

The Trial



SYNOPSIS

Scene 1

INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR!

"Somebody must have made a false accusation against Josef K, because he was arrested one morning without having done anything wrong."

Josef K, a senior administrator in a large bank, awakes to find a strange man in his bedroom. The man explains that he is a warder and that K is under arrest. This is unexpected news. The warder seems to be hoping for a bribe, but is rebuffed by K. The Supervisor arrives but far from agreeing with K that the arrest is a mistake, confirms that the proceedings have begun, although she can't provide any details of the accusation. She suggests that K goes to work. It seems that being arrested is not quite the upheaval K anticipated.

Scene 2

THE LAW PROTECTS YOU! DO NOT FIGHT IT!

"K had been notified by telephone that a brief examination into his case would be held the following Sunday."

Two surveillance officers follow K's progress towards the court, which is housed in a tenement block in a poor part of town. When K eventually finds the courtroom, he finds a large audience waiting and an Examining Magistrate who berates him for being late.

K discovers that the examination is ill informed and badly organised, and that parts of the audience are supporting him enthusiastically. He begins to decry the administration and proclaim his innocence, and even complains about the warder's behaviour at his arrest. The audience's mood changes abruptly. K notices that the audience's reaction is being controlled by the examining magistrate and court usher, and realises that his supporters are, in fact, officials.

Scene 3

TOO MUCH INFORMATION IS BAD FOR YOU

"During the following week K waited from day to day for a new court order, but none came."

Fearing that there might be a hearing that he was unaware of, K returns to the courtroom. There he encounters the court usher, who is in the process of moving his furniture back in for one day. The Usher seems sympathetic, and offers to show K around the court offices. When they get there, K discovers a room full of defendants who have been waiting far longer than him to gain information about their cases. K begins to feel faint because of the heat. The Usher suggests he speaks to the Information Officer, but the Information Officer does not seem to be able to provide any information.

Scene 4

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT IF BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO OTHER PEOPLE!

"At the bank, on one of the next evenings, K was passing along the corridor which separated his office from the main staircase."

K hears whimpering from a storage cupboard, and when he opens the door he discovers Franz (the warder who arrested him) about to be whipped by another official, the Whipper.

Franz explains that he is being punished as a result of K's comments to the Examining Magistrate. K tries to prevent the whipping, even resorting to bribery, but the Whipper is intent on doing his duty and the whipping begins. K is terrified that Franz's screams will attract attention. He shuts the door and creeps away.

The Trial



SYNOPSIS... CONT

Scene 5

ASK FOR HELP! IF YOU DO IT BY YOURSELF YOU WILL GET IT WRONG.

"One afternoon – K happened to be very busy just before the post despatch – his uncle Albert, a small landowner from the country, pushed his way into the room."

K's uncle Albert has heard rumours of K's arrest, and takes him to see an old friend, an advocate named Huld. Huld's maid is reluctant to let them in because Huld is unwell, but the uncle insists. K and the maid are instantly attracted to each other.

Huld is already aware of K's case and excited to be involved despite his ill-health. During the conversation Leni, the maid, causes a distraction to get K's attention and they slip into the advocate's office. The room is dominated by a portrait of a judge. Leni has also heard about K and they begin to discuss the case, but before long they become sexually entangled.

Afterwards K is waylaid by his uncle who is disgusted at his behaviour, but reveals that Huld has nevertheless agreed to represent him in court.

Scene 6

ACCEPT EVERYTHING YOU ARE TOLD! IT IS TRUE!

"K did not know what the advocate was doing. He had not asked to see K for a month, and even in earlier interviews, he had scarcely asked any questions. He just talked."

K finds it difficult to concentrate as Huld lectures him on the complexities of the legal process.

Scene 7

YOU HAVE THE POWER! DO NOT USE IT!

"K began to feel he should take the case out of the advocate's hands and into his own. But if the advocate were removed, then a plea of innocence would have to be filed immediately and action taken every day to see that it was taken into account."

At the office, K's case is distracting him from his work. He feels he is making no progress, but by chance a client suggests he visit the artist Titorelli, who is known to have some influence over the court.

Titorelli, the only artist qualified to paint judges, and therefore extremely well-connected, agrees to help. K's initial relief turns to despair as he realises that all Titorelli can offer are legal loopholes and technical obstructions that will never truly release him from his charges.

Scene 8

THE BEST PEOPLE DO WHAT THEY'RE TOLD!

"At last K had made up his mind to withdraw his case from the advocate."

K goes to see Huld, but the door is answered by another defendant, Block, who is wearing a nightshirt. K suspects that Block is also sleeping with Leni. Block denies this, and confesses to K that he has taken on five different lawyers to work on his case, leaving him destitute.

