

# Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks I Performance Books

Bertolt Brecht was a German playwright, poet, and theatre director who developed a new theory of performance called the Messingkauf, or 'epic theatre'. This theory was based on the idea that the audience should be distanced from the action on stage in order to think critically about the play's message. Brecht also developed a number of modelbooks, which were books that contained instructions on how to perform his plays. These modelbooks were designed to help actors and directors understand Brecht's theory of performance and to ensure that his plays were performed in the way that he intended.



## Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks (Performance Books) by Bertolt Brecht

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 9164 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 312 pages



## The Messingkauf

The Messingkauf was Brecht's theory of performance that he developed in the 1930s. The term 'Messingkauf' is German for 'brass purchase', and it refers to the idea that the audience should not be swept away by the

emotions of the play, but should instead maintain a critical distance from the action on stage. Brecht believed that this critical distance would allow the audience to think more clearly about the play's message and to see the play's social and political implications.

In order to create a *Messingkauf*, Brecht used a number of techniques, including:

- **Alienation effects:** These are techniques that are used to distance the audience from the action on stage. For example, Brecht might use actors to speak directly to the audience, or he might use music or lighting to create a sense of detachment.
- **Epic theatre:** This is a type of theatre that is based on the principles of the *Messingkauf*. Epic theatre is characterized by its simple staging, its focus on social and political issues, and its use of alienation effects.
- **Modelbooks:** These are books that contain instructions on how to perform Brecht's plays. Modelbooks were designed to help actors and directors understand Brecht's theory of performance and to ensure that his plays were performed in the way that he intended.

## Modelbooks

Brecht wrote a number of modelbooks, including:

- **A Short Organum for the Theatre:** This book was written in 1949 and it contains Brecht's theory of performance. The book is divided into 28 short chapters, each of which deals with a different aspect of performance.

- **The Messingkauf:** This book was written in 1935 and it contains Brecht's instructions on how to perform his plays. The book is divided into 10 sections, each of which deals with a different aspect of performance.
- **The Threepenny Opera:** This book was written in 1928 and it contains Brecht's instructions on how to perform his play The Threepenny Opera. The book is divided into 3 acts, each of which contains detailed instructions on how to perform the play.

## Brecht's Legacy

Brecht's theory of performance has had a major influence on theatre around the world. His techniques have been used by directors such as Peter Brook, George Devine, and Robert Wilson. Brecht's work has also been adapted for film and television.

Brecht's legacy is that of a major innovator in the field of theatre. His theory of performance has helped to create a new way of thinking about theatre and its role in society.



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