

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 2

Process to performance research reports

Version 1



Introduction

This work has been produced by Drama students as part of their school curriculum time, studying practitioners and performing from a text. It offers teachers an insight into how the process can be recorded by students in their research report and portfolio for Process to performance (Component 01/02/03/04).

As these responses have not been through moderation, an indication of the level of each response has not been included. A version of this resource which provides an indication of the level of the response will be made available in addition to this version in due course.

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of an endorsed approach to creating a research report or portfolio.

EXEMPLAR RESEARCH REPORT 2

SAMPLE ANSWER

Explanation of the practical exercises and working methods of Stanislavski and how these can be applied to studying Two by Jim Cartwright.

My chosen practitioner is Stanislavski. Stanislavski was a Russian actor and theatre director. He provided a rehearsal system that allowed actors to create characters which in theory, an audience could believe. He named this "The system". Stanislavski was the first person to develop a cogent and practical system of acting. He remains one of the most important influences on actor training today. He said to achieve a normal living state on stage an actor must feel physically free and in control of their muscles, their attention must be alert, they must be able to listen and observe on stage as in real life, be in contact with the person playing opposite him/her. He also thought that everything that happens on stage should be for a purpose and an actor should only act with a purpose.

By the time Stanislavski came to work in the professional theatre, standards were haphazard, punctuality was poor and there was often drunkenness backstage, this "behaviour" took a lot of time to deal with. Rehearsals in the 19th century Russia were very bland. Actors would simply walk onto the stage and deliver the lines. There was hardly any exploration of characters by directors or actors. Stanislavski wanted to change this and made up many different theory's, one of which was the "magic if" this enabled actors to 'step into' the characters mind and see how they would feel in that position. This then leads onto another of his theory's, "emotion memory" in this theory actors were told to look back on memory's in their own lives similar to the characters and use that emotion such as grieve and put it in the character. For example the landlady's grieve in Two could be played by a woman who had experiences grieve close to herself. These two theories are examples of "The Given Circumstances". The Given Circumstances are; imagination (an actor needs imagination, and an actor must know who they are, where they came from, why you are there and what you want other people to say about yourself). Circles of attention (these are designed to help actors relax and focus when on stage), Units (this is when actors must break down the play into little 'units' so are easier to understand and remember), objectives, emotion memory (I have already spoken about this), communion and the Super objective (creating an overall goal for a character).

My chosen play is Two by Jim Cartwright, written in 1989. This play is a group of duologues and a few monologues set in a pub in the 1980s. Taking place over the course of one evening in a typical Northern pub, Jim Cartwright's 'Two' famously features fourteen diverse characters played by just two actors, as various members of the local community pull up a stool and let us into their lives.

The play opens with the pub Landlord and Landlady, bantering and bickering their way through what at first seems like a typical night at the pumps. It is the kind of pub where everybody knows your name, and even if they are not glad you came you'll still be greeted like an old friend. This familiarity extends to everybody in the pub that night - namely, the audience.

The Landlord, often chatting up audience members, 'glass collecting' through rows of people, and generally drawing you into the beer stained world, it's through the play's more light-hearted aspects. The Landlady, winking and flirting her way through her evening with a Northern warmth and robustness that at first conceals the tragedy behind the couple's relationship. As the Landlord and Landlady's painful story slowly unfolds throughout the evening, audiences find out what keeps them apart, as they both have different ways of dealing with close grief.

From the old man who takes quiet comfort in the memory of his late wife, to the fat bobble-hatted couple who come to the pub to eat crisps and watch TV, to the drunken 'other' woman arriving to confront her lover, the audience is allowed to catch snapshots of the community through these self-contained characters. Sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant, yet always incredibly human, each character or couple acts like a fragment of shattered glass reflecting back at the audience as the play mines the depths of the human experience.

