

Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco



**Discipline Courses-I**  
**Semester-I**  
**Paper: XIII Modern European Drama**  
**Lesson: Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco**  
**Lesson Developer: Aateka Khan**  
**College/Department: Bharati College , University of Delhi**

# Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

Introduction

Avant Garde Theatre

Avant Garde and Modernism

Naturalism: Stanislavsky

Experimental Theatres and Modern Stage Direction

Performance and the Text

Craig

Maeterlinck

Vsevolod Meyerhold

Antonin Artaud

Bertolt Brecht

The Theatre of the Absurd

Samuel Beckett

Eugene Ionesco

Conclusion

Glossary

Bibliography

## Introduction

The French term Avant Garde literally translates as “advance guard.” It is a term whose etymological source is a clearly military one and refers to the troops in the vanguard of an army. The term, in so far as it reverberates with current usage, appears to have surfaced during the Middle Ages. According to Gunter Berghaus(diacritical mark) its figurative meaning denoting the most advanced tendencies in the arts or literature first originated during the Renaissance. Etienne (diacritical)Pasquier apparently was the first to characterize certain writers in terms of the Avant Garde recognizing them as heralds of change(35). Thus when used in connection with literature the term came to denote the trailblazing tendencies radical literature is capable of. Namely, how iconoclastic literature has the potential to question and influence societal practices. For instance, Henrik Ibsen’s

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

*Ghosts*, along with creating a naturalistic setting which takes into account heredity and environment as crucial determinants of character also severely critiques the sham religiosity that a decadent bourgeoisie is at pains to uphold. Subsequently the term found favour with sympathizers of Jacobin politics who used it to refer to their revolutionary utopian ideas. If we jump a century another usage can be traced back to 1845 when a Frenchman, Gabriel – Desire Laverdant, published *De la mission de l'art* wherein he considers:

"...art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies: it is the forerunner and the revealer. Therefore to know whether art worthily fulfills its proper mission as initiator, whether the artist is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where Humanity is going, know what the destiny of the human race is... Along with the hymn to happiness, the dolorous and despairing ode... To lay bare with a brutal brush all the brutalities, all the filth..."

It is clear from these references that Avant Garde as a term since its inception has been regarded as a term representing the cutting edge of artistic activity. It denotes the innovative and radically experimental creation of art which certain artists felt compelled into practicing as a reaction to the traditional modes of artistic representation and tradition bound creativity. August Strindberg's play *Miss Julie* might come across as a normal depiction of an intimate encounter to 21 century audiences, but contemporary reviews lambasted it as 'a heap of ordure', 'debauched', 'filthy', 'repulsive... the man who wrote this play and the foreword, in which he states the most irrational theories, must have been troubled by some affliction of the brain...' and one could go on. It is undeniably associated with the rejection of bourgeois morality and an exploration of new forms of artistic expression. A misconception that needs to be cleared is that the avant garde was a monolithic movement. Instead one must realize there was a great diversity of avant-gardes. The radical experimentation that the avant garde artists of the time involved themselves with manifested itself in variable content and purpose. There were some artists who appeared to revel in theatricality per se for eg, Jean Genet wanted his play *The Balcony* to be performed as "a glorification of the Image and the Reflection." On the other hand the playwright Bertolt Brecht used spectacle as a distancing effect in order to elicit a meaningful and proactive audience response. Genet's characterization of theatre accords it an aesthetic value while Brecht on the other hand has an unabashedly political agenda and yet both are radical in their own individual ways.

## Avant Garde Theatre

"Avant Garde theatre" as a term in literary discourse signifies the distinctly experimental theatre which emerged around the fin de siècle and lasted till the first half of the twentieth century. This is the context in which the theatrical Avant Garde is generally understood and which is the scope of this lesson. This clarification is necessary as the term, even today, is invoked to designate texts which appear to radically challenge existing aesthetic norms. As a result many literary critics use the term "historical Avant Garde" to differentiate between the period of radical experimentation dating from roughly the end of the nineteenth century till the middle of the twentieth century and the ongoing "contemporary Avant Garde". Theater of the Avant-Garde: 1890 – 1950 the title of an anthology of plays by Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf gives us a perspective on the historical scope of this theatrical phenomenon. This of course is not to imply the foreclosure of alternative periodizations which may be validated through convincing arguments in the support of them. Some literary critics for instance omit naturalistic theatre from their discussions choosing to define the phrase at its radical best in the post-realistic phase of this literary phenomenon. Others choose to treat Avant Garde theatre as an ongoing expression and thus include contemporary dramatic productions in their writings. Nevertheless, "Avant Garde theatre" used in reference to this historical period, has stood the test of time and now serves as an umbrella term which holds within its purview the plethora of epithets that have been used to describe the various expressions of dramatic experimentation such as pure theatre, total theatre, the theatre of cruelty etc. The theatrical Avant Garde should not be mistaken to denote homogenous expressions of experimentation; rather it references the numerous artistic movements and manifestoes which were constitutive of it. Antonis Glytzouris suggests that "the common denominator for all avant-garde movements was a deep feeling of dissociation in the relationship between the artist and his public". Thus the theatrical avant garde manifested itself in divergent trajectories yet a point of commonality could be located in the felt need to demolish the existing standards of mainstream theatrical acceptability in order to create new representational methods as well as innovative departures from out-dated theatrical conventions. Christopher Innes regards Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnival as a handy critical tool to analyse avant garde theatre practice as a counter-culture reacting against monologism (in the form of formulaic definitions of genre) and replacing it with multi-tonal dialogic creations which are intrinsically revolutionary. Bakhtin(1895-1975) was an influential Russian critic who introduced many new concepts in literary discourse, one of them being the carnivalesque which he used to denote the subversive tendencies of certain literary texts. Other related terms which he introduced are polyphony and dialogism. As Innes sees it:

Carnevalesque qualities are the defining marks of avant garde drama: in particular the emphasis on stage production as process in opposition to the fixed art-product of classical aesthetics; and the fusion of actors and audience, breaking down the barriers between performance and reality to create a communion of (in theory at least) equal participants. *Avant-Garde Theatre : 1892-1992*, p 7.

