

A LEVEL
Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459
For first teaching in 2015

**Candidate style answers
with commentary
– The Visit**

Version 1



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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 these answers 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 1 Candidate style answer – high level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

This extract comes towards the climax of the timeless play when the themes of fate and retribution, justice and revenge, greed, corruption and material temptation begin to come together. It opens with a repeat of the moment when the mayor and citizens of Guellen (meaning 'liquid manure') are asked by the press and TV men to repeat their ritual as there was a light cable short the first time.

So, we immediately start with a spectacle, the staging of a piece of civic theatrics. The mayor would be central stage in my directed piece, declaring that the deal is accepted as spelt out earlier – a million pounds in return for the death of Ill who wronged Claire when they were young. The first time Ill had called out 'My God' as the ritualistic chant built to a climax on 'And all our most sacred possessions'. This time he says nothing, disappointing the media as it had been a cry from the heart of a condemned man.

The mayor comes over oily and smarmy and guides the press to the restaurant. He needs to clear the area so that the good citizens can butcher Ill to fulfil their side of the bargain. The ladies are being served separately – decorum and tradition is being observed officially. As Ill stands to leave, the policeman pushes him down. The focus is now on Ill, the pace changes from politeness and ceremony to a more evil deed. After a quick check by looking out from the stage, the mayor orders doors locked (building tension) and lights out. This allows the moonlight to provide the sinister, pale illumination for the death.

The order to form a lane or line is setting the stage still further for dramatic spectacle. Ill will walk the line, like a conscience corridor in drama, and meet the large Gymnast symbolically standing at the end of the remaining space and of his life. The key players and cowards, those who have agreed to take the money in return for lynch-mob justice against Ill speak in turn, each adding a further knife in Ill's heart. The Priest, the Mayor and the Policeman should all have resisted temptation and rough justice, so their last words are dramatic in this tense situation and they adopt a high moral tone, but are guilty of greed and hypocrisy.

Ill turns at the end of the line walk and the mob close on him, 'mercilessly'. It is a vicious and cruel death, hidden by the backs of the perpetrators from the audience, but horrifically real after so much comedy in the play. The entrance of one of the reporters breaks the crowd up and the doctor diagnoses 'heart attack' from the joy of the endowment to the town, which satisfies everyone. The reporters rush away to write up and send the news and Claire enters into what is now a semi-circle of silence. She takes in the body.

Dramatically showing her absolute power over all, she orders the body to her feet, has the cloth removed and examines her one-time lover who made her life into what it was. She starts to leave, but still in silence, hands the mayor the cheque, like 30 pieces of silver.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242859-unit-h459-47-de-constructing-texts-for-performance-the-visit-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

You may find it useful to print off the sample assessment paper and match the text extract to these comments. Candidate comments should line up to the relevant part of the text.

This is a call-and-response ritualistic sequence, led by the Mayor and building up to a triumphal crescendo.

It has an almost religious aspect. Facial expression support.

It effectively points the finger at the victim/criminal (Ill).

It builds in tension and takes on feel of a revivalist religious rally, with a prayer led by a priest.

It finishes with the real heart of their concern - their possessions.

The disappointment of the cameraman not to have a heartfelt cry is direct contrast to the chanting.

Thinking about the need to destroy Ill the Mayor wants everyone to go out for tea, without arousing suspicions.

Men of Guellen standing around – it is an awkward moment, with no one looking anyone else in the eye.

Ill, making a move to leave, lets the policeman take charge and order him back. This charges the moment with the reality of what is about to happen. His face is blank.

Ill is pathetic and ironic to be making suggestions to them about where they would be better killing him.

The mayor orders checks on people – done by the men looking each way in turn without leaving the stage.

Sound effect of doors locking – dramatic, final.

Lights going out leaving only moonlight through window makes it like a murder thriller, hides the men's faces a bit and allows audience to make out what is happening.

The mayor's voice still barking orders in the gloom, still in charge, adding to tension.

A silent shuffle into two lines making a lane. The silent positioning of the tallest, biggest person as the block at the end of the road is symbolic of man facing death alone (Everyman).

