

GCSE (9–1)
Teacher Guide

DRAMA

J316
For first teaching in 2016

Gizmo
– Alan Ayckbourn

Version 1



Gizmo

by Alan Ayckbourn

Content

Brief Synopsis

The back story is significant in the plot of *Gizmo* - Ben was a barman who witnessed a double shooting close to him in his bar. If the gunman hadn't been interrupted Ben would have been next. The shock of that has set off a medical condition known as post traumatic paralysis.

Ben is now – that is to say in our near-future – to be the subject of a trial of a revolutionary device called a GIZMO, which is a chip in his brain operated from a wristwatch worn by a doctor or carer. The chip will make Ben mimic precisely the movements of the wearer of the watch.

The theory is that once he has trained his muscles and brain to work to enable him to move by imitation, he will walk again on his own, albeit gradually. The implied dangers are that Ben will come to rely on the device and the concept only works if the wearer of the watch (controller) has Ben's well-being in mind.

Of course the play makes a strong comment on society's dependency on technology and ever-evolving new ideas, but it is full of humour and the characters become absorbing as Ben's journey progresses.

All goes well until Ben convinces a nurse it is safe for them to go for a 'walk' in the park. That's when a nightmare begins for Ben which is extremely painful, humiliating and terrifying but ultimately leads heroically to his freedom and the forces of law prevailing.

When the watch and therefore Ben too fall into the hands of a gang of low-grade muggers followed by a group of heavy murderous criminals including the shooter from the bar, the situation is set for the show-down of the drama and some outrageous physical comedy.

An undercover police officer called Cevril rescues Ben but gets shot herself before ending up paralysed and having the GIZMO technique applied to her to restore her mobility.



Long Synopsis

Scene 1

The scene is set in a lecture theatre in the private Chepthorne Medley Research Hospital – not an NHS facility – where Professor Ray Barth, Project Chief Administrator for the GIZMO experiment introduces us to the idea and the security procedures: ‘no notes, photographs, filming or recordings.’

We meet Dr Bernice Mallow who explains how long it has taken and what it has cost to date and that everyone is impatient for results, for the realisation of a long-cherished dream. The audience feels part of this briefing.

The nurse Ted Wilkins wheels in Ben Mason, the subject of the medical experiment, who explains some of his backstory about the shooting which so shocked him he is now over 90% paralysed.

Neurologist David Best adds to the explanation with details of how Ben ‘literally froze with fear’ with his system shutting down. There is more medical discussion as Best is interviewed before we are introduced to GIZMO with appropriate pseudo-medical jargon – PMRS, positive movement replication synchronicity.

The principle of Ben’s muscles moving in precise imitation of those of the person wearing the rather chunky watch is demonstrated. It is quite modest and then becomes more impressive so that the audience applauds.

There is extensive stage direction to explain exactly how the actors should show the physicality and the comedy has already begun, despite the apparent seriousness of the medical conference.

Scene 2

The stage directions order the opening in the same style as each scene transitions into the next – ‘the lights come up almost immediately.’

We see Ben lying on the bed, unable to move but wanting to walk about. Ted is reading and is reluctant to even turn the device on unless Ben wants the toilet.

Physiotherapist Nerys Potter enters looking ‘fit, young and hearty,’ but Ben groans. He is forced by the GIZMO to engage in a series of exercises he loathes but are meant to be good for him.



It would be difficult not to find his imitated exercises amusing, though many will feel sorry for Ben, too – ‘I’m dying. I think I’m dying.’ Even when the doctor, David Best, comes in, Ben is not spared the regime and while Best talks to Nerys about him, we watch as Ben goes on, imitating.

In medical terms this is not good, as he is not yet operating under his own brain, but simply copies reflexively. They try to encourage him to move alone, but he cannot. This is important for later when he simply has to move to save his life.

Scene 3

With simultaneous lights up, this scene shows us Ben and Ted standing looking out of the window, both equally bored. The park outside looks interesting to Ben who has been sitting down for 14 months, less so to Ted – ‘it’s full of perverts and muggers,’ which is funny but turns out to be true.

Arguing that he’s ‘a patient, not a prisoner’ Ben finally persuades a very reluctant Ted to lead him outside and into the park.

Scene 4

Now Ben and Ted are in the park where Ted insists on his cigarette break, so the comic miming from Ben continues

to entertain. As they talk, Ben opens up with the backstory and gives us and Ted the details.