K informs Huld that he no longer wants Huld's representation. Huld accuses K of complacency, because K has not suffered as badly as other defendants. He illustrates this by summoning Block to be whipped.

The Trial



SYNOPSIS... CONT

Scene 9

BE GOOD. WE'RE WATCHING YOU.

"K had been given the assignment of showing the local monuments to one of the bank's important clients. It was agreed they would meet at the cathedral, but at the appointed time, K's guest is nowhere to be seen."

In fact, it is the prison chaplain who has summoned K to the cathedral. But is the priest there to offer K some comfort, or to deliver the last rites? K is left convinced that a judgement has finally been reached.

Scene 10

INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR

"On the evening before K's thirty-first birthday – it was about nine o'clock, when the streets grow quiet – two gentlemen came to his apartment."

A final pair of officials arrive to carry out K's sentence.

The Trial

BRECHT IN THE PRODUCTION

Our structure and starting point is always Brechtian and this is where we begin as a company. Please find below a dissection of our production:

Verfremdungseffekt – (making the familiar seem strange)

The 'verfremdungseffekt' is fundamental to Brechtian theory. It encourages a 'distanced' observation of the events in the play, and we use a number of devices to create an element of strangeness in the familiar. **The V-Effect is always used for a specific purpose;** it will be drawing your eye or ear to something that we think you should notice.

- **Actors playing more than one character** – this is a simple technique that means the audience has to engage their brain to keep up with story and with who is playing whom.
- **Puppet Advocate** – This weak old lawyer is given extra fragility by making him a puppet. Unable to function without help from someone else. His cruelty to the character Block in the later scenes is much stranger because he is not a human being.
- **Cross gender casting** – a distancing effect for both actor and audience.
- **Repetition** – Repetition is a useful V-Effect as you are more likely to notice something that happens more than once. Phrases are repeated with specific gestic actions (for clarity) like "It is my duty", "personal connections" and "It is pointless". We hope these will stand out.
- **Repetition of song** - the opening song is repeated at the end of the play, but the meaning of the song will have changed for the audience the second time they hear it.
- **Episodic structure** – The original Kafka book is divided into chapters and our version is broken down into 'scenes'. These episodic chunks of action could be watched or played in a different order as each one can stand-alone. We present them in chronological order but the flow of the narrative is interrupted by scene titles and a propaganda message on screen.
- **Chorus** – We use chorus as a v-effekt to connect the clerk characters, who you could imagine being a small element of a wider 'organisation'. This is also the case in scene 2 with the Surveillance Officers who are two sides of the same coin. In scene 7 we use chorus to show the mindless bureaucracy of K's office with shared office movements and manipulation of Josef K. In a more simple way we add vocal chorus to certain phrases within the play.
- **Signs** – The signs on the projection screen tell you the title of the song you are about to hear, or deliver a propaganda message in relation to the scene you are about to watch.
- **Breaking the Fourth Wall** – "I smashed this plate against the fourth wall..." We do not treat the fourth wall with much respect. Sometimes it contains Josef K, but when his passions are raised he breaks through it into the crowd. When he requires the audience to empathise he will physically go to them. Using the audience interactively encourages a dialogue between actor and audience, which is important to Brechtian theatre. You engage with your brain first and emotions second.
- **Direct Address** – There are times when we talk to the audience directly, predominantly when characters are sharing gestic opinions (see below for more details of that term). We choose who does this and when very carefully. It can be a powerful technique to engage or distance.
- **Narration** – Josef K narrates his own experience twice within the play. This promotes objectivity for both the actor and the audience. In the first 'whipper' scene it is a moment of shameful behaviour from K and the narration helps to emotionally disconnect him. He also takes us into his office routine, where he is manipulated and buried under paperwork and bureaucracy. This allows the audience a glimpse of his professional life, providing another angle on K's existence.
- **Freezing action** – To encourage our audience to concentrate on something specific on stage we will freeze the action surrounding it. This allows a tight focus in on one place at one time. We also use the technique to highlight a character's attitude in that moment of the story.
- **Change of Theatrical Style** – It is a very simple technique to change the pace and rhythm of a particular section of text, for example from naturalism to physical theatre, via clowning, exaggerated characterisation, narration, song or third person references.
- **Theatrical references** – Throughout the production we refer to techniques used within the creation of theatre. It reminds the audience that they are watching a play and provides some tickle alongside the invariable slap that will undoubtedly arrive at any minute.

