

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Section A – Question 6

The Love of the Nightingale

Version 1



QUESTION 6 – THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

- 6 Explain how an actor could use body language to emphasise the social status of a villain in the opening scenes of the performance. Justify your ideas with examples from the opening scenes of the performance text you have chosen for this question.

[20]

SAMPLE ANSWER

The Love of the Nightingale – Timberlake Wertenbaker

Timberlake Wertenbaker's *The Love of the Nightingale* has a very clear villain in Tereus. He is spoken about before his appearance on stage in fond terms as the two sisters Procne and Philomele discuss Procne's future marriage and the secrets of what being with a man might mean. Philomele describes him as handsome and romanticises the idea of love between a man and a woman. She is excited by the 'tiger in her stomach'. Procne is more cautious and innocent which shows the way that women are seen to be the passive sex. Tereus has asked for her as 'justice' for his support of Athens in the war and her father Pandion feels unable to refuse him. This would seem shocking to a modern audience but was the custom at Greek times and Wertenbaker emphasises the lack of 'voice' that women have throughout the play.

When he first appears on stage, Tereus is not a traditional villain, but more of a typical Ancient Greek King. To show his importance I would have him seated upright, hands on knees, knees apart to show a strong sense of his masculinity. His head would be upright and he would sit proudly with his head up to show confidence and supremacy. Pandion is his senior but would be fawning around him respecting the fact that Tereus has helped him to win the war and wanting to thank him in any way possible.

Tereus does not come straight out with the fact that he wishes to take Procne away as his wife, but hints at what he wants. I would show this craftiness by having him speaking in a slightly mocking tone – the Queen is astute and guesses his intentions but he should never look towards her showing that he does not value or listen to women. This becomes important later on when he ignores Philomele's pleas to leave her alone. Although he does not acknowledge her I would have him smirk slightly when she whispers to her husband to hint at the villain that lies beneath his apparently 'just' exterior. I would have King Pandion fawning about him, but Tereus looking at him as a fool rather than an equal. His physical strength would be shown by the size of him – the actor playing him would need to be physically big and muscular.

When Tereus addresses Procne who is clearly frightened by the prospect of marrying him and moving so far away from her home and family he says 'I will love and respect you'. We later recognise that he does not keep this promise and even pretends that she is dead in order to attempt to seduce her younger sister. At this stage in the play it should be ambiguous. I would want the audience to recognise his power and supremacy but also keep the full extent of his determination to get his own way for later in the play to keep their interest, I would have him turn to Procne and as he makes his promise and clutch her hand – perhaps too tightly to show he is not a gentle man. His voice should be loud and impersonal to reflect the fact that he sees the marriage as a public arrangement rather than a personal affair. Once the deal is made I would have him move between Procne and her Father, these proxemics would reflect the fact that he will isolate her from all that she has known.

In Greek times it would be expected that Tereus would be a powerful and strong ruler – to show love and soft emotions would be to suggest weakness. He would be a figurehead for the army and valued only for his strength and courage. To reflect this I would keep his character very stereotypical – his voice would lack tonal variety and his movements should be bold and almost mechanical to hide any subtext. He would 'own' the seat he sits on by leaning right back and filling the seat – again reflecting how powerful he is and the dominance he has over the situation.

Later in the play, Tereus develops an obsessional love for Philomele. To foreshadow this, in the opening scene we see him in, he could notice her and linger his eyes on her before looking away. A good time for this to happen would be when Philomele asks to go with her. He does not reply verbally but could look at her. This would suggest that something about her has attracted him, in spite of her young age and this would make the audience feel uncomfortable. To see him look at her as predator will stir feelings of dislike in the audience and create a sense of unease about what might follow. In addition to this it will suggest that his promise to love and respect Procne are empty words. The fact that the play is based upon the myth means that many members of the audience will already know what happens and the dramatic irony on stage will be further enhanced.



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