Bertolt Brecht Epic Theatre

Bertolt Brecht- biography
Director and Playwright
Married to Helen Weigel (previously-2 other women-many mistresses, illegitimate children)
Founded the Berliner Ensemble- 1948 (East Germany-Communist Rule)

Slide 2- list of “Brechtian elements” and inventions
Slide 3-
1- against the audience who would “hang up their brains with their hats in the cloakroom.”
2- V effect- to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his/her approach to the incident.
3- No attempt is made to put the stage (and the audience) in a trance.

Slide 4-
Transposition into the third person
Transposition into the past
Speaking the stage directions out loud
“Addressing the audience directly” as both actor and character
Stage “purged from anything magical”
Use of half curtains
Making visible the sources of light (and other scenic/stage elements- rigging, etc.)
Using signs at the start of scenes

Slide 5-
1- From the first rehearsals, the cast forms opinions of the incidents or characters they are playing.
2- For what social purpose they are performing this particular historical event?
3- These opinions, once “fixed”, then determine the acting style for each character and event.

Slide 6-
Example of Gest:
Gesture= Soldiers marching across a stage
Gest= Soldiers marching over wounded and dead across a stage

Slide 7- Spass
(In rehearsal, to find a stereotype; explore the character from the outside-in.) Two Acting Styles co-existing
Grotesque contrasted with Sympathetic down-to-earth characters
(both are making political statements to the audience and one shows up the other)

Slide 8-
Brecht used- Acting, Dance, Music, Song, Mask, Chorus, Signs & film Projection...
Not Combined
Montaged

Slide 9-
The audience must remain critically aware.

Slide 10- Epic Theatre
structured episodically
awareness of events in the past
tell audience through labels
use of cue cards to reinforce- fill in missing link
socialist message prevailed
use of parable
clear one sided message
anti illusive techniques- flash back, missing time