Young couple in the bar, man entered who knew the male and then shot him. Ben describes the scene graphically – we can easily replay it in our minds. In production this could be done on video, to the side or left to the audience’s imagination.

The screaming, hysterical girl was then shot as the man turned to Ben and the look in his eye brought on Ben’s paralysis. Someone came in from the street and the hitman legged it.

Clearly impressed, Ted asks Ben if he’d know the gunman again and is told he would; Ted’s fearful response for his own safety is amusing.

They are suddenly stopped by Hezza, Tiz and Dart, female gang members, who proceed to hassle the two men ‘for the price of a cup of tea’ in a way that will be recognised by watchers of film gang behaviour.

Ted stubbornly resists the demand but then Rust, Dazer and Fritzo appear. We are told their male gender later, but Rust is the leader. For Ted and Ben it is not the rescue they might have hoped for, as the new arrivals turn the hostility up a gear to the menace level.





Even in this there is humour with two of the girls being 'fiancées.' It builds up to 'a melee' with Ted swamped by the gang and all his actions copied by Ben outside the cluster. Ted ends up comatose on the floor while they relieve him of money and the wrist watch.

As they find Ben, Rust puts the watch on and so they discover the effect it has on him but lose interest and start to leave, Ben hopelessly following. This accelerates into a bizarre knife fight, Ben miming the weapon.

As the fight reaches the climax, we see Manny Rice, 'a businessman' and well-dressed thug with his bodyguards, Rudi and Keith, who watch before stopping the fight.

With insults galore, 'squalid little pus-ridden scumbags', Manny and his henchmen sort out the gang, get Ted's wallet back and teach them the park is a) for peace-loving, law-abiding people, and b) not for them.

Now Ben is in the hands of a more serious class of adult criminal who pretends to be concerned. Manny orders Ted is taken to hospital and moves Ben along with him and the watch.

Scene 5

This begins quickly, set in Manny's apartment with the feature of a bar, where an attractive girl, Cevril is sitting reading.

The thugs place Ben on the settee and he tries to explain about the watch but Manny overrides him with his continuing pretend caring. He patronises and kisses Cevril, telling her to mind Ben while he deals with business and gives her the watch as a present.

Cevril and Ben are left alone so he tells her a potted version of the shooting story and the treatment. She tries the watch and Ben responds as expected which confuses her a little. When she wants a drink Ben suggests one and reveals he was a barman. They are definitely getting on.

Suddenly the hitman Lando enters and we see there is no love lost between him and Cevril. Lando thinks he has seen Ben before and as soon as he leaves, Ben tells Cevril that is the man who shot the couple in his bar.

Suddenly Cevril seems to know more than expected, gets changed in the other room which Ben mimes on stage but somehow they get out of synch so there is yet more absurd humour as she tries to lead Ben out of the room to escape.

Manny returns and demands she re-changes and is not going out. She manages to use Ben as a remote

combatant from behind on Manny, who is chopped down and out. They take his gun as Lando returns.

There is now a further round of combat with Lando disarming Cevril but they are locked in an even battle echoed by Ben. Suddenly Lando has her in an arm lock and she calls out to Ben to help her, which Lando dismisses as he's remembered where he saw Ben before, the 'scared little rabbit.'

The fight moves offstage but we have a one-sided version from Ben leading to an assumption that Lando has defeated her but is struck by an object which causes Cevril to be pushed back through a window.

Lando crawls in, tells Ben she's dead after falling five floors down and makes for the gun to kill Ben. He, in turn, makes a monumental effort to reach it too.

Blackout and a shot. We assume that Ben is dead.

Scene 6

The final scene is a full circle, a neat reversal of roles. We have a lecture room at the hospital, just as in Scene 1. It is an award ceremony where the Chief Constable is guest of humour. He speaks of their strong blow against 'the gangs that terrorise and presume to own our cities.'

The success of GIZMO is being marked and Ben receives an award for outstanding bravery in the community, fully able to walk normally and without assistance. In his thank you speech Ben says that Cevril is in fact a Detective Sergeant and she too receives an award.

She is in a wheelchair pushed by Ted. She incurred spinal injuries when she went through the upper window and has been paralysed for months. Now she is the subject of a GIZMO treatment.

Ben kisses her, and with the wristwatch on him she appears to like it, kissing him back. So the play ends on a happy note. A love story of good triumphing over evil.