The Landlady plays most or usually all female roles within the play. Superb as the buttoned up headmistress type who reveals her secret lust for 'big men' as Maudie, the long suffering girlfriend of the womanising Moth. There is also an emotional complexity to a character called Lesley; the tortured girlfriend of the emotionally manipulative and physically abusive Roy, in what is probably the most carefully created portrait of the play. The play, mainly focused on Northern humour and striking abilities as a play, bringing out the multifarious aspects of Roy's character and take the audience from nervous giggles to stunned, uncomfortable silence in the space of a few minutes.

I used Stanislavski techniques during exploration of the play Two. I chose a section from the Landlord and the Landlady on page 170-171 where they have an argument. I like this scene as it doesn't focus on the dialogue and more on the vocal awareness and it is dependent on how you use your voice, rather than what you say. I wanted to shape the atmosphere within the scene with lines

like "Don't say things like that". I said this as if to be sickened in response to the Landlady as she mentioned their son, which I think the Landlord is trying to avoid, I looked away and at the floor. I used a fast pace and say the line loud as he lost his temper and leant over the table to intimidate her. The line, "You worry about that, I'm alright." was performed in a way that would intimidate her and make the audience feel like their marriage is a joke. It was important within the scene that the volume builds until they are virtually screaming at each other to build the tension and then suddenly goes down when the Landlady says, "what have we come to". She was upset so the audience can tell its heartbreak not anger that breaks the tension and gets the audience involved and connected into the performance. I used Stanislavski's 'magic if' during this scene to help me develop an understanding of what my character was going through. So that I could be more truthful to an audience.

I looked at the language featured in *Two*. The script and punctuation shows me that the characters are comfortable around each other with their use of informal colloquialisms. This reflects the small northern towns and villages that Jim Cartwright was writing. I saw this mostly in the character Maudie, I took the language in the script and interpreted that Moth and Maudie have known each other for a long time, for example "Hiyah Moth". This shows their closeness. In a workshop I did a monologue playing the Landlord focusing on Language, it was clear to me what his personality is like and how he would say particular words, such as "but we're also strong on couples, don't get me wrong" as if he is defending himself. This shows that he does not want to offend anyone and is willing to serve anybody as he wants the money to keep the pub going. I confidently leant on the bar; I used hand gestures to show that he does not want to offend anyone. I put my hand up in a 'backing away' attempt to show he was not stereotyping his customers. The language towards the Landlady tells me as an actor and the audience how he views her, such as, "we met outside this pub when we were kids, me and cow" as he stills loves her underneath as he calls her his wife and doesn't hide it, but covers it up by saying words like "cow" and "bitch". I am from Yorkshire and do use some of the similar language as Jim Cartwright uses. I tried to experiment with my accent during this exploration to feel like I was from the same town. I used this accent during the session and during my breaks. Trying to never break character.

I explored my ability to play Roy through Stanislavski's methods. I wanted him to seem quite nervous within his body language throughout, yet heightened when Lesley went to the loo. I wanted his hands to be constantly moving but slightly to show the audience that he really does not trust Lesley. I did feel when playing Roy that he isn't necessarily angry, more upset, upset that he can't trust Lesley like any other couple, so I didn't play Roy constantly on the edge to shout, more quiet and confident with just Lesley. My aim was to show Roy's authority over her, how he can control her and I think we met this due to the characters body language and facial expressions.

For the play *Two*, using Stanislavski methods I would want the stage to look like the inside of a typical Northern pub. I would recreate specific brands and types of alcoholic drinks that would have been drunk in the 1980's in this area of England and I would want the actors to be really drinking the drinks during the performance. (this does not mean actual alcohol, just actually drinking something on stage not just pretend)

I would want the audience to be part of the performance and be seated on chairs and tables at patrons of the pub. I would encourage them before entering the performance space to 'engage' with the performance and feel free to order drinks at the bar. Depending on the location of the performance and space available, this concept would actually work more effectively if the whole play took place inside an actual bar.



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