Like to a condemned man before execution Priest goes to Ill, he asks for cigarette – like in a movie, a bit of a cliché. Their proximity is touching.

A good cigarette – on credit they all now have good things.

Ill rejects the priest's attempts to comfort him with some quote from the Bible. That would be shocking to a religious audience.

Ill is not afraid; this is quiet, reflective moment. His face is annoyed.

The offer to pray for him is the last thing he can offer Ill having been rejected with more comforting words.

As he pronounces a blessing, the priest rejoins the line of would be executioners – this is visually telling moment.

Mayor back to orders, to keep control of the moment.

Policeman angry, face twisted, grabs Ill, who for a moment is not co-operating in his own death.

Mayor is aware of the niceties, no need for violence even though Ill is about to be executed.

By walking slowly, dragging his feet, treading the cigarette out slowly and turning his back to audience to start his last few steps, the visual spectacle is heightened.

Get moving – it is painfully slow moving.

The slow walk ends in the block of the Gymnast and so he has to turn to see the lines of men who make their move by closing around him. It is silent but must now have a real sense of horrific urgency to get it done.

Ill falling to knees as he is hidden by the men is poignant.

The entry of the reporter leaping in suspiciously making lights go back up is a sudden shock and scatters the group of men.

Already the body is covered and the doctor is kneeling with a stethoscope that is just a prop now, as the doctor knows really what killed him.

The heart attack line produces silence so the mayor improvises with the idea he died of joy about Guellen.

The press has its headline, died of joy, and leaves the audience with a knowing thought about how the press works.

The entrance of Claire is slow and measured, the mistress of all she sees. She notes the corpse and adopts central stage position facing out to reinforce her authority and demands the body be presented to her.

Her face must betray no emotion or feeling.

She examines the uncovered corpse from where she is standing above it. She shows no reaction at all. There is no sense of victory or of long waited revenge.

In death people often look younger and she makes connection to black panther he was like as a young man with her and to the imaginary beast she has unleashed on Guellen in the run up to this moment.

The coffin has been seen before and was brought especially for Ill.

Unsmiling assistants.

The news of Capri was given earlier, so audience know she has prepared a nice place for Ill to be laid to rest on Capri.

She hasn't forgotten her side of the arrangement and calls the mayor forward to collect his blood money. Expressionless.

The cheque is the price of a collective murder to fund their now ambitious lifestyles.

A tableau is created of the citizens gradually looking better dressed and displaying grotesque wealth as they spend their shares of the blood money.

The use of lights, videos and sound effects here should show how the town has changed into a wealthy if soulless metropolis. Everything is renewed or rebuilt.

It is a happy ending if it weren't for what has just occurred.

I would have the townspeople as they become the chorus read these directions out and then perform in part and collectively the ending poetic chorus narration. No especial facial expression of emotion or stylised movement.

I would divide chorus into following sections - men, women, men/women, authority figures, minor roles, so that we have a rich variety of voices making a true chorus. The reference to Greek chorus means they should foretell the death of all, their souls sold for a million pounds.

It is a downbeat yet satisfying ending.

Commentary

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to create a visual impact.

While this response is a thorough account of the scene it also makes a number of directorial points on the way through. The mayor in the centre, taking control and then leading the press pack are among the examples where it is shown there is understanding of how to stage this particular extract.

The switch to focus on Ill is a good way of reflecting the shift in the balance of power in the moment and the gliding into the lynch mob aspect of the scene also shows real grasp of the directorial requirements and spells out a vision, a blueprint for actors to work from.

The building of tension around Claire making a grand entrance and then a big gesture with her cheque, like thirty pieces of silver, as the candidate suggests, is powerful and reflects well on a mind that thinks through visually and dramatically.

The annotations are a continuation of the style of interpreting the text for performance. There is some stress on the visual, but there is room for some further development of those aspects. The account of Ill's walk to death is particularly effective, though.

All in all this is marked in Level 5, near the bottom, excellent and developed demonstration, understanding and references on all criteria in the level.