Alan Ayckbourn and his influences

Sir Alan Ayckbourn (b.1939) is a household (theatre) name in the UK, having written over 75 plays, many of which are so popular that they are performed by amateurs and professionals alike over and over again.

He was knighted in 1997 for services to theatre and along with John Godber and Shakespeare, stands among the most performed playwrights in Britain. By any measurement, he is a giant of the late 20th century stage in the UK.

He has spent his entire adult/working life in theatre from the age of 17 when he became hooked after coming into contact with theatre enthusiastic French teacher, Edgar Matthews <http://research.alanayckbourn.net/styled-20/styled-24/page33.html> who introduced him to Shakespeare and theatre itself.

Since then, Ayckbourn has turned his hand to almost every job going – from stage management to sound and lights, from making and painting props to acting, directing and writing commercial and successful plays. Not only is this experience extremely rare, it uniquely qualifies him as a stage craftsman.

In his in-depth biography of Ayckbourn, *'Grinning At the Edge'* (2001), Paul Allen described him as a man of few friends, outwardly distant and 'never politically correct.'

He has been a vocal and practical advocate for the joys, challenges and advantages of theatre-in-the-round, mainly at Scarborough but also elsewhere. It was Stephen Joseph, whose Scarborough theatre Ayckbourn worked in, who believed writers should be part of a theatre company, so he encouraged everyone to write to save his company money. Ayckbourn's long career began with the unofficial apprenticeship of hands-on stage experience.

The 1950s and into the 60s were a period of extraordinary social change and cultural revolution on post-World War Two Britain and other European countries. The death of Brecht and the premiere of John Osborne's *'Look Back in Anger'* in 1956 marked the watershed moment in British theatre when the 'Angry Young Men' era began, paralleled by the Hungarian uprising and the Suez Crisis for Israel, Britain and France.

The Angry Young Man time which described a period of social rebellion against what had gone before was a misnomer, as several were neither young nor especially angry. Joan Littlewood was neither young nor a man, but was very angry indeed.



Samuel Beckett's *'Waiting for Godot'* had come to the UK in 1955; French writers such as Jean Anouilh were well established. There was earlier psychological and spiritual drama from TS Eliot and Christopher Fry, Rattigan's comedies tackled class seriously and back in the 1940s, so the revolution went on for several decades perhaps culminating in the 'swinging' 60s.

Paul Allen made a telling point by identifying three major playwrights in the post-war period – Harold Pinter, John Osborne and Ayckbourn. All three acted on stage before writing and since. Arnold Wesker, another key playwright had also acted as an amateur. This tells us that their outstanding writing was born in their invaluable acting experience.

So, who were the influences on Ayckbourn? People assume that Bertolt Brecht must have been one, simply because he influenced so many practitioners and so much of theatre to this day. But Paul Allen said in 2001 Ayckbourn had never watched a Brecht play, but had seen work in that style.

Above all other influences was Stephen Joseph, his mentor. Described frequently as 'half-genius, half madman' Joseph's influence cannot be over-estimated. Not only did he encourage Ayckbourn to write, he was a hands-on role-model for every aspect of keeping a theatre company alive often against all economic odds.

Ayckbourn's commitment to the Library Theatre in Scarborough in 1957 changed the course of his own life and brought Joseph's passion for in-the-round, but not exclusively, performance into the mainstream.

Now the theatre is named after Joseph and a study of his life www.stephen-joseph.org.uk informs the student about Ayckbourn. The blog <http://ayckbourn.blogspot.co.uk/2013/07/alan-ayckbourns-most-significant.html> refers to a book by Dr Paul Elsam, 'Stephen Joseph: Theatre Pioneer and Provocateur' (2013) in which Joseph is called 'our cultural big secret - virtually a missing link on the British stage. Quite simply, he brought intimacy back into theatre, and he let audiences and actors get on with what they do best.'

Other influences discussed by critics and friends with little input from Ayckbourn himself, include Harold Pinter for his precise use of language and rhythms, the BBC Radio producer Alfred Bradley <http://research.alanayckbourn.net/styled-20/styled-27/page40.html> and playwrights' agent, Peggy Ramsay <http://research.alanayckbourn.net/styled-20/page58/page40.html>

Much like Pinter, it is his ear for the words, phrases and strange things people say, the way they say them and the things left out that allow Ayckbourn's natural writing skills to shine through his characters. His awareness of the absurd in life and the bizarre situations so many of us find ourselves in has enriched his original ideas and turned them into compelling drama.