## Historical context

As much as the avant garde was a reaction to the literary traditions preceding it, the scientific and technological discoveries were also instrumental in ushering in this period of relentless experimentation. The changes of form and style cannot be seen in isolation without taking into account the defining socio-historical context. The technological advances lead to sweeping sociological changes. The accelerated Industrialization in this age resulted in a major shift in lifestyle. With industries being set up in urban centres, there was an unprecedented movement of rural folk who sought work in these cities. As a result the cities suddenly became densely populated by people who were strangers to each other. Community life and its shared experiences was traded for the anonymous crowd of the cities, feeding into the sense of alienation and exclusion that made its way into the modern psyche. The modern "society" as against the rural community, was a mechanical body which lacked any sense of togetherness. Relationships in this amorphous body were as unstable as the body itself. Another unprecedented change was the revolution in the mode of transportation. The shift from animal to machines – trains, buses and planes, injected speed into modern existence. Time-keeping became an important aspect of existence with public modes of transport governed by timetables, as were factory hours.

The disenchantment that became another defining feature of this age owed its genesis to the alienation from the community, and found its fullest expression in the aftermath of the world wars. The destruction caused by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs and the brutality of the holocaust in particular were political events that contributed to the avant garde loss of faith in and rejection of all things traditional.

## Avant Garde and Modernism

The differences between these aesthetic categories are far from decisive and irrevocably final. Nevertheless, it is useful to define the Avant Garde movement against that of modernism to highlight the differences that inhere despite the seeming similarities.

As with most literary and artistic concepts there are differences of opinion as to how these two trends are to be distinguished or whether they really are discernably different after all. Often, one may find the same artists being championed in discourses devoted to the illustration of both the concept of the Avant Garde as well as Modernism. Adding to the confusion is the fact that many of the art movements that came into existence during the Modern period influenced both these artistic trends. One reason for the amorphous boundaries of avant garde art cited by Innes is the pervasive nature of its influence. Also the historical conditions which created the sense of modernity and the concomitant reactions to it in the form of Modernism and the Avant Garde were essentially the same, the point of departure between these two forms lies in the degrees of the reactions. As Innes states the Avant garde being "the experimental edge of modernity, has historically given itself a double task: to destroy and to invent" p8. The German theorist Peter Bürger, opines that the distinction between the two lies in their functionality. While modernism was a mere reaction to traditional artistic techniques, the avant garde was a violent attack that sought to change the social function of art in bourgeois society. A comparative look at texts from both these groups would help to explicate the differences that inhere. The Wasteland is generally regarded as paradigmatic of modernist literature. It is a poem which conveys the sense of a pervasive dislocation of the individual as a result of the influences of modernity. Yet for all the dissonances in the poem, there is an aesthetic sense of patterning and completion. The over-arching structure of the poem adds up to make an artistic whole. This

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

modernist aspiration for, and belief in aesthetic validation of art is at odds with the avant garde impulse of questioning the aesthetic value of artistic creativity. A good example of an avant garde work questioning of the institutional status that art presumes to have is Marcel Duchamp's Dadaistic anti-art readymades, the most celebrated example of which is the *Fountain*. *The Fountain* was the title given to a realigned urinal which was signed R. Mutt and was intended for display at an exhibition by the Society of Independent Artists in America. It was, needless to say, too shocking for the independent artists and was disallowed participation despite meeting the participation requirements. Avant-garde art as is apparent in the *Fountain* attempts at revising notions of "high art" and the sense of privileged distance which such art assumes from popular culture. While modernism carries forward the principles of the aestheticism associated with the fin de siècle movement "art for arts sake" the avant garde stops at no less than a complete dissociation with the past and the literary traditions thereof. As Antonis Glytzouris puts it:

Given that in aestheticism form and content coincided under the dogma of "art for art's sake," certain artists realized that modern art had been transformed into a "sacred refuge" within bourgeois society; the next step in the self critique of bourgeois art was to be the most radical, since it was opposed not only to this "sanctification" of art but also to the aesthetic experience itself as a private sphere that had lost its social function. In this way the avant-garde artists not only retained a basic element of aestheticism but also sought to incorporate art and life or attempted to organize life *via* art.

Another point of difference lies in the usual avant garde stress on an anarchic primitivism while modernist writers believed in "the ancient sovereignty of words". While both groups appear to share stylistic similarities at times, it is as Innes states, their philosophical outlook that sets them apart. Even though a modernist text like *Sons and Lovers* (published 1913) by DH Lawrence, in defiance of the existing standards of morality, unabashedly explores sexuality, it at the same time vies for recognition within the establishment. Lawrence allowed extensive editing in order to make the novel more acceptable though of course he stood by his daring exploration of the Oedipus complex. His choice of form too adheres to the staid chronological Victorian novel. Thus one perceives in modernist texts the tendency to reign in the subversive potentiality within the framework of working acceptability. Compare such trepid/measured experimentation with the Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (premiered 1896) a play which caused a sensation because of its unrelenting subversion of generic expectation. Such an extreme reaction to existing cultural standards is the essence of avant garde art. *Ubu Roi* is a play which sweepingly lambasts bourgeois pretensions. It revolves around a protagonist, who is a revolting anti-hero a consummation of the vilest character traits possible. The first and only provocative performance of the play was received with rioting and utter disapproval. While the modernist text accommodates experimentation within a traditional framework, the avant garde text often attempts a complete dissociation from all things past.

For Innes a defining feature of all avant garde art in opposition to a modernist tendency of a formalistic harking after artistic touchstones was the spirit of the carnivalesque, an important concept which the Russian critic Bakhtin (1895-1975) used to denote the subversive tendencies of certain literary texts. He argues that Bakhtin's concept in its anarchist tendency seeks to dismantle the hegemonic control of established culture and its coercive notion of 'being' into a fluid and liberating sense of 'becoming'. A 'becoming' which

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

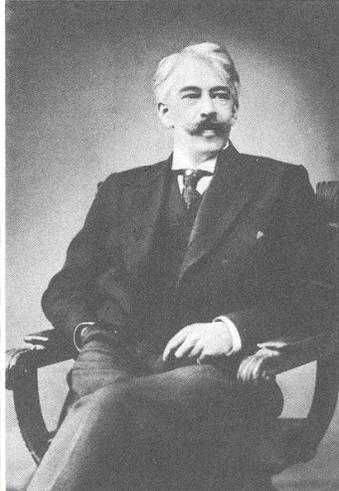
is ever a process and thus free of definitive characterization as against 'being', a mould into which the individual is expected to fit into.