Question 2 Candidate style answer – High level

As a director, explain and justify how you could use staging in a present-day performance of *The Visit*.

[30]

The postscript notes written by Durrenmatt in the edition of the play are in effect an introduction as it's helpful to read them first. The playwright talks about how meaning should not be imposed on the stage production of his text and how people are not puppets. The play is action not an allegory. He has presented a world, not painted a moral.

Yet, in fact, for many observers the opposite is true. It does have a number of morals about greed and corruption and about justice and retribution. No, the characters are not puppets but there is a sense of destiny about the ultimate doom that damned souls who sold their consciences for a million pounds are headed for permanent hell.

As director I have to sort out these contradictions in my mind, certainly before I start rehearsing. I will go for the moralistic tale in my interpretation. There is a further problem from Durrenmatt. He says his townsfolk acting trees is 'no Surrealism' but the play has a surrealistic feel from the outset with juxtapositions of unlikely objects and people.

However, accepting the author's rejection of Surrealism, it means that others who have found many examples of black comedy/dark humour and Absurdist theatre are not wrong. The railway station is ramshackle with occupants who look as decrepit as the buildings lament their town's demise as fast trains between prosperous cities hurtle through without stopping.

They are awaiting the arrival of Claire Zachanassion, an old woman of fabulous wealth beyond dreams who has secretly brought up Guellen their town to close it down and impoverish it. Her arrival is absurdist – she pulls the emergency cord on an express train and pays the fine happily. The delivery of countless cases and a coffin are absurd, yet have a particular realistic purpose in the plot.

Her succession of inadequate husbands, her cast of freaks and misfits – the butler who is a powerful hider, the gum chewers Toby and Joby and the blind pair, Koby and Loby – symbolise a half-crazed world-weary woman, much married and much altered. Her leg and hand (at least) are artificial. She might fairly be called sadistic in her treatment of others.

The driving force of the visit of Claire, the woman who was born and raised in Guellen is revenge against Alfred III for deserting her when she was pregnant. She visits her old grounds in the town and allows the town's dignitaries to flatter her and brush over the past in the hope of a large payment for the town.

I believe the deal she finally makes with the town is a Faustian pact. They are to share half a million, the town gets the same and they just have to ensure that III is killed and put in a coffin she has brought with especially. It is revenge that is very cold after decades, but the offer is compelling and eventually persuades them all (even the policeman, doctor and priest) that they can override their consciences in return for the money.

They spend in anticipation; everything is bought 'on account'. They finally do the deed, overcoming natural human scruples with relative ease. The woman playing Claire is the key to the success of the play. She is at once superficially attractive, with a hint of her young beauty visible through the make up and false limbs of age and the rigours of at least nine marriages.

Durrenmatt says she doesn't represent Justice or the Apocalypse, she is simply 'what she is.' She is cold, detached from people and betrays no emotions even as her former lover lies dead her feet. After all, not only did he abandon her when pregnant but paid two witnesses to deny paternity on his behalf in court. This is a challenge for the actress, but if she can find grace, moments of charm, a wicked sense of humour and a steely resolve, we shall find the formula needed.

The eunuchs she has with her are not stereotypes, and neither are even the minor roles, such as Mrs III, the

schoolmaster or painter. So with a clearer idea that I am embarking on a somewhat absurdist (Ionesco or Albee) approach, I direct the play as a moral tale of sorts with a universal message beyond the historical contexts of its original production that if you sell your soul the Devil will want repaying eventually.

Claire appears to be friendly with Ill despite openly planning his death, and suddenly tells him he has become fat and grey and 'drink sodden.' that gives us a picture for the actor to start on. The recollections of their past are quite touching, and the proxemics is important that there was once physical attraction.

But this is no love story. As the play progresses there must be distance between them. Indeed, I would not make this any sort of Brechtian adventure as it does not lend itself to stripped-down, minimalist representational sets, though it would work for some directors. The townspeople portray trees, so in a sense part of the piece employs physical theatre techniques more reminiscent of Brecht and his followers.