Despite his personal reticence, Ayckbourn has given hundreds of interviews to explain his philosophy, his writing approach, his style and his influences, but perhaps the one by Jim Mulligan <http://www.jimmulligan.co.uk/interview/alan-ayckbourn-gizmo> conducted after Gizmo was published is particularly revealing and helpful.

Mulligan quoted Ayckbourn on writing as happening around other things. If he wakes in the morning with an idea, he writes; or if he has time at the end of a dull day before a meeting he writes. However, if he is working on a full length play, which he does once every year, he takes a month – 'about three weeks circling round the problem and then (I) write quickly based on thoughts and ideas accumulated over several months.'

There is a YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1y3Soure5Y> 2014 interview given by Ayckbourn at the National Theatre which explains some of his working methods.





Exploring the play

Paul Allen describes *Gizmo* as science fiction, a murder thriller and 'the excuse for young actors to play a favourite game – copying the actions of somebody more powerful and, when accused of taking the mickey, affirming that they can't possibly help it.'

It's undoubtedly a winning formula for a piece of drama categorised as 'a play for children/young people' and it's a short piece Ayckbourn wrote for the 1999 National Theatre Connections Festival where schools take on and perform specially written new works in a simultaneous national event, performed and judged locally with selected performances advancing to the National Theatre.

His website <http://gizmo.alanayckbourn.net/> explains some of the background of what is undoubtedly an 'unusual piece.' It is unusual for Ayckbourn in that its theme is designed specifically for teenagers while its often surrealistic approach is suitable for all ages. Certainly, while it is not much performed professionally, it's popular with youth groups in school and out with a large cast of mixed gender roles or small list with doubling up.

To label it as challenging is to state the obvious: its synchronisation of physical movements alone are highly demanding, it's deliberately swift scene changes push technicians and actors to their limits.

There may be some purists who feel that an Ayckbourn comedy should be one of 'manners', mocking English middle-class lifestyles, aspirations and foibles. But he rarely conforms to any template. His plays are funny/hilarious, dark, satirical, biting, insightful commentaries on life and *Gizmo* crosses several boundaries at once – mockery of medical science, disability, human relationships, power and adult perception of some aspects of youth culture.

Some critics have likened *Gizmo* to his 'Ernie's Incredible Illucinations' (1969) – summarised as, 'Ernie's concerned parents take him to see a doctor about his 'illuminations', but are they really all in his mind?'

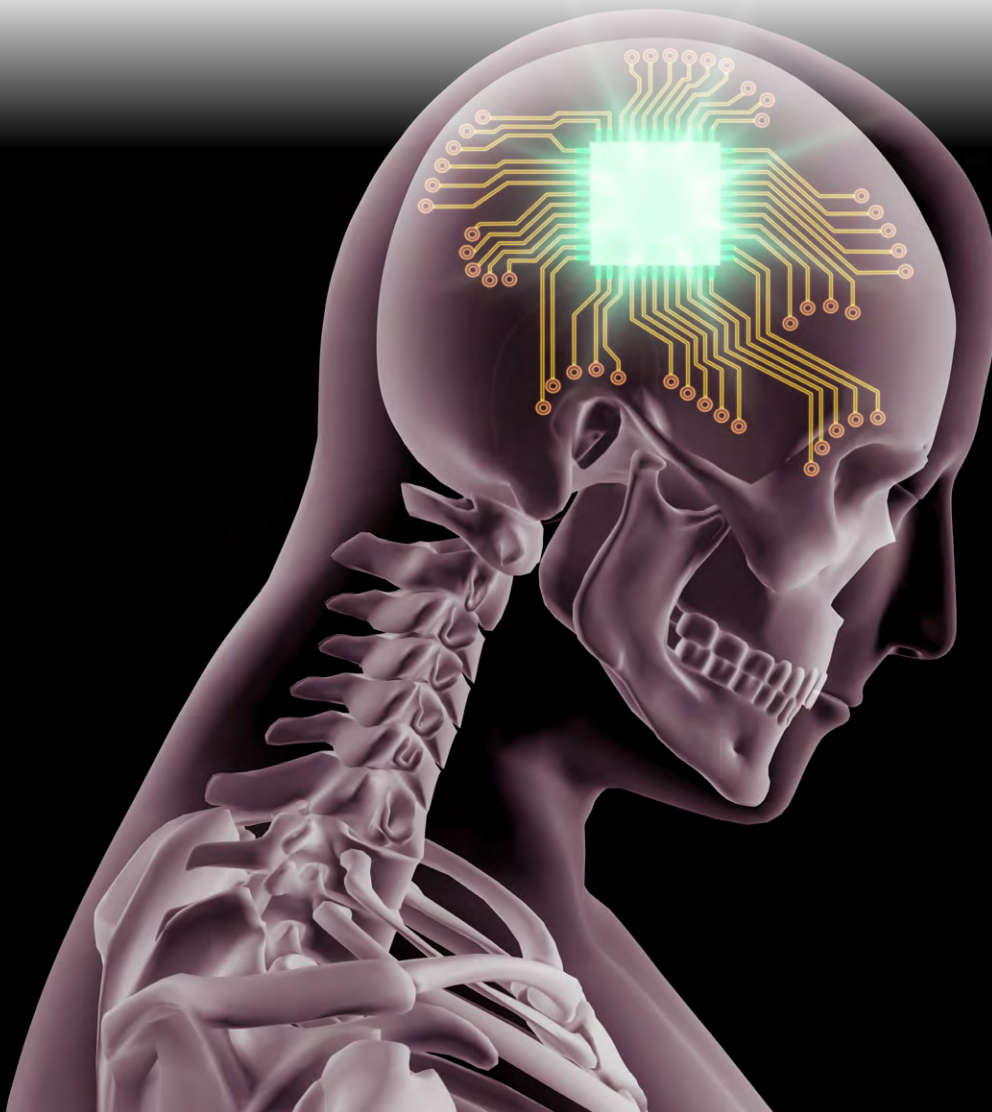
Stated simply, *Gizmo's* plot would make a convincing performance of theatre or film in several differing genres with a serious purpose. Or it can be what Ayckbourn intended – a piece of stage comedy with a number of hard-hitting warnings.