Having delineated the general context which explains the appearance of such a cultural phenomenon, it is now time to delve into the manifestations of the theatrical avant garde itself. The first significant theatrical movement that is recognizable in the history of the avant garde is Naturalism.

### **Naturalism**

Naturalism is the movement which ushered in the first radical critique of the existing bourgeois theatrical conventions. At times critics pass over naturalism for the later anti-realist movements owing to Naturalism's non-creative mimetic and photographic quality. Nevertheless this theatrical movement was the first systematic and conscious rejection of redundant conventional realism. Yet interestingly despite its revolutionary reaction to realism the movement doesn't quite forsake the realistic ideal and is rather the culmination of realism. Thus curiously, as Glytzeouris puts it, "it is a maturation of bourgeois realism and *at the same time* an initial critique of it." Naturalism as movement shifted the focus from romanticized melodrama to the sordid depiction of the seamy reality of everyday existence. On the stage Naturalism translated into realistic acting as a reaction to the stilted declamatory style of the melodramas that preceded it. Dramatists, during their association with this movement, (remember this was a time when any particular movement usually was short-lived) called for naturalistic dialogue delivery along with natural gestures. Actors were instructed not to use make-up as for instance Strindberg in the preface to his naturalistic play *Miss Julie* clearly states. Further certain time bound theatrical conventions were flouted. Where earlier the actors were expected to face the audience throughout a performance, on the naturalist stage dramatists wrote plays with express instructions that the actors back should at times face the audience. Andre Antoine (1858-1943) founded the Théâtre Libre in Paris (a major artistic centre for innovation during modern times) in 1887. Antoine is recognized by critics as a major influence in effecting the change in acting style. A doctor by profession Antonin was neither initiated into the conventionalities of staging nor did he have the resources at his disposal to hire the acclaimed actors of those times. Indeed he would engage amateurs free from the stilted acting of professionals, to act in plays staged in small workshop theatres where their natural and informal acting catered only to a rather small group of artists. This aspect of the avant garde, the initial resistance it encountered from mainstream conventional bourgeois culture and its initial peripheral existence, is recognized as one of its defining features. The moment avant garde movements and their iconoclastic features were accepted and co-opted by mainstream cultural institutions the prefiguring aspect of the avant garde was fulfilled and the moment of fulfillment was also precisely the moment of its demise. It is this ephemerality which lies at the heart of the avant garde.

### Constantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938)



**Constantin Stanislavsky**

At the end of the 19th century, Stanislavsky together with Nemirovich-Danchenko wanted to reform Russian theatre and replace it with high-quality art available for common consumption. They set about creating a private theatre of their own, over which they had total control (as opposed to trying to reform the government operated [Maly Theatre](#), a move which would have given them far less artistic freedom). As a leading figure of the Russian avant garde Stanislavsky is credited for introducing a complete acting system which in turn was derived from the naturalistic staging of Antoine's Theatre Libre and other such independent theatre practice as well as other avant garde movements such as constructivism and symbolism. Like Meyerhold's his system is an attempt to synthesize psychological and physical factors which are believed to facilitate acting. Psychological realism had been developed by Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Mikhail Shchepkin by the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. Stanislavsky building on the spade work of his predecessors devised a holistic system which integrated this attempt at arriving at the truth of the character not just from the actor's imaginative grasp of the heart of the role but also explored ways in which external stimuli work towards the revelation of a character. In his book *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky makes use of the Socratic dialogue to elucidate his ideas on acting. Through this book he attempts to create a system whereby an actor would be able to regulate his "instrument" ie himself. "Faith and a Sense of Truth" the name of one of the chapters in the book denotes the complete departure from the existing unrealistic and clichéd "rubber stamp" acting that held sway at the time. Stanislavsky perceived a strong sense of self-consciousness in actors playing tragic roles especially so during the dramatic high points of a play. Departing from such practices Stanislavsky stressed the need for the actor to be relaxed and also to be continuous in his acting, rather than overdoing the high points and neglecting the in-between inner life of the character portrayed. In order for an actor to in effect "become" the character Stanislavsky asserted the importance of a naturalistic milieu. He considered the *mis en scene* of the natural stage a crucial lever which facilitated the actors' imaginative grasp of a role. Imagining a situation bereft of physical rootedness would result in a barren visualization. It is the natural setting created by the material framework within which the role to be played can be located and understood. He believed an actor's affective memory plays an important role in bringing to life analogous emotions required for a given character. Yet without the natural movements which are born of a natural stage the affective memory cannot be successfully retrieved. Stanislavsky concedes that a performance inspired by one's personal experiences cannot be

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

out measured by any other approach to acting, but it has a huge drawback. An inspired performance cannot be summoned at will and therefore results in mediocre performances interspersed by the odd inspirational ones. In order to be able to control emotions and feelings and reproduce them at will, thus the actor needs to be able to delve into the inner life of the character. For this purpose he proposed the magical word "if" as an effective lever into an imaginary situation. "If" has the potential to make the actors forget themselves and become one with the imaginary situation. Such an imaginary induction into the character, along with the natural setting and the bodily actions it induces, contribute to the generation of "a sense of faith" which is the stepping stone to the "justification" of the part.

For Stanislavsky the consciously created physical body of the role lends credence to as well as gives an impetus to the actor's creation of the subconscious life of the role. The naturalistic physical detail acts as a veritable springboard for an actor essaying a role. After all acting is the physical manifestation of a character in terms of voice modulation, gestures, movement etc. He even gives the example of Lady Macbeth to prove the point that physical actions serve as expressions of intense emotional moments. He points to the tragic depiction of Lady Macbeth's ritual of washing her hands as a natural act which eschews theatricality. Stanislavsky's system closely aligned to naturalism, was soon to be followed by radical movements that challenged it.



**Stanislavsky as Othello**

### **Experimental Theatres and Modern Stage Direction**

A driving force behind the development of avant garde theatre is the mushrooming of these small experimental theatres which catered not to the bourgeois class but to a small band of artists. Antonine's theatre libre was crucial in setting the trend for this new phenomenon of the so called independent theatres. In contrast to the mainstream bourgeois theatre whose popularity ensured its commercial viability as well as its existence, the independent theatre companies catered to a limited audience and were kept afloat by a dedicated group of artists. Their existence questioned and called into doubt the academic art state theatres encouraged.