The trains moving at speed and noise are a challenge technically, but the London tube was mastered in 'The Curious Incident' and I would use the same techniques of modern technology in this show. I would aim for traditional wings, back cloths, generalised lighting to tell the time of day with particular focus on the moonlight through the window and keep the pace fast moving, pushing the humorous moments and lines hard.

Stylistically the play has passages of lyrical poetry like the very ending of tableau and still images. It has pomp and ceremony with civic formality; it has black Sabbath type of quasi-religious chanting followed by a ritualistic mass murder behind locked doors. The raised area of a balcony for Claire to survey and keep tabs on the town and how people are reacting to her cash offer and spending money on credit, for instance all buying snazzy yellow shoes, is essential to be high and central enough.

Shoes and a range of better quality costumes are needed to reinforce the spending, which is mentioned in text, particularly in terms of foods, chocolate, alcohol and tobacco they now treat themselves to. This wears Ill down, makes him angry and he joins them with a new till and better shop. But this is the beginning of the end as he gives up and accepts his fate which builds and culminates in him rejecting the offer of a gun for suicide and walking the line to his death at the hands of his fellow citizens.

We never see the black panther which has allegedly escaped but is a metaphor for the lost youth of the couple and of the danger that Claire has made him out to be to intimidate the townspeople. Some commentators also believe that the panther is a representation of Nazism defeated not many years before this play was written.

In my proscenium arched theatre with fixed facing seating, I want the full range of props and appropriate costumes of the 1950s as they appeared in the first production.

I am aware that in making all the choices I have in interpretation as director, I must carry my cast with me so that they in turn will convey the impact of the play to our audience. That is my directorial role and plan.

Interestingly, Durrenmatt describes Ill's death as 'both meaningful and meaningless.' If not a statement of Absurdist theatre, it is certainly a challenge for a director, cast and audience alike.

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they would use staging in a present-day performance of the whole play.

The response begins with observation on the playwright's postscript notes which inform the learner and the director a great deal about staging and costume and much else besides. It goes on to discuss the moralistic issues and how best they can be portrayed on the stage before addressing the author's point about 'no surrealism' and the linked Absurdism and dark humour.

It highlight's Claire's arrival and develops into a discussion of the 'Faustian pact' between her and the townsfolk. The question of staging is not explored as deeply as it might be and the matter of the contemporary audience perhaps demanded more consideration in the director's thinking.

There is no doubt that the themes of greed, revenge and the past in the present are relevant to any age, but a little more highlighting would have helped. There is certain knowledge and understanding of the key significances of the play and how to convey meaning to a contemporary audience.

Over, the response is marked in Level 5, near the bottom, on all criteria in the level.

Question 1 Candidate style answer – mid level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

The play does not work so well in a Brechtian style simplicity as it needs lots of props and a proscenium arch type stage to work. My vision is for a conventional production using some modern technology.

The final section wants a tableau that leads into the chorus. I would make this a series of tableaux using technology such as pre-recorded video and images to show the town of Guellen changing using all the money they got from the old woman.

The opening part is where the mayor leads the people in a sort of psyching up exercise, I would say a bit like the Two Minute Hate in 1984 but with a more self-righteous tone. It is an acceptance of the money in exchange for killing Ill who may have deserved it years ago but has been a model citizen ever since. The mayor should be like a high priest centre stage whipping up the crowd.

This is done twice, but once in the extract and it finishes without Ill's cry of 'My God'. He doesn't want to be there any more in a crowd who are hypocrites because they accept the money but are no better than Ill and he has actually lost the will to go on living. This is seen in his slow walk up the lane of death made by the men on either side. The build up to this is tense and dark as the lights have been dimmed to leave moonlight which can be quite like a Midsomer Murder.

The part just before he walks the line is like a death cell scene. I would try to get that feel to it. The priest sits as if waiting for confession and makes phrases and words from the Bible as if that is what Ill needs at this moment. The slowness of his walk contrasts with the desire for speed from the police officer who must be ashamed of his role in a crime. He wants it over.