The Trial

BRECHT IN THE PRODUCTION... CONT



Gestus – (An attitude, or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in word, action or song)

We use Gestus throughout 'The Trial' to provide clarity of characterisation and story for both actor and audience. Josef K has a shifting physical gestus, which is displayed at the start and end of each scene. If you showed these side-by-side they would create a physical montage of his journey throughout the play. The characters he encounters also have a strong physical and vocal attitude that should read easily for an audience.

Within many of the scenes an external character will break out of the action and comment on the behaviour of Josef K. This gives us a moment of objectivity when considering how others view him – do we think the same? Do we then judge Josef K differently? The actors have decided on a one-word attitude that saturates the statement physically and vocally, before snapping back into the action. Gestus provides moments of clarity that can assist the juxtaposition of the story and the construction of the argument surrounding Josef K's experience.

Our songs are also gestic; please see our very own 'song' section for details!

Spass – (Fun)

Splendid use Spass as a tool to keep our audience alert and encourage their brains to engage. The joyful elements of the production allow a group of students to stomach a piece of social political theatre. Without song, comedy and sense of fun, the politics are much harder to digest. By sandwiching comedy against tragedy we are able to create a 'tickle and slap' effect.

- **Jokes** – We use humour to undermine and highlight both the characters' and the audience's attitude. The theatrical gags in The Trial increase awareness of watching a play with actors.
- **The Journey** – The ridiculous physical journey to the court offices taken by K and the Usher is an example of pure Spass. The Usher approaches it with effort and seriousness, whereas K watches on casually... a metaphor for how he approaches the case and his situation.
- **Sound Effects** – We punctuate scenes with vocal sound effects, which add a strangeness and joy to the storytelling. It encourages play for both actor and spectator.
- **Exaggerated Characterisation** – The style of performance for most of the characters is not only a V-Effekt but also an element of Spass. They are extreme in all areas vocally and physically. Even the natural interpretation of Josef K is punctuated with extreme moments.
- **Style** – The Leni and K seduction scene is stylistically different from the rest of the play. It is cinematically melodramatic, while the final sex scene is farcical and silly. K chooses to be seduced by Leni rather than helping his own case. It is self-gratifying but perhaps that one action could have changed the outcome of his whole case?

Song

We use song as a V-effekt, but it also links to Spass and Gestus. In Brechtian theatre, song can be used to highlight attitudes or social / political comment as well as entertain. Song has an important part to play in our production of 'The Trial' – as it frames the production, allows you access to the mysterious and illusive Leni and breaks up the action.

- **The Anthem of the Blissfully Ignorant** – The Clerks sing this opening hymn with huge pride. The words are bounced along the screen to encourage the audience to pay attention to what is being said – hopefully noticing the juxtaposition between attitude and lyrics.
- **The Song of Boredom** – Our 'country' song gives us a break from the legal jargon of Huld. We are Josef K. We too have been uninspired and weighed down with words; we too have been bored senseless by lacklustre blah. The song is filtered through a joyful persona and punctuated with moments of gestus. It reads like a Josef K dream sequence. What information did he miss?
- **The Allure of the Accused** – is a gestic torch song from the heart of Leni. It breaks up the scene and allows us a glimpse into her inner dilemma. She is a woman in a patriarchal world, who gains excitement and power through the accused men who come for help. She cannot fight the compulsion and believes that perhaps she can save them with love.

The Trial

BRECHT IN THE PRODUCTION... CONT



Emotion and Objectivity

There is a widely held belief that Brechtian theatre should be devoid of emotion. This is not true. We must first bring our audience towards the characters or story in order to then be able to distance them from it. The spectator should be given the chance to form a reasoned emotional response – emotion sieved by the brain. The circumstances that Josef K finds himself in are terrible, but to simply empathise with him is not enough. We also have to question his actions and response to what happens to him. Is he innocent or guilty? How does he treat the people involved with the case and how might he have changed the course of events? What is inevitable and what is changeable in our world? How can you as an individual effect that?

The Archetype – (The Greek root of the word is 'first-moulded', the prototype, the first)

In Brechtian theatre it is vital to present options for an audience about the characters they are seeing. Highlighting the archetypal qualities help to keep our brains engaged. Each new juxtaposing version of the character gives us something else to think about. Josef K displays a selection of archetypal qualities throughout the play: 'the innocent man', 'the fighter', 'the defeated person', 'the victim', 'the hero', 'the snob' and 'the politician'. We aim to show each of these types clearly.