Another significant development in history of theatre that coincided with the emergence of the theatrical avant garde was the liberation of the stage from the stranglehold of the

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

playwright/dramatic text. Till the nineteenth century it was the dramatic text that was reserved for the adulation that is accorded to artistic creativity. Theatre, at best merely served an auxiliary function of a medium responsible for bringing a dramatic text to life. Thus the theatre was regarded as an institution which was limited to the passive role of representing an a priori work of art and therefore reducible purely to the pre-existent dramatic text, guided by the playwrights instructions. Alongwith with the radical changes in performance aesthetics, Avante garde theatrical performance ushered in the realization that theatre was no longer at the mercy of the dramatic text, instead together the text and the performance of it emerged as a symbiotic end result. This was the time that verbal/dramatic poetry was transposed into stage poetry of the experimental theatre which found its impetus from the symbolist quarters. Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* is a highly symbolistic and surrealistic play which brings to life the central metaphoric symbol in the form of a concrete stage presence. It is a play which exploits the technological advancements of the time that could make such stage presentations possible. It unleashes a riot in term of stage language, with the proliferation of visual images that ensure a spectacular performance. The importance which stage direction had acquired in the creation of the naturalistic milieu through appropriate mis en scene soon developed into a poetic theatre invested with symbolist suggestiveness.

### **Performance and the Text**

The historical avant garde thus marks the shift from literary aestheticism to theatricalism which in turn created a new autonomous space for theatre. Before stage practice acquired this new found artistic credibility it was considered a mere extention of the written text. The performance, in this long lasting view was confined to a solely functional role of giving expression to a preexisting artistic work. As against such a conception the new stage space was for the first time in theatrical history conferred with the status of art. In Glytzouris' words "With the discovery of "theatricality" and the new stage language, a new world came to light that offered unlimited opportunities for creative expression onstage and provided a modern complicated theatre culture to the theatre audience". The title of Hans- Thies Lehmann's book *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006) provides an apt term denoting this paradigmatic change from a convention bound theatre that functioned as an adjunct to the dramatic text and one which had disengaged its dependence on the written word and a concomitant non-creative role to effect an unleashing of theatrical energy. At its radical best this led to the creation of an altogether new form of theatrical expression namely a performance art which reveled in spectacular effects. The revolutionary slogan "theatricalize the theatre" meant among other things that the older production and consumption standards of the theatre industry had been exhausted at a time when cinema ushered in the art of spectacle in an age of "technical reproducibility."<sup>38</sup>Theatrical production underwent a drastic change from Stanislavsky's belief that the task of theatre was to give "form to the inner life of the play and the roles within it and to embody on the stage the kernel, essence and basic thoughts from which the work of the poet stems".( Qtd from Erika Fischer-Lichte, p284)

The term "avant garde theatricalism" has found widespread acceptance among critics and alludes to in Puchner's words "an unprecedented celebration of the theatre and of theatricality," to "those turn- of- the- century reformers and revolutionaries of the theater

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

who made it their business to rescue the theatre from what they thought of as its accelerating decline.”<sup>46</sup> A fall out of this shift in theatre practice led to the creation of a separate discipline of modern historiography of the theatre.

There were many involved in this de-literarisation of theatre playwrights and artists alike. Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) an English theatre practitioner, one of the major proponents of this new focus wrote in “First Dialogue on the Art of Theatre” first published in 1905 “the poet is not of the theatre, has never come from the theatre, cannot be of the theatre”. It is this premise that generated the demand for “unfinished” drama. Representatives of many avant garde movements seconded this demand, whether they be Futurists, constructivists, Dadaists and Surrealists.

The distrust of dramatic texts can also be traced to, as Erika Fischer-Lichte explains in *History of European Drama and Theatre*, the mounting skepticism regarding language as a viable media of communication. As early as 1876 Nietzsche noted in reference to Wagner that “language is sick.” This misgiving concerning language was one which was of course not limited to those associated with theatre. Instead it was regarded as the malaise of civilization and can be seen as a characteristic of the Modern era. Hugo von Hofmannsthal in the fictive *The Lord Chandos Letter* written in 1902 complains:

It gradually became impossible for me to converse on any higher or general subject ... I felt inexplicably loath even to say ‘Mind’ or ‘Soul’ or ‘Body’. I found myself incapable of passing an opinion on the affairs at Court, events at Parliament, or whatever else. And this not through caution or regard – you know I am candid to the point of recklessness: but those abstractions which the tongue has to pronounce in making judgment fell apart like rotten mushrooms in my mouth.(qtd from Fischer-Lichte)

It is clear that the linguistic characteristics and its concomitant possibilities that were constitutive of the drama of the previous century could no longer be taken for granted. In the wake of the disarticulation of language and its inability to retain its erstwhile semantic quality Hofmannsthal argues in *The Stage as Dream Image*, 1903 for the stage to become the producer of a ‘true language’, a language of ‘dumb things’. Later Antonin Artaud was to argue in a similar vein. In 1932 in his *Letter on Language* he writes “For a gesture culture also exists side by side with word culture”. The de-literarising of theatre was thus consequent on largely the crisis of language during modern times.

### **Gordon Craig (1872-1966)**

Another important development was the realization that theatre was a unique art form in itself and should not be expected to act as a medium to express another art. In fact Craig argued that the poetry of a dramatic text is meant for recitation and works on our imagination and so “it will not help the matter if the poet shall add gesture to his recitation or to his song; in fact it will spoil it.” The ‘re-theatricalisation of theatre’ a term first used by Georg Fuchs in 1904 was in many senses the byword of this era of extreme experimentation.

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

Just as with painting, which acquired a new objective altogether with the advent of the camera, theatre practice too reacted to the by dated appropriation of naturalistic verisimilitude as the key to performance. Thus Craig's tirade:

The actor looks upon life as a photo-machine looks upon life; and he attempts to make a picture to rival a photograph ... He tries to reproduce Nature ... he never dreams of creating. ... This is to be an imitator, not an artist. This is to claim kinship with the ventriloquist.