The actual hiding Ill with all the men who are killing him I would do in slow-mo to reinforce the horror. The play says the audience don't see it but I would put what is hidden by the men up on a video screen overhead that shows Ill passing away in agony and silent screaming.

The doctor declaring he died of a heart attack shows that even this man is guilty of murder. They all are. If there was time for costume changes just before this I would put all the men in striped convict clothes to show they are killers. Their crime is greater than what Ill did in the first place.

The appearance of Claire Zachanassian just after the murder to look at his body is very cold. I would bathe her in white light, she is the ice queen. She has got revenge but shows no joy in that. And when she gives the cheque to the mayor, a million quid is nothing to her she is so rich, so she is unmoved that he is dead. All the old love is wiped. That is my vision for this extract.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here

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This is a church like section with Mayor arms raised, urging them on. The echoes of their voices help to stir it all up.

Justice is taking on a different concept here, it is crowd vigilantism justice.

Ironical – they cannot condone a crime, but they are committing one.

Their souls will not be delivered from evil after this. More irony.

They care about money and goods, especially now they are rich.

Ill doesn't scream for the cameraman, he is not a performing monkey. He is ready to end it all.

The restaurant is appealing to them because press and people who go to these sorts of public events always guzzle a lot of food and drink.

Policeman behaves like he is in control, a true law officer dealing with a criminal, It is ironical.

A spark of interest from Ill who has always been an organiser and doer, even at this late stage of life.

The townsmen are like junior cops being bossed around by the senior one as they check nobody else is left to witness the death to come.

Auditorium – using the theatre itself as the setting and showing that they are keeping nosy people out but are actually doing the deed in full public view.

Moonlight only - this is where I would recreate a Midsomer Murder case.

The gymnast is dressed in white with a red scarf indicating purity, like he is bringing justice, with red that is the blood to come.

The priest is another one Ill should have thought would stop it, but the priest is part of the line up.

The collaboration in murder continues with the police man giving the light for the cigarette.

The prophet Amos is from the Bible. He should have a copy in his hand which Ill pushes away.

Having rejected the Bible Ill suggests praying for their rotten corrupt town rather than him personally

God have mercy on us – he is asking forgiveness ahead of the crime. Ironical.

The policeman's sudden anger shows how he is tense and the situation is getting to him. Even now, Ill hesitates to walk his last few steps but is pushed by the policeman.

Slo-mo for the murderers after slow walk from Ill with a video of his face shown above the mass of people, showing what cannot be seen on stage, which is Ill's dying face as he is crushed.

The reporters crash in, as if aware that with no lights on and all those men in there they are up to no good.

Because the doctor helped kill him his lie that it was a heart attack is unquestioned.

The reporters have a story; he died of joy, which is also ironical.

It is here I would put cold white light on the ice queen who shows no reaction to the achievement she has waited for decades for and paid a million pounds for, Ill's death.

This is her only moment of showing she is pleased, a black panther was her pet, and so was Ill.

Capri is where she has prepared a special place for Ill to rest in peace. But even this doesn't make her crack a smile.

She has no feelings for the mayor as she gives him the cheque – he is as beneath her as all others, inking her many husbands.

This is the tableau sequence I would show through images and videos of an accelerating high rise city prosperity in Guellen over a short time as the money is splashed around and they all wear better and more expensive clothes.

The end chorus sequence would have everyone dressed expensively and rich and comfortable. They are not comfortable in their consciences.

However, they are doomed as murderers, as it says like a ship of the dead sailing into hell.

Commentary

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to create a visual impact.

The candidate argues for a conventional production with some technology rather than a more Brechtian and sparse one. The reference to the Two Minute Hate in 1984 is apt. Other references such as the Bible and Midsomer Murder do not overstretch the points, but perhaps there could have been more on actual staging techniques, styles of staging and proxemics.

The suggested use of slo-mo and a video screen would certainly work. It is a competent piece of thinking about staging and is broadly supported by the annotations. The visual perspective is given prime place in the notes and a few extra details like mention of light strengthen what is being described.

