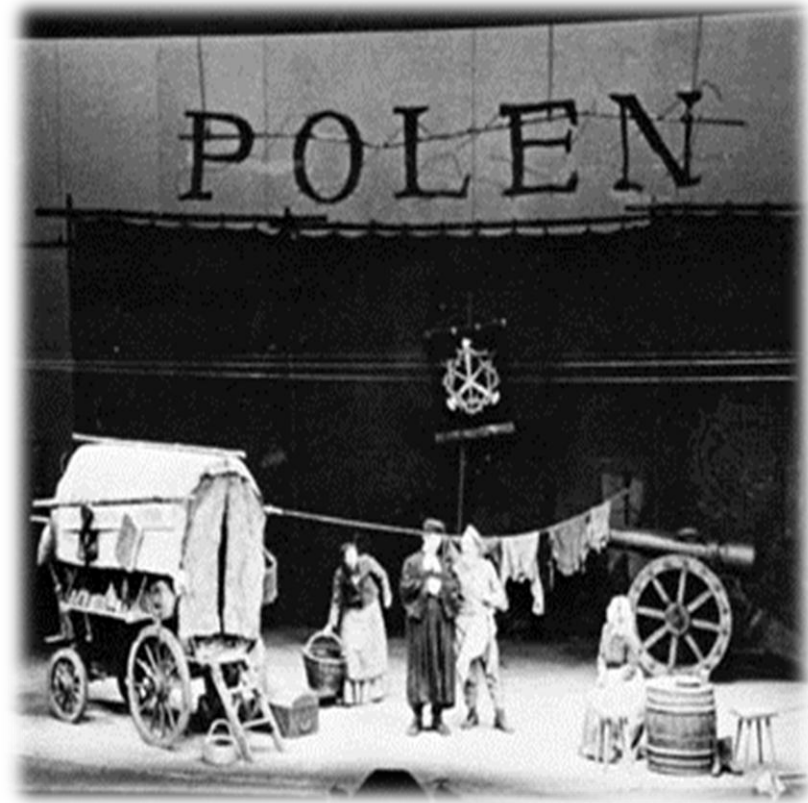*Mother Courage & Her Children*
See the title on the stage

Terms and Concept

- General movement **away from the techniques of realism & naturalism** in acting, staging and playwriting

- **Against the illusio**n of reality

- Draw inspiration from **the spirit of the theatre itself**

- Hates picture-frame stage

- Favor a **platform projecting into the physical space of the audience**

Theatricalism 극장주의

Mother Courage & Her Children
  See the title on the stage

Techniques

- Stylized acting
- Stage projecting into the audience
- Frank scenic artifices and conventions

Effects

- Prevent audience's assimilation to stage
- Remind audiences of their role as critics
- Audiences always know: **"IT'S JUST THEATRE NOT REALITY!"**
- **Share** the aesthetic attitude **with Epic Theatre in Europe**

Theatricalism 극장주의

Our Town (1938)

- American Play by Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)
- 평범한 미국 마을의 지극히 평범한 하루 생활
- 여주인공 Emily의 출생, 결혼, 출산, 죽음, 장례식
- 미국인의 낙천적 기질 묘사
- 극장주의 기법 도입 실험
- 유럽의 서사극(epic theatre)과 기본적 미학 공유
- **BUT**

✓ 서사극 = 사회적 메시지 전달에 초점
✓ 와일더의 극장주의 = 인생의 철학적 사유에 초점

Our Town (1938)

The Stage Manager as narrator in *Our Town*

Thornton Wilder as the Stage Manager and narrator in *Our Town* (1950)

Thornton Wilder as the Stage Manager and narrator in *Our Town* (1950)

Stage projecting into the audience: "It's theatre nor reality"

Frank scenic artifices: "It's theatre nor reality"

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Frank scenic artifices: "It's theatre nor reality"

Frank scenic artifices:
"It's theatre nor reality"

Thanks