Another related idea that Craig espoused that found currency not only in avant garde theatrical productions but also in modern literature was that human beings were of interest not through their personality or as a species ruled by fate but as being integral to the transindividual power which is manifest in them. In his essay, "The Artists of the Theatre of the Future"(1907) he asserts 'I believe not at all in the magic of man, but only in his impersonal magic ... personality comes second'. It was this belief that led Craig to consider the means by which theatre should devise innovative instruments of presentation. Since the actor is led by emotions while any art should work by design Craig believed the actor was not appropriate material for art. Craig therefore recommends the use of masks for actors when they are indispensable to a performance. But the future of theatre Craig believed lay in the replacement of the actor with an inanimate figure the 'Uber-marionette':

The Uber-marionette will not compete with life – rather it will go beyond it. It's ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in trance – it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit. (84-85)

Thus Craig's theatre of the future not only repudiated the bourgeois concept of theatre and personality, but questioned the notion of the individual altogether which was a concept which had grown to great proportions ever since it found circulation from Renaissance times. For his ideas on the transindividual nature of being Craig like many other artists of his time was indebted to the non- European cultures of Asia and Africa. Indeed as Innes observes an important element of the theatrical avant garde was its primitivism, which on the one hand helped in the exploration of dream states and on the other lent the ritualistic atmosphere needed for mythic representations.

### **Maeterlinck and Symbolism (1862-1949)**

Gordon Craig's ideal of the actor as an uber-marionette was echoed in the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck's belief that puppets would be the most suitable performers for his early plays. Maeterlinck joined the early symbolists in 1886 and played a pivotal role in setting the standards of the avant garde symbolist theatre. His early plays – *Princess Maleine*(1889), *The Intruder* (1890) and *Interior* (1894) produced at the Theatre d' Art used indistinct stage setting to evoke an atmosphere replete with subliminal images. The details of stage setting: rustling of leaves, shadows playing on a wall, rather than depicting a realistic context were present to serve a symbolic role. The external settings of these plays served as representative of an inner psychic reality of the characters. He even coined the term static theatre to convey how the mood and images were central to his theatre instead of the customary tracking of linear action. Symbolist theatre, owing to a deep-seated distrust of rationalism, attempted to devise non-discursive modes of representation This preference, which translated into the use of masks, stemmed from the symbolist belief that only by obscuring the individuality of the actor can the performance acquire independence from the physicality of representation and acquire emblematic resonances.

## **Vsevolod Meyerhold and Constructivism (1874-1940)**

Another important figure associated with experimentation in theatre production was the Russian Vsevolod Meyerhold. Russia had undergone tremendous political upheavals with a preliminary revolution by the Mensheviks in April 1917 that deposed the ruling Tsar. The mensheviks (whose Marxism allowed for compromises with the bourgeois) were, in turn, ousted in the same year in October by another successful revolution, this time by the more radical group, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin. The political revolution ushered in the need to create society anew and theatre was as a valuable instrument in this regard. Meyerhold had joined the Bolshevik party and was a member of the Theatre Division, but his absence due to illness resulted in the Party's revision of policy and the favouring of conventional theatre over revolutionary theatre. Thus the revolution in theatre production that was announced in Autumn 1920 when Meyerhold first used the phrase 'October in the Theatre' was an independent and personal one. He had begun his acting career at the end of the nineteenth century working under Stanislavsky. Soon however he was dissatisfied with his association with the Moscow Art Theatre where though he met success as an actor, he was not quite comfortable with its leading principles. Meyerhold too like other radical theatre artists and dramaturgs felt that stage practice had stultified and required to be freed from the hegemony of the dramatic text, though his idea was not to question the existence of the written text altogether. Wary of the academic approach to theatre he felt the need to create a theatrical experience that was in sync with the times. He held the need for theatre practice to develop independently rather than being determined by the dramatic text. In *On the History and Techniques of Theatre* (1907) quoted in Fischer-Lichte he states:

Gestures, poses, looks and silence determine the *true* relationships between men. Words cannot say everything. Thus a structure of movement on stage is indispensable in transforming the spectator into a keen-eyed observer in order to hand him the same material which the two dialogue partners give the third who observes them.

Like Brecht Meyerhold held Japanese stage practice to be exemplary and was drawn to it for similar reasons. As Fischer-Lichte notes "in the Japanese theatre, Meyerhold saw an almost perfect paradigm of anti-illusionist theatre and he took from it the convention of the stagehand, clothed in black and the 'flowerpath' or *hanamichi* for various productions."

Later on in the 1920s Meyerhold under the influence of like-minded left-wing artists, began to develop a theory of theatre called Biomechanics. Boris Artavov for instance inspired by Taylorism theorized on concept of 'theatre as production' which he sought to be used as a tool towards reorganizing life. In a similar vein Meyerhold sought to make the actor an efficient being in total control of his emotions and movements.

In a lecture "The Actor of the Future and Biomechanics" (1922) Meyerhold expanded on these ideas:

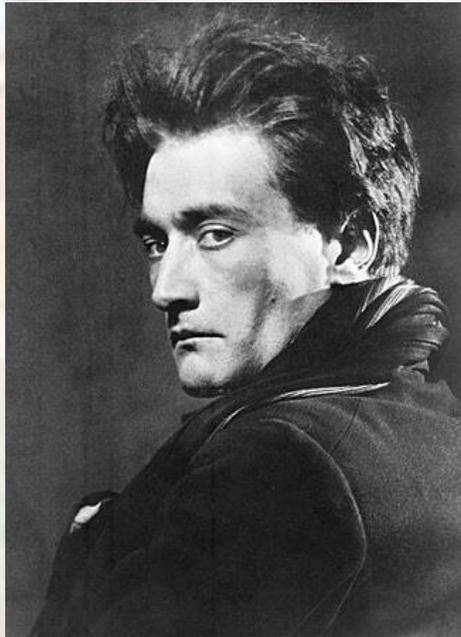
The spectacle on a man working efficiently affords positive pleasure. This applies equally to the work of the actor in the future.

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

In art our constant concern is the organization of raw material. Constructivism has forced the artist to become both artist and engineer. Art should be based on scientific principles; the entire creative act should be a conscious process.

The vigorous physical exercises that Meyerhold devised led to a sense of spacial and relational awareness amongst actors which was instrumental in their psycho-physical development. Stressing the relational aspect of any human activity, not least acting, Meyerhold contended that the spectator was a co-participant in the creation of meaning on the stage. His radical views clashed with the socialist realism propagated by Stalin's Communist State which led to his arrest in 1939 and eventual execution the following year.