Again, some further development and focus on the visuals would have been a benefit.

It is marked in mid Level 3 as it contains clear references to processes and understandings of choices and how meaning is conveyed. More could have been done with social, historical and cultural contexts.

Question 2 Candidate style answer – Mid level

As a director, explain and justify how you could use staging in a present-day performance of *The Visit*.

[30]

I would give my play in production the strapline – ‘everyone has a price, what’s yours?’

I think the best description of the play *The Visit* is to call it a tragic-comedy. There is a sense of inevitability about the return to the town of Claire Zachanassian leading to the death of Ill by some means. That is the tragedy.

The comedy is in places like the way the Mayor tries to rewrite the bad history of Claire’s childhood in Guellen and the reality of just what she did which she herself admits later.

My first job if I was directing the play would be to explain that to the company and that there is fun to be had with much of it, such as the inspired madness of the public occasions when they try to impress the multi-millionaire, such as passing the single top hat around to hide the fact they are broke.

The central argument is that should a town that has been brought to its knees economically (by Claire herself as it turns out) accept a massive sum of money for each individual and for the community as a whole in return for murdering one of its own for crimes he supposedly committed decades since?

The answer is yes, they do take the bait and carry out the murder, hiding it with a sort of official acceptance that somehow makes it legal. Still they try to hush it by pretending he had a heart attack. The fact that the mayor and policeman are in on it makes it an even bigger crime and therefore Ill’s death even more tragic and possibly unnecessary.

When the offer is first made, just before the interval after Act two, the town refuse to accept it. They say that Ill is far more valuable to them than even that much money. Some may even feel sorry for him. Pretty soon they all start buying things on credit to upgrade their possessions and improve their lives. They are expecting to get the actual cash from Claire. They expect Ill to die.

I think I’d like to simplify my production. The trains would be hard to do in a realistic way, so I would experiment with sound effects and just the actors moving their heads as they sit on the bench by the station, as if following it.

I would have a stage left and right with on/offers there, and a backdrop that was the skyline of Guellen. The atmosphere from lights would be a neutral season somewhere around autumn time. These things are less important than the acting.

I would have one area for Claire to focus on as hers. She needs a raised platform to watch the town from and this could also double as her base on the stage, one side. She could always be looking down on everyone, except when she goes with Ill to the woods and places where they had sex a lot of years back.

In those times she could come down and be close to him to show how close they were. When she goes back up to her platform, it shows how different she is even though she was born there. She must hold a grudge also that he caused her to become a prostitute through his cowardly actions.

She is different. By investments and lots of marriages she has become wealthy. She has had a false leg fitted and a new false hand. The rest of her has grown old, of course. The actress must show that aging. But she keeps her desire for revenge burning within.

She displays little outward emotion and even Ill as he knows his time is up does not fight it, no escape. He obeys orders and walks the line to his smothering by the men he lived among and did business with for years.

The small town effect is very important to get across. It is a contrast with big capital cities like Zurich, Hamburg and Naples up and down the rail line. The irony is that if she had chosen to, Claire could have built Guellen up to equal those big cities but for the past events, chose not to. She is a villain, though doesn't kill Ill personally. Certainly she is a clever manipulator.

The director needs to ask if Ill ever regretted his shameful behaviour as a young man to leave her when she was pregnant and get people to lie in court about it? I don't think he really does. Despite accepting death and not legging it, he really is accepting his destiny which even the years of living as the soul of the community and being known as the next mayor does not stop.

I would make a connection between the panther and Ill. Is the panther real or a shadow, a figment of her mind that she convinces everyone is real? It is definitely a symbol of a wild and dangerous beast escaping, which is how she regards Ill. We are told that both die at the hands of the local people – Claire commands.

The clanging bells and those that ring better as the town gets richer are quite good metaphors for the state of the place. Bells mean danger or death but also a joyful celebration of success. I would make a lot of them, ringing them live and in view.

In the end the play is about all these separate but lined issues – money, greed, the price of peace, corruption, honesty, remembrance, truth and forgiveness (which is almost totally absent).