Also described as a 'fast-moving thriller and love story combined', Ayckbourn said he wanted to set it on 'neutral ground' that is 'neither teenagers nor adults'. He intended there should be 'convincing dialogue and a degree of physicality that would be fun.'

Above all, he thought the play turned out to be 'moral'. He is fascinated by scientific discoveries and inventions and hoped there's more to it 'than entertainment', which suggests an attempt to put over a message which in this play takes the form of a warning about machines. He admits to 'a bit of the preacher' in him.

Fast-moving? It's a forced pace with the emphasis at every scene ending written into the stage directions. One scene follows the last with a rapidity that is a stage management and acting challenge but adds to the effect of riveting action that holds teenagers' attention.

Love story? Certainly Ben's and Cevril's growing affection culminating in the final kiss suggests a love story. It could also be argued that the very program to bring some life back into the limbs of the paralysed and the police attempts to clean up the society/community in which they live are also acts of wide love for fellow human beings.



Key themes

1. Technology and dangers

One of the contemporary issues that we have become used to handling is the danger from technology, particularly new technology.

When jobs are affected or a way of life is threatened, we may take a hostile view. But if a disruptive or scientific advance is of benefit to us we take a different stance. This ambiguity is natural.

It's reflected in this play. On the one hand, the GIZMO idea of an implanted chip in which forces the patient to imitate the human wearing the watch and his or her movements as a means of training their own muscles and brain to rediscover walking and moving after prolonged paralysis is positive, life-changing in a good sense and desirable.

On the other, the vulnerability of the patient to humiliation, abuse, crime or total control is negative, life-changing in a bad sense and highly undesirable.

The play leaves it to the audience to decide whether either view or a mix of both is paramount. As Ben is healed by it and we suppose that Cevril will be in due course we are likely to feel well disposed to the technology.

As the police chief lays claim to a successful fightback against criminals through policing techniques, by association, the GIZMO technology is favourably regarded.

It is the old technology, the gun, which is seen in the bad light.

2. Science fiction

The syndrome of post traumatic paralysis is not a recognised one. Ayckbourn made it up together with its catchy GIZMO title and the entirely plausible PMRS – positive movement replication synchronicity.

As science has advanced in the past century at an accelerating and exponential rate, so science fiction has struggled to keep ahead. What seemed incredible two generations ago is now taken for granted.

Nonetheless, Ayckbourn's interest in the sci-fi genre is given free rein here. It also speaks to a generation more familiar with the application of technologies than his own.

It also happens to be the case that the use of this particular device is an easy, natural and effective lead in to a range of absurd physical comedy that appeals to a wide audience.