### **Antonin Artaud and The Theatre of Cruelty (1896-1948)**



**Antonin Artaud**

Antonin Artaud is another seminal figure whose contribution to the theatrical avant garde is indispensable. *The Theatre and its Double* published in 1938 in French features most of his articles and lectures on theatre from 1931 to 1936. He saw modern society as "mad, desperate and sick" and this deep-seated crisis that permeated society could only, according to him, be addressed through the medium of theatre. Artaud identified western society's penchant for logocentricism, rationalism and individualism as most detrimental, indeed having destructive consequences for mankind. Artaud's theatre aesthetics aims at redressing the sickness generated of these fallacious concepts. His re-theatricalisation is firmly centred on the pivotal role of theatre as a physic for mankind which shall 'drain abscesses.' In "No More Masterpieces" he states:

I suggest theatre today ought to return to the fundamental magic notion reintroduced by psychoanalysis, which consists in curing a patient by making him assume the external attitude of the desired condition.

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

The desired effect of cathartic group healing was to be achieved by propelling the spectators into a new state of consciousness by taking drastic measures. His Theater of Cruelty was to affect the audiences' through their anatomies rather than rely on the problematic discursive structures of society:

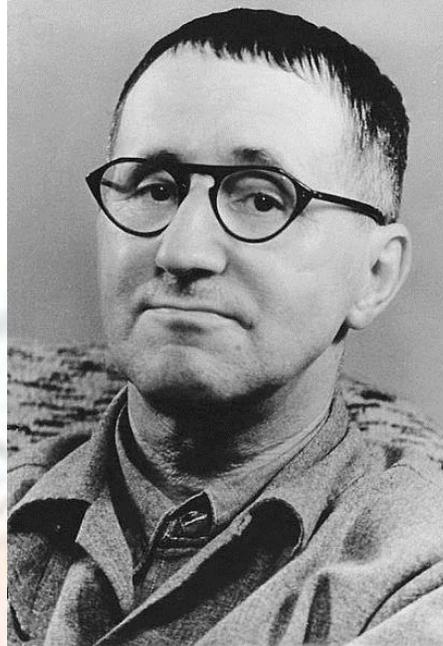
Snakes do not react to music because of the mental ideas it produces in them, but because they are long, they lie coiled on the ground and their bodies are in contact with the ground along almost their entire length. And the musical vibrations communicated to the ground affect them as a very subtle, very long message. Well I propose to treat the audience just like those charmed snakes and to bring them back to the subtlest ideas through their anatomies.

For Artaud the actor on stage should become a 'living hieroglyph' whose performance should affect sensibilities resulting in a ritualistic cleansing. Artraud's radical theorization of theatre thus seeks to overthrow the tyranny of the text by replacing it with pure mise-en-scene. The emphasis of his theatre aesthetics is indicative of, just as much as it contributed to, the pivotal change that the relationship between the dramatic text and performance was undergoing.

Thus the theatre Artaud advocated was to hit the senses through music, light, gesture and sound with the spectators centrally positioned on revolving chairs surrounded by the intimidating stage performance --"violence and bloodshed having been placed at the service of violence in thought – once out of theatre, I defy him (the spectator) to indulge in thoughts of war, riot or motiveless murder."

The primitivism in Artaud clearly follows in the lines of Richard Schechner's assertion that 'the ambition to make theatre into ritual is nothing other than a wish to make performances efficacious, to use [theatrical] events to change people.'" P 10 note7

### **Bertolt Brecht and Dialectical Theatre**



**Bertolt Brecht**

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1957) was a theatre practitioner and playwright whose innovative theatre aesthetics like that of many others was constantly revised in the light of theatre praxis. The term Brecht initially used to describe his decidedly political theatre was "epic theatre". "Epic theatre" was a term he took over from Erwin Piscator (1893-1966,). Piscator was an innovative director under whom Brecht had worked for some time. His Marxist leanings contributed to the creation of a theatre in which news clippings were integrated into the performance investing it with topical relevance. As the spokesman of the proletarian theatre of his time he successfully harnessed the stage as a platform for the discussion of social and political problems. Brecht's was no idle borrowing, though it did imply an allegiance to the Piscator's prioritizing of man's relationship to society, divested of religious and private matters. Developing the concept further Brecht theorized on the change of emphasis that epic theatre had introduced from conventional theatre as it had become entrenched with certain associations over the ages. "Dramatic theatre," Brecht's term for popular mainstream theatre, is defined by him as an ideological construct which appears to represent 'universal' aspects of being but in actuality, perpetuates certain hegemonic notions of character fixity. Such theatre regards the human being as "taken for granted" while in epic theatre the human being is the "object of enquiry". This change in emphasis is a manifestation of Brecht's Marxist commitment to the belief that the destiny of man is alterable, contingent as it is upon social factors. Unlike most disillusioned artists of his time he regarded the political situation as responsible for man's suffering, Once again individuality is seen as a misleading bourgeois notion ("thought determines being") which obfuscates the social fact that a person's being is in reality determined by social forces ("social being determines thought"). Brecht's epic theatre also shuns the Aristotelian regard for plot and the unities of time, space and action, which together contribute towards creating an overwhelming emotional experience for the spectator. This emotional experience in turn is seen by Brecht as a mechanism that "wears down his [the spectators] capacity for

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

action". The spectator at the end of such a performance experiences a cathartic calm after the passions are spent. So after an intense identification and emotional response to say *Oedipus Rex* the spectator, once he steps out of the theatre, returns to his daily routine. Epic theatre instead of eliciting such an affective response (which was short lasting and impotent) sought to engage the spectator as an impartial observer ("the spectator stands outside, studies"). By encouraging a critical stance he hoped to arouse the spectator into meaningful action rather than the usual passivity instilled by the repose that succeeds emotional involvement. While he initially sought to abolish emotions altogether in the casual cigarette smoking audience which he conceived as his ideal, Brecht later realized that his theoretical expectation never translated into an actual response by the audience. This led him to switch to a more appropriate term "dialectical theatre " which denotes the complex interplay of emotional involvement on the one hand and attentive critical thinking on the other.

Another reason for Brecht's oppositional stance towards Aristotelian theatre aesthetics and the concept of unities owed to its generating a notion of seamless naturalness with a concomitant acceptance of the situation presented. Brecht instead theorized of the *Verfremdungseffekt* or alienation-effect, which was the turning stone of his theatrical aesthetics. The most important function of the alienation effect was to rupture the appearance of seamless continuity which realistic and naturalistic performance induced with the result of creating a sense of normativity. Brecht's term is close to Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky's use of the word *ostranenie*, which translated would yield a similar meaning - "making strange," or "defamiliarisation". In a reaction to realistic discourse which inevitably reinforces the status quo under the garb of normativity, Brecht sought to estrange his audience from its surroundings in order for them to arrive at a dispassionate, critical understanding of capitalistic society.

