

AS LEVEL

Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459

For first teaching in 2016

Section B: Question 7 – The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time with commentary

Version 2



INTRODUCTION

This resource has been produced by the A Level Drama and Theatre assessor team to offer teachers an insight into how the assessment objectives are applied.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

The sample assessment material for this answer and commentary can be found on the A Level Drama and Theatre web page and accessed via the following link:

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-drama-and-theatre-h059-h459-from-2016/>



Question 7 – The Curious Incident of the Dog in the night time

- 7 Evaluate a live performance you have seen, explaining how closely the production reflected the conventions of that performance style of drama. At the start of your answer state the name, venue and date (month and year) of the live performance you have seen. [40]

Curious Incident – Month, Year, Venue

Simon Stephen's adaptation of Mark Haddon's book 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time' uses many techniques like Total Theatre and Epic Theatre to educate the audience and gain a greater understanding of Asperger syndrome and the challenges that affect them.

I like the way the set designer created the stage as it is a 13x13 cube with chalkboard walls which is a symbolic representation Christopher Boone's mind, as Christopher is a very logical, methodical and intelligent person. I like this as Christopher loves prime numbers and the subject of maths. Christopher likes prime numbers as he feels they are isolated like him. Before act one begins the stage is open with all of the props on stage. This Brechtian technique breaks the illusion of the play. All the ensemble and props are on stage and they rarely come on from the wings and the set moves around Christopher as it is how he experiences it in his mind. This is because they are constantly in Christopher's mind and so are always on stage. I liked the use of chalk as it suggests that Christopher is a teacher, teaching us the difficulties he faces in his life like facial expressions which is what the whole play is about, to inform the audience of Aspergers.

The sound effects used throughout the play make us think that Christopher's mind is like a computer as the uses of non-diegetic sounds implies. An example of this is when he is in the train station with all of the advertisements, of DFX and project adverts and signs play at the same time as Christopher can't just simply ignore them like we can so struggles to walk through the train station. Also the actors in the train station move in a very un-naturalistic way and in all directions to show this is not a natural environment to Christopher. At times when Christopher can't handle things a loud, high-pitched techno sound like a switchboard malfunctioning is heard and this reflects his discomfort which forces us to feel this discomfort as well. I liked this as it alienates us from Christopher as we wouldn't hear this noise usually making him un-relatable to us. I liked when the voice of the father is distorted when Christopher is having a fit as it shows how his father is a different person than both Christopher and we thought, because after finding out his father lied to him he can no longer trust him, and we feel a differently about his father.

The lights were not naturalistic and used in a symbolic way to show Christopher's logic thinking, like the light set for the neighbourhood was projected like a blue print. I think this was a good use of projections as Christopher wouldn't see them as house, he'd see them as building in a set layout in his investigation. Sometimes the lighting effects were used to force the audience to feel Christopher's emotions and how he sees everything. For example when the strobe lights were shone in our faces making us uncomfortable like him or when the whole stage and auditorium was pitch black, except for the flash light on Christopher's head, I think this was a well-used Brechtian technique as it forced us to only see what he is seeing which is what the play is based on, showing Christopher's story. I liked how the light set used the lighting effects to illustrate how isolated Christopher is as he is always in strict LED lighting whereas everyone else was in soft lighting, which is displeasing to him. The lights also created a tempo at certain parts of the play, like when there was an argument a bright strobe light was shone at a fast tempo but then faded and became a gentle light again when the argument ended, or when the scenes change the lights would move quickly to a different part of the stage showing how Christopher doesn't follow a linear structure.

Christopher contradicts himself, as he uses the actors like props, as he sees people like objects due to his lack of social skills but hates people touching him. However when he's dreaming of being an astronaut he doesn't flinch or scream when the ensemble are moving him around because he is dreaming of isolation, this was my favourite scene as its showed creativity and tranquillity which questions the false dichotomy.

Those autistic children can't be creative, as he has created the world but would be able to make it without the actors. Christopher's body language, voice and posture were mainly mono-tone and un-naturalistic for the majority of the play, compared to the rest of the ensemble, making him un-relatable to him to the audience. The train set is a microcosm which is allegorical of Christopher's mental, physical and emotional journey. The track never makes a complete circle which shows that his journey is ongoing and does not have an ending yet. When Siobhan is reading though his book, he builds the track slowly but when he finds out his father lied to him, and finds out his mother is alive he builds the track faster.

The use of total theatre created a performance that made us as the audience observe his life, through his thoughts and his feelings, to create a new understanding of how he has lived his life with Asperger's syndrome making us look at our lives differently.

Marks:

AO3 - 9

AO4 - 26

Commentary

The work opens with a clear definition of the performance style of the production. The essay provides a detailed, full description of what was seen within the performance.

The work is confident and clear with effective and detailed analysis of all elements. There is clear reference to the style of the performance and ideas are analysed throughout, although this is not necessarily the case in the final paragraph of the essay.

The work reflects an excellent understanding of how meaning is conveyed through a range of theatrical elements. There is well developed technical discussion which is accurate and detailed. The work is coherent and logically structured.

How the answer could be improved

The evaluation and reference to the performance style could be made throughout the essay in terms of how each idea represents Total Theatre as raised by the candidate.

More detailed explanation and justification in some areas with regard to some techniques used could be given to enable the examiner to clearly see what the candidate is referring to. The candidate cannot assume that the examiner has seen the performance and therefore must give enough detail to recreate what was seen in the mind of the examiner.



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