

AS LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H059

For first teaching in 2016

Exemplar 5

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 5

SAMPLE ANSWER

The practical exercises and working methods of Jerzy Grotowski and how these can be applied to studying 4.48 Psychosis by Sarah Kane.

Jerzy Grotowski was born in Rzeszów, in South-Eastern Poland in 1933 and studied acting and directing at the State Theatre School in Kraków and in Moscow. Grotowski is best known for his intense actor training processes in the 1960s and 70s and has developed the most rigorous acting training programme since Stanislavski. His own influences come from that of Stanislavski, Brecht and Meyerhold. His concept of Poor Theatre focuses on removing the excess of lavish theatre and hones in on the more raw side of theatre itself; only having a few props on stage at one time and usually performing in rooms or buildings rather than actual theatres. Poor theatre forms the antithesis of modern day theatre, moving away from the modern day "blockbuster" style of films and television. Grotowski argues that theatre could never compete with such forms therefore should not attempt to, it should rather focus on the rawness and essence of theatre. However, few of Grotowski's Poor Theatre performances reached an audience and those that did were only performed once and in front of a small amount of people. This particular element to Grotowski's style I find interesting as his work was so rigorously put together through his intense actor training programs yet hardly ever reached performance. As well as the term Poor Theatre, the term paratheatre is often recognised with Grotowski meaning 'beyond theatre'. This particular phrase meant that Grotowski saw his actors experiment in training as well as in the few performances that were shown. This resulted in an attempt to transcend the separation between performer and spectator. As well as his work on the actor as a whole he focused on voice, his group of actors became known in particular for their experimental work on the human voice. Grotowski died of leukemia and a heart condition in his home in 1999.

4.48 Psychosis is a play by British playwright Sarah Kane. It was her last work before Kane's death in 20 February 1999. The play has no explicit characters or stage directions and is written in continuous prose. The play was first staged at the Royal Court's Jerwood Theatre Upstairs on 23 June 2000, directed by James Macdonald, nearly one and a half years after Kane committed suicide by hanging herself in a bathroom at London's King's College Hospital. Kane struggles with depression and this is shown greatly through the play 4.48 Psychosis and some consider the play an extended suicide note. The language of the play is very violent and covers issues such as suicide, mental health, anger and death. The title of the play is in reference to the time 4:48am when Kane woke up in her depressed state. The play contains no characters, therefore is open to interpretation to add in characters. Our adaptation of the script showed the UK in the future, with government extremists in power. The new radicalised government deemed anyone a threat to society "unsafe" therefore they were housed in abandoned council flats. The flats are dirty and very minimalistic. There are wardens that monitor the flat, who watch through CCTV cameras. There were rigorous interviewing sessions to ensure that nobody housed in the same flat has any affiliation with each other. However, a depressed wife and a PTSD damaged husband managed to get housed together and the climax of the play is when the wardens find out that they know each other. There is mass panic in the flat as they know they will be killed for breaking the rules. My character is "Dangerous", a paranoid schizophrenic who attempts to kill another one of the flat mates by strangling him.

Poor Theatre was something I found really interesting to explore. It was something new to me therefore it was a concept that excited me. The play itself can be helpful when exploring Poor Theatre and the abstract style of 4.48 Psychosis made this easier for my ensemble to explore. Firstly we undertook an exercise which made us physically exhausted. We ran around the room, did star jumps, squats and basic circuit training activities before performing. This helped me develop my character as she would be tired of being in the same room day in day out. The food she would receive would have little nutritional value and she is very paranoid and would find it hard to sleep at night. Overall, she would be exhausted. The Grotowski style method helped me actually present a tired character, for example I was breathless and my posture slackened as I was struggling under the strain of the circuits we had just ran. Furthermore it affected my speech, my words were more sparsely spread out as I was struggling for air. Grotowski's work focused on the actor and spectator relationship, to explore this we tried to focus on the direct address of speech to the audience. For example there is an uncomfortable speech in the play where someone confesses to terrorism. We made a decision to directly say these words to the audience, almost as if he was proud of them, but also making them uncomfortable. The effectiveness of this was positive, feedback from the audience showed that they felt the encounter was too personal but also too disturbing to watch wide eyed. Most audience members said they had to look away at times and often they said that they felt involved in the performance on stage. This was good feedback for us when exploring Grotowski as we felt we had used his own methods in our performance successfully. Furthermore we developed our own Grotowski style warm ups that we would go through before every rehearsal. One of those was called the "cat exercise", in the cat exercise we had to lie on the floor, pull our arms in towards our chest,

push up the top half of our body off the floor and stretch our back legs out like a cat waking up in the morning. This was a simple exercise but effective as it helped up to get into the mindset of a Grotowski physical actor before rehearsing. The performance had elements of physical theatre therefore by starting with this exercise it helps to warm up your muscles to make these scenes easier to perform. In my opinion I really liked the physical elements to Grotowski's training as it is a style of theatre I feel I engaged with very well. In Grotowski's performances the audience would usually sit on many sides. Although our actual performance was done open ended we rehearsed in the round. This was effective as it focused more on our stage space and the way in which the performance is perceived from different angles. The intensity of the piece means there was always tension of some sort on stage and by rehearsing in the round it made it easier to gauge how that tension is received and seen by different angles and if it has the desired effect.

Grotowski liked minimalistic props onstage therefore when deciding on the scenario for 4.48 Psychosis; it needs to be considered that it cannot be too complex. For example on stage in our performance it only saw a chair, a bean bag, a coffee table and an empty box. All of which were used by all characters on stage at some point. This is also preferable by Grotowski as he was keen on object transformation; the box on our stage was sometimes seen as an empty box or as a television. The lighting that I would use as a director would be stark, almost blinding for the actors on stage. This is preferred by Grotowski as he wanted the performance to be raw and not influenced by any other factors than the action on the stage. The harshness of the lighting doesn't draw away from the tension on stage and this for me makes for a better performance. As a director I would avoid blackouts in a Poor Theatre performance as it breaks the action up too much. If a scene is very intense and raw as an audience member this is interrupted by a blackout. As a director focusing on Grotowski's methods I would hone in on actor and spectator relationships. I would get my actors to talk directly to the audience in some areas. In my opinion it would be better to stage the performance in the round, not only from an actor's point of view but from an audience member's point of view too. The concept of performing in the round for an actor means that they need to be much more aware of their spacing and the physicality of the performance but also the maintaining of their character. Performing in the round means they are being watched at all times. Furthermore from an audience member's point of view it allows more of a relationship to be created. The distance between actors and the spectator is much shorter than open ended for example. This forces the performance to become more intimate.



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