The production of his plays are permeated by alienation-effects in the form of masks, narration, interruptions through narration and song, employing visible stage machinery, staging parable plays, acting in third person etc.

In "The Street Scene" Brecht posits the street demonstration as the ideal model for Epic Theatre. ....

*The Good Person of Setzuan*, like many other plays Brecht wrote, is replete with alienation techniques and can serve as an illustration of Brecht's theatre aesthetics. It is written as a parable, examining the possibility of being good in a world that is not perfect. Situated in a province in China, it presents before the audience three ineffectual gods, deflating the grand Narrative of Godhead.

In the play there is extensive use of narrative devices, for instance we have Wang, a water seller, breaking the illusion of performance by intermittently addressing the audience and appraising them with the latest developments. The songs in the play effectively dismantle the sense of the fourth wall too while at the same time they serve to thematize issues Brecht would have his audience reflect on. They freeze the frame giving the audience time to ponder, as they stand independent of the action. Capitalistic exploitation is the subject of

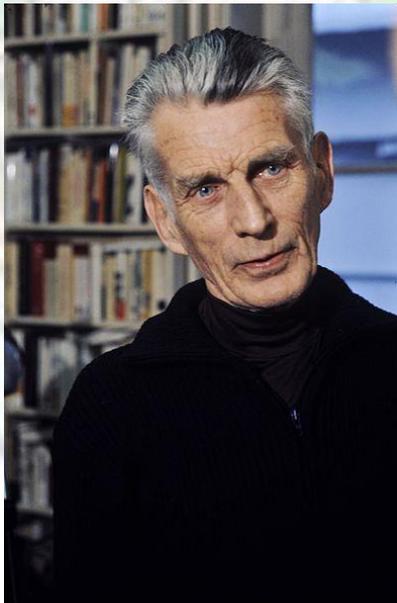
## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

the 'song of the eight elephant' while the 'song of green cheese' conveys the fairytale like improbability of the possibility of an ideal world.

In a play which is episodic, and plot and characters take a backseat we have the central character a soft hearted prostitute called Shen Te, disguise as her imaginary cousin the ruthless Shui Ta. While a feminist reading would find problems with Brecht's apparently gendered conception of human behaviour, his intention is to highlight the impossibility for goodness to sustain itself in a society filled with destitute people due to capitalist exploitation. The play concludes inconclusively through the alienating device of an epilogue, asking the audience to ponder over the issues raised in the play and arrive at a solution.

### **The Theatre of the Absurd**

Another form of avant garde theatre that came into existence during modern times was destined to be labeled the theatre of the absurd by the influential critic Martin Esslin(1918-2002). Esslin in his book the Theatre of the Absurd (1961) was probably the first to analyze at length a body of work by different playwrights that appeared to represent a new consciousness which found expression in a particular form. While the term has acquired critical currency, one should not mistake the phrase as consciously adopted by or even acceptable to those playwrights it is used to describe. Esslin's use of the term "absurd" derives from existentialist writer Camus's "Myth of Sisyphus" where he used the term to denote the utter meaninglessness of existence in an incomprehensible world. His book focused on the works of Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco and Jean Genet while also discussing others.



**Samuel Beckett**

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

What sets these playwrights apart from the conventional well-made play is the attempt to convey the sense of metaphysical anguish intrinsic to existentialist philosophy not through dialogue as was the case with existentialist plays written by Sartre, Camus etc. Instead Esslin explains that unlike these existentialist playwrights, who sought to "express the new content on the old form"(p 24) the Absurdist attempted to devise new forms to express the sense of a world devoid of purpose. As he goes on to say "the Theatre of the Absurd has renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition; it merely presents it in being – that is, in terms of concrete stage images".

The Theatre of the Absurd is indebted to the avant garde art movements like Surrealism, Dadaism, Expressionism etc without whose existence it would not have come into being.

Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is considered to be an absurdist play par excellence. Originally written in French, it was translated into English by Beckett himself with the added subtitle "A tragicomedy in two Acts. " The play holds all those characteristics which set this Absurdist theatre apart. It lacks all those elements which were associated with theatre in general and the well-made play in particular -- a plot, psychological characterization and meaningful dialogue. Also there is no sense of a dramatic conflict which is the mainstay of conventional drama, precisely because a conflict can arise only when there are strong yet opposing value systems at work. The play is about two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon's endless wait for Godot, whom many critics believe to signify an indifferent or even nonexistent God. In the play there is the pervading sense of purposelessness, whether of the action (indefinite waiting for an elusive Godot), or of the characters ( Vladimir and Estragon's "passing the time"). Peculiarly, the play meets the classical standards of the unity of time, place and action. But this formal classicism holds within its fold radically new content. The cyclical structure of the action that occurs on the two days represented on stage conveys a sense of helpless boredom in the event of their having nothing to do but to await the appearance of that person who might lend meaning to their lives. The vacuous antics of Vladimir and Estragon who keep vigil by a bare tree hark back to comic traditions of the past, but instead of providing comic relief, instills a sense of pervasive despair.

The play also brings up the question of chance with Vladimir talking of the parable of the two thieves. That one is saved and the other is not brings to question the role of good deeds in a person's salvation. Further the fact that only one of the Gospels mentions this, further complicates matters. Vladimir's wry remark "One of the thieves was saved. It's a reasonable percentage" foregrounds the inexplicability of the human condition which seems to be predicated on chance alone. The arbitrariness of existence, therefore feeds into its meaninglessness. Another feature of absurdist theatre is the disarticulation of language which is illustrated through the breakdown of meaningful dialogue. The characters ramble on incessantly whether it is Vladimir and Estragon or the other pair Lucky or Pozzo. For instance at the end of both the Acts the two tramps say "let's go" but their actions belie their words as they stay where they are stuck in the circular absurdity of existence.

Another playwright who is more often than not treated as belonging to the Theatre of the Absurd, despite his loud protestations is Eugene Ionesco (1912-1994). Like Beckett and

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

most other playwrights who are considered to belong to the Theatre of the Absurd, Ionesco began writing plays in his 40s, overcoming an innate revulsion of theatre.