3. Characters/relationships

None of the characters is fully developed or rounded, but many people argue that his writing skill enables them in the main to rise above stereotypes.

The apparent/possible affection between Ben and Cevril by the end is hard to judge, but as it appears to be so we can only wonder if she is actually reciprocating his affection willingly. That is part of the interest of the story.

No other character is developed – the villains remain small parts. There are revealing moments such as the conversation between Ted and Ben in the park or when Cevril plays along with Manny's control of her body and mind where we can momentarily believe in them in the context of the drama.

Ayckbourn has said that he is moved by the 'interconnected lives' of people. One event leads to another; there is a cause and effect in the life of humankind. In this play we learn that we are not actually connected by machines except superficially, but we are in a sense responsible for each other as well as ourselves.

The play is also about bullies – the females, the males and Manny and his cronies and certainly Lando the killer. Yet, it's possible to find behaviour that controls and overrides personal wishes in the keep-fit nurse, in Ted and the officials in the hospital program.

4. Violence

There is violence in the two part approach of the gang in the park culminating in the shocking death of Manny although that is not confirmed, and the fight and shooting of Lando and Cevril being propelled through a window five storeys down.

There is intimidation and threat present in all the characters who are the gangsters at varying levels though even Cevril the undercover police officer demonstrates extreme violence.

Nerys, the physiotherapist, could be said to enjoy her violent and possibly sadistic treatment of Ben.

It would be incorrect to say that the play is about violence, but it's a fundamental part of its structure. It would not work without it.

Again, some think that violence appeals to teenager audiences in the main.

5. Youth culture

The references to technology and violence above chime with the understanding of youth culture that Ayckbourn shows. He accepts that youth culture is somewhat alien to his age group and in some ways to a middle-class perspective.

But it is real and tangible. The feral teenage gang idea, the harnessing of cool technology, the use of violence as in a comic book story all speak to young people.

6. Come-uppance

While there is no justice served up to the teenage gang, Manny is beaten unconscious, humiliated and finds that his small-time empire (but bigger than the kids in the park) is reduced by a woman. He gets his come-uppance.

The hit man Lando having been reported as callously shooting dead two people in a bar is seen to threaten Ben with death and after perving on Cevril, ends up shot dead. He gets the ultimate come-uppance.

On the positive side of people getting what they deserve, Ben may end up with Cevril as his girl after all he's been through.

7. Humour

The explanation for the name Cevril is hilarious: her father at her christening was pissed as usual and when asked what name they'd chosen for her said, several.

There are other jokes (the fiancées; the pretend caring of Manny) and there are long passages of physical humour from the process of the GIZMO technique throughout.

It is like extreme clowning in many ways and, again, it's not a main theme, but it is an important element in the message of the play and its entertainment value.

Performance characteristics and staging requirements of the text

The staging requirements are relatively straightforward. Ayckbourn has specified the location of each of the six scenes with the opening and final scenes in the same location and second and third sharing the same venue.

The setting descriptions and the lighting needed to accompany them – hospital lecture theatre, hospital bedroom, a park and Manny's apartment – are sufficiently generalised to allow a large degree of freedom for designers, directors and performers.

He provides a helpful furniture and props list at the back of the play text so that all requirements can be met. They are not demanding.

In Scene 4, Ted smokes in the park with Ben standing beside him copying the gestures. Smoking is not permitted in most places though there are exceptions for certain stage productions. Many productions may decide to use an e-cigarette or have both Ted and Ben miming the habit.

Reference has already been made to the high speed transitions between scenes that Ayckbourn specified. This adds to the sense of fast-paced action and is a strong characteristic of any production of this text.

Common misconceptions and difficulties

1. Is it a farce?

Particularly in his earlier days, Ayckbourn's work (such as *How the Other Half Loves* and *Taking Steps*) was described as farce – plays with broad humour and usually totally improbable plot peopled by somewhat stereotypical, barely developed characters.

Farce is an ancient art, traceable back to Greek theatre and through medieval plays to the Commedia dell'Arte of the 17th century to what became called 'bedroom farces' of the 20th century.

Usually concerned with sexual antics, mistakes and mishaps and rich in physical comedy, farces are a genre in their own right. On balance, it would be fair to say that his plays are not farces, and Gizmo certainly isn't.

Instead most are comedies with farcical elements.