The characters surrounding the action are predominantly archetypal in nature. Many of them display a sense of 'duty' to their work: 'the dutiful person', 'the judge' and 'the supervisor'. The archetype is not just a job title; their title implies a way of behaving and operating. Franz is 'the corrupt man' in Scene 1 and in Scene 4 he is 'the victim'. Unlike many of the other characters we get to see two sides to him, easily shown by highlighting these archetypal qualities. The Priest also works as an archetype. He displays qualities we associate with religion to begin with, but the more he preaches, the more he seems to be the mouthpiece of the authorities. Who does he represent? The law? God?

Montage

Montage depends upon presenting juxtaposing ideas/attitudes/images. This can occur within a single scene, or when two contradictory angles on a character or story are shown back-to-back. Dialectics work along the same principle. We are presented with a 'thesis' and 'anti-thesis' and we create a 'synthesis' of the two ideas in our minds. Montage allows the audience to draw a new conclusion from the juxtaposing elements they have seen or heard. Here are some examples from the production:

- **Signs on Screen** – are montaged against the action on stage. The propaganda encourages our audience not to think or act; yet the production is designed to provoke questions.
- **Songs** – Both 'the song of Boredom' and 'The Allure of the Accused' have montage of attitudes within them. The boredom lyrics juxtapose with the perky tune and hoedown dance routine. Leni's cabaret theatricality contrasts with moments of honesty and revelation for the audience. Entertaining, thought provoking and (of course) joy giving.
- **First Whipper Scene** – Scene 4 is an intense montage experience. We witness the horror of a man being flogged juxtaposed with the workmanlike approach of 'The Whipper' AND the cowardice of Josef K as he ignores the pleadings of Franz. In fact, he disguises the torture first from the audience and, in the next scene, from his uncle. Who is right? What would you do?
- **Audience Whipping Section** – By inciting the audience into a mob mentality we are interested in whether or not a student will whip the character Block onstage. Whatever the individual decision, we behave as if they were intending to actually carry out the action. The moment should go from cheering to horror at what might have occurred. The montage of these two attitudes should hopefully provide the largest 'slap' of the show.

BREAKDOWN OF BERKOFF AND SPLENDID VERSION

Component	Berkoff	Splendid
The portrayal of Josef K	Sympathetic. He is the 'under-hero'. A man who should fight more but is overwhelmed by the system. 'The diary of a no-one'.	Not just 'the victim'. We show his cowardice, his fury and his snobbery. We use the Brechtian principle of 'not – but' to encourage the audience to think about his actions.
Characters	Josef K – Chief clerk at the Bank Miss Bürstner – Tenant in the lodgings Mrs Gruback - Landlady Two Guards Doorkeeper Inspector - Police Leni – Huld's Mistress Huld – The Lawyer of K K's Father – Disembodied voice from past Block - Pathetic client of Huld Laundress – Works in the Courts Student – madman & lover of Laundress Bailliff (Usher) Humiliated husband Tiforelli – Court painter & verbalist clown Priest - K's confessor & judge	Josef K Franz the Warder Supervisor Surveillance Officers 1 & 2 Usher Leni Huld Block Tiforelli Priest Gentleman 1 & 2 The characters remaining in our production are key to the trial and the bureaucracy pervading the original story.
Set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bare stage • 10 screens – structure of city • 10 chairs • A Rope – his route as well as his death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bare stage – surrounded by rope • Microphone –scene titles & song • Projector with screen & Box • Curtained doorway on wheels.
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkovian • Exaggerated characters • Multi-roling • Sound Effects - live & recorded • Actors play correct gender • Narration - chorus & character • Mime • Incidental music • Direct address • Theatricality & plight of K is central • Formal gestures & atmospheric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brechtian • Exaggerated archetypes • Multi-rolling • Sound Effects – live • Cross-gender casting • Narration – Josef K • Rudimentary mime • Song – gestic in nature • Audience participation • Politics & audience are central • Puppetry & joy
Chorus	is the environment of K, they create characters, atmosphere, objects, sounds and set.	We use chorus to punctuate scenes or to highlight a gestic moment. It adds theatricality to our work.
Politics	The politics are held within the story What is his guilt? What is your guilt?	The politics provoke questions for the audience. How does K's story impact upon them?
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th wall broken by actors vocally • Direct address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th wall broken – physical & vocal • Audience participation throughout
Scenes	Divided into 'acts' in the play script, but this is not used in performance.	Verbally and physically divided into scenes with titles – delivered by K.
The Court Scene	This is moved from the beginning to the end of the play. So that it appears to have more of a climactic experience - the narrative builds.	Played earlier in the play in line with the Kafka novel. The audience are complicit with the authorities. Which sets them up as officials & defendants.
Characterisation	Exaggerated vocally and physically to create grotesque figures. Adding to the oppression of Josef K.	Exaggerated vocally and physically to enhance gestic qualities of characters.