**Ionesco**

His anti-plays were radical departures from the pomposity of conventional theatre. The first play *The Bald Soprano* (1950, English trans 1958) stemmed out of the experience of reading clichés from his English Primer as he attempted to learn English. *Rhinoceros* (1959, English translation 1960), is the play which accorded him international repute. Like his other plays it radically questions the purposefulness of existence in a world one has no understanding of. Through the depiction of cocksure characters with their respective ideological underpinnings, all of whom eventually turn into rhinoceroses, Ionesco questions humanity's reliance on belief systems altogether. Jean speaks as the prospective superman with a sound belief in will power and self-improvement, Botard sounds like a fanatic Marxist, keen on unraveling the conspiracies of the establishment, and yet both appear to offer the least resistance to the rhinocerotis epidemic that takes over the small town and promptly turn into rhinos. Initially, of course, their reaction to the sudden appearance of a trumpeting rhinoceros has the appropriate incredulity. But subsequent repetitive exposure soon replaces the initial shock and repudiation with quotidian acceptance. Ionesco in this manner exposes the absurdity of the human predicament. This feeling is brought home in the tour de force of the play, the scene where Ionesco subjects the audience along with Berenger to the violence of a surrealistic transformation of Jean into a rhinoceros. As in Beckett here too the comic farce is laced with a potent degree of tragedy. Even the Logician, whose far from infallible logic had demonstrated how Socrates was a cat, succumbs to the disease. The only character, who manages to withstand the disease, till the curtain falls at least, is Berenger whose initial apathetic state would have appeared to make him the first victim. The menace which takes over the town causes him to overcome the state of angst to defend the existence of humanity.

The play also conveys the disarticulation of language through characters who talk at cross purposes and continually misunderstand each other. The repetition of phrases like "Oh, a rhinoceros" by virtually every character on stage, conveys the hollowness of expression and also at the same time drains the characters of psychological realism, rendering characters

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

as duplicates of each other. The sense of duplication is reinforced by the repetition of a single name for more than one character.

While Ionesco resorts to the proliferation of sheer physicality on the stage, whether in terms of an ever expanding corpse, proliferating chairs or rhinos etc, Beckett conveys his distinct message of the absurdity of existence in direct contrast with a stark stage and minimal stage props.

### Conclusion

To end this lesson with a more balanced picture of the critical attitudes towards avant garde it is only fitting to mention the obverse side to the valorization associated with this movement. The fact that this obverse side is a marginal one, should not render it invisible. As Christopher Innes contends, though avant garde has become an ubiquitous term apparently denoting the radical artistic genius of modern times it is by no means value-neutral as the currency of the term would imply. For a few like the Marxist critic George Lukacs, it became synonymous with decadence, a cultural symptom of the malaise engendered by bourgeois society. Similarly in "Whose Theatre? Whose Avant Garde", Roland Barthes contends that the avant garde artists actually served to protect the bourgeoisie and their interests, rather than jeopardizing them. They, according to Barthes, constituted the vanguard of the bourgeois army itself, whose purpose was to "inject a little subjectivity, a little freedom under the crust of bourgeois values."

### Glossary

Fin de siècle – a French term whose literal meaning is "end of the century." Usually though, it refers more specifically to the end of the nineteenth century, which signifies the beginning of modern period.

Logocentricism -- literally meaning "centred on the word", it is a phrase coined by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages (1872-1956) in the 1920s to refer to the perceived tendency of Western thought to locate the *centre* of any text or discourse within the *logos* (a Greek word meaning *word, reason, or spirit*). Later Jacques Derrida(1930-) was to popularize the term as signifying Western culture's general assumption that there is a realm of "truth" existing prior to and independent of its representation by linguistic signs.

Modernity -- is not to be confused with Modernism which was a literary movement which took root in the context of Modernity. Modernity can be defined as the complex conjuncture of historical conditions, material existence and social relationships put together. From the situation of modernity stem both modernist as well as avant garde art.

mise- en- scène – a French term which literally means "put in the scene." It denotes the arrangement of scenery and properties to represent the setting of a play or movie.

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

Taylorism – named after American engineer Frederick Taylor, was a scientific system of managing labour in order to enhance productivity. The attempt was to increase work efficiency by calculating the optimum ratio between the period of work and refreshment break. This system was propagated by the central institute of labour in Moscow and was the beginning of the new labour culture cultivated in order to catch up as an industrial State.

Über-marionette – Über is the German for super and literally translated means Super-Puppet. It was a term coined by Gordon Craig to denote the function of the ideal actor his revolutionary vision of theatre.

### Bibliography

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*. New York: Grove Press 1958.

Cardullo, Bert and Robert Knopf, Eds. *Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1890-1950: A Critical Anthology*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Berghaus, Günter. *Theatre, Performance and the Historical Avant- Garde*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Brustein, Robert. *The Theatre of Revolt*. Great Britain: Methuen, 1965.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant- Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Great Britain: Pelican Books, 1980, first Edition 1961.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *History of European Drama and Theatre*. Translated by Jo Riley. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2002.

Graver, David. *Aesthetics of Disturbance: Anti- Art in Avant- Garde Drama*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Hayman, Ronald. *Theatre and Anti-Theatre: New Movements since Beckett*. New York: OUP, 1979.

Harding, J M and John Rouse. Eds. *Not the Other Avant-Garde: The Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006

Henderson, John. *The First Avant- Garde (1887-1894): Sources of the Modern French Theatre*. London: George G. Harrap, 1971.

## Avant Garde Theatre: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco

Innes, Christopher. *Avant-Garde Theatre: 1892-1992*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Krasner, David. *History of Modern Drama*: UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 1952.

Noszlopy, George T. "The Embourgeoisment of Avant-Garde Art" *Diogenes* 1969 17: 83

<http://dio.sagepub.com/content/17/67/83.citation>

Theatre History Studies. University of Alabama Press.

Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant- Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Pronko, Leonard C. *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theater in France*. Berkley: Columbia University

Press, 1962.

Murphy, Richard. *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Sell, Mike. *AVANT-GARDE PERFORMANCE AND THE LIMITS OF CRITICISM*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Szondi, Peter. *Theory of the Modern Drama*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

Weiss, Samuel A. Ed. *Drama in the Modern World: Plays and Essays*. Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C Heath and Company, 1964.

Wellwarth, George E. *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox: Developments in the Avant-Garde Drama*. New York: New York University Press, 1971(first edition, 1964).