2. The one act play

It has been known for some people to think the one act play is of less value than the full three or five act work. Ayckbourn has said that some people think writing a one act play is somehow easier, requiring less skill, less expertise than its full length counterpart. 'Would that it were. I would personally have written dozens by now – as opposed to the handful I have done.'

He compared the one act play to the short story versus the novel, the small scale chamber piece with the full symphony - 'it is neither harder nor easier. It is different.'

He argued that you have to be very mindful of what is left in, what is left out of a one act play. It could be asked whether Gizmo benefits from being just over an hour in performance or if it would gain from being lengthened and if so, with what?

3. Physical theatre and ensemble playing/overacting

The matter of physical performance, particularly mime and highly exaggerated movement by way of imitation is the essence of the comedy.

While Ben demonstrates most of the mime as he copies whoever is wearing the watch, it is a physically demanding role because each character who wears the wrist watch has his or her own way of walking, sitting,

standing and arm gestures. These differences must be reflected.

How Ben copies Ted will be very different from how he imitates Cevril when she is changing her clothes, including as it says in the stage directions, taking off a dress, putting on a bra and stepping into jeans.

How far Ben's mimicking is over exaggerated and how much an exact replica is a matter for actor and director, but there needs in performance to be awareness among the rest of the ensemble that their own movements must be precise, personalised and differentiated.

4. In-the-round

There is no suggestion that this play must be done in a round setting, although there is no reason it shouldn't be. For the original setting of the National Theatre, the traditional thrust staging was a given.

This is a matter of directorial taste.

5. Psychological drama

It is a thriller in one sense; it has the ingredients of a classic adventure story – a past event affects the present, an attempt to solve the problem goes wrong; a heroic overcoming of obstacles deals with the baddies and sets the stage for a touching romance.

Is it psychological drama? Are the characters deeply enough drawn for that to be the case? Probably not. It may be argued that the absurd and fantastic ridiculousness of the central premise is too big to leave room for the subtleties of the mind.

However, the psychological undercurrents of violence, machines, medicine and the greater good must not be neglected in evaluating this drama.

6. Cautionary parable about the power of machines

In the light of the discussion above about the outcome of the machine being good in overcoming the criminals and leading to a possible romance for Ben and Cevril, it may well not be such a cautionary tale.

However, there is an underlying suggestion that perhaps Ben would have got better in time with rest and patience, as outlined in Scene 1.



Suggested activities

1. Mime and copying

- Warm up exercise – in pairs, one copying the other behind the back, like a child would copy an adult.
- Take any of the scenes where the device is being used on Ben and improvise a series of copied movements that are realistic.
- Develop this by exaggerating the movements so that they are funny.

2. Humour

- Take the moment in Scene 4 when the gang beat Ted up and experiment with mime and physicality to make it deadly serious and shocking.
- Repeat the exercise but make it comical. What is different now?
- Class discussion on what people find funny.

3. Gang behaviour – a key moment

- In groups, stage a tableau from Scene 4, the arrival of Hezza, Tiz and Dart and their surrounding of Ted, with captions taken from lines in the play that depict the control these girls exert over Ted.
- Same groups use the arrival of Rust, Dazer and Fritz to show even more pressure on Ted.
- Hold a discussion on how the later gang behaviour of Manny in his flat differs from the teenagers' behaviour.

4. Menace

There are several moments of menace that the class or groups can use to develop a piece of improvisation using what is given in the text as material for the characters:

- The knife fight in Scene 4.
- When Manny deals with Rust in Scene 4.
- The fight between Cevril and Lando in Scene 5.

Additional activities – exploring the play further

5. The medical possibilities

- a) In teams with one a 'robot' improvise a new technology contest which sees a robot do three things better than a human being.
- b) Develop the idea so that the robot's lack of feeling and interaction becomes funny
- c) Go one stage further and make the robot sinister and unsupportive of human failings.

6. The directorial perspective

In small groups, using either the opening (Scene 1) or the closing presentation (Scene 6), take it in turns to direct the group so that the scene is understood by the audience and conveys a message, as needed by the rest of the story.

7. The fights

In small groups experiment with staging the fight scenes, including:

- a) realistic/shocking
- b) slow motion
- c) over exaggerated
- d) with or without sounds and effects
- e) using a video projection to distance the audience from the violence or
- f) stage it around and among the audience so they are part of the action.

Further research

Some of the physical theatre companies such as Lloyd Newson's DV8, Complicite, Forced Entertainment or Kneehigh are worth investigating for ideas of using physicality.





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