

**AS LEVEL**

*Exemplar Candidate Work*

# **DRAMA AND THEATRE**

H059

For first teaching in 2016

## **Exemplar 3**

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 3

## SAMPLE ANSWER

### DRAMA PRACTITIONER

#### BERTOLT BRECHT (1898–1956) – AN INTRODUCTION

German dramatist, theorist, playwright, director and poet whose unique, disengaged treatment of social themes greatly influenced modern drama and theatre practitioners. (But first and foremost a dramatist – a maker of plays)

Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria to a fairly affluent family, and was educated at the universities of Munich and Berlin. He studied medicine and briefly worked in an army hospital during WWI. The horrors he saw led him to develop strong feelings against war and the bourgeois class. (Middle class)

In 1924 he went to work at the Berlin Deutsches Theatre under the direction of Max Reinhardt. His early plays show the influence of expressionism, the leading dramatic movement of the time.

In 1928 Brecht wrote a musical drama, *The Threepenny Opera*. This musical was a caustic satire on Capitalism and became Brecht's greatest theatrical success. Staged first in Berlin, it was translated and produced in the USA in 1933.

Brecht began to study Marxism in 1924 and from 1928 until Hitler came into power, Brecht wrote several musical dramas which severely criticised Capitalism. He was very outspoken against the Nazi party.

During this early period in his career, Brecht trained actors and began to develop a theory of dramatic technique known as Epic Theatre. He rejected the methods of traditional realistic drama, preferring a loose narrative form in which he used distancing devices such as asides and masks to create a historical frame around the action. This technique prevents the spectator from identifying with the characters on stage. Because of his anti-Hitler political activities Brecht had to flee Germany in 1933. He lived first in Denmark, and finally settled in California in 1941. During his years of wandering he wrote a novel, many anti-Nazi poems, one act plays and radio scripts.

*Mother Courage and Her Children* is a play spanning the somewhat fictional thirty year war. It explores the themes of poverty, motherhood, female roles within society, war and relationships.

A Brechtian device was that I explored during my working on Brecht was how the actors entered through the auditorium and got changed in front of the spectators and conversed with them. Then, when they had put on their costumes and 'transformed', they would adopt the role of the character for which they were cast. The audience were left in no doubt that the people performing were 'actors' and not people attempting to transport them into a world of make believe. Characters could address the audience, the mechanics of back stage were visible and actor movements were often exaggerated or in contradiction to what were being spoken (*Gestus*). Brecht's ability to distance actor and audience (in contrast to Stanislavskian 'traditional' theatre) became known as the *Verfremdung* Technique. I enjoyed the freedom that this gave me as an actor to not be heavily and emotionally drained by the experience of acting a troubled character.

The content of Brecht's plays had smacks of real life corruption and deceit in them and they did not end like traditional fairy-tale theatre had done previously. Often endings of plays left questions unanswered or posed social problems that could be contemplated long after leaving the theatre. This can clearly be seen in *Mother Courage and her children*. The play is often depressing and thought provoking, but posed questions on the destiny of humanity rather than provided answers. Brecht attempted to merge demonstration (showing the audience/acting) with identification (Something they could easily recognise).

As a designer using the theories of Brecht I would want to use a revolving section on the stage for the wagon. This will have different weights and pulleys so it sometimes appears easy to pull. This will represent how *Mother Courage* can sometimes make war look like an easy thing to live through. Also, emphasising Brecht's thoughts that the wagon was a fourth child.

I would want to use a contrast of digital media screens with visions of war and 'real' 17th century military equipment as part of the setting. He had the names of countries suspended in huge black letters over the stage and facts about death and poverty in war on placards.

I would use brilliant white lighting and evenly spread throughout the performance space to avoid shadows on characters or staging. This ensured that nothing was intentionally sinister. I would want the lights to be bright and slightly facing the audience to alienate them from the actions.

I would use key costume and props to emphasise show the social level of each character.



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