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they would use staging in a present-day performance of the whole play.

The use of a strap line and calling it tragic-comedy relates it to a contemporary audience very effectively. It develops to deal with more with motivation in characters than actual staging, but keeping it current and real at the same time.

Once the response talks about simplifying the style of production, there is more focus on staging and including a certain amount of detail, including the problem of moving trains.

Raised blocks for sightlines and status are well suggested and the more intimate discussions about the past between the one-time lovers would be staged effectively, taking account of proxemics and the director's thoughts as outlined in the response.

Towards the end, the points about the bells and metaphors are effectively made. There are a lot of ideas and points throughout. What was needed was a little more depth in the discussion of some of them.

This was marked in Level 3, near the top, as clear on theatrical processes, interpretations and demonstration of the decisions of a director.

Question 1 Candidate style answer – low level

Describe your directorial vision for staging this extract, and then annotate the extract to show how you would direct the actors to realise its comic potential.

[30]

The visual impact comes in three parts of this extract from the play. The first is when they working themselves up into a sort of church like passion about doing everything because they are honest and just people. The second is when all gather round and murder Ill for what he did to Clare when they were teenagers. It is a shared murder, as if to say that no one person did this. They will all share in the money the town is given.

The third impact is when the script wants a tableau series at the end to show prosperity has come to Guellen, but it is corrupt money. The colours are brighter now, compared with how grey the town was and all broken down as the play started.

If I was the director of this I would use the stage to put the main actions in the middle. When they do the line up of men that he has to walk down it should be in the middle. When he sits with the priest smoking his last cigarette he should be in the middle. The focus of the still images at the end should be each group that is speaking should be in the middle of the stage so the groups have to move around in a circle.

The Gymnast is a big bloke and he is at the end of the line, like against the back wall. Ill can't get past him. This would have a big visual impact. He is dressed in white with red scarf.

The other is when they have killed him and Roby and Toby carry him out on a stretcher to be put in the special coffin Clare brought for him. It has a visual power that people are seeing a man who was alive and smoking a few minutes before is now dead and being taken to his coffin. She stands looking down at him, and it says she is in the centre to give the most impact to this scene.

The other visual impact is when the priest speaks softly to him before he dies and then joins in and kills him. When they all check the place is empty and the doors are locked, that has impact. It makes the audience think something bad is going to happen which we know it is. The moonlight instead of bright stage lights is powerful, like an image.

I would make the still images at the end visually effective with lots of lights going on and off as each tableau shows them getting more and more filthy rich. But they are like the living dead so I would put them all in skeleton masks like in Pirates of the Caribbean; they are dead but alive on one level. They would speak through those masks. Some eerie music to play against the final chorus would have impact as well which is what it needs to get the audience ready after they have seen a murder.

It would be the final message of the play. The money they have has done them no good and it will not in the future. It is saying that greed doesn't pay, like crime doesn't pay.

To see the text extract/match it to the comments, click here

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242859-unit-h459-47-de-constructing-texts-for-performance-the-visit-sample-assessment-material.pdf>

You may find it useful to print off the sample assessment paper and match the text extract to these comments. Candidate comments should line up to the relevant part of the text.

There is a series of echoes that the citizens make as part of like a church service. The mayor is leading it so gets to speak and the others just copy him but louder.

They don't seem to have any conscience, it's all money.

The cameraman is disappointed because he is making a TV show and wants to get something out of Ill before he dies.

He wants him to say My God as if he is going to meet his God.

When they have all gone to eat and drink, there are only the killers left. Ill tries to get away but is stopped by the policeman.

Ill is playing for time and suggests they take him to his place to kill him.

The check that there is nobody else about is not much – all done from the stage, they don't look far.

The mayor needs doors locked so the murder is secret.

He wants the lights out. Why not let moonlight show them what they are doing? But it is only dim light.

The lane is like a walk between people, in the old days they used to whip the man walking along, but this time they are going to kill him instead.

Prisoners used to have a last meal before execution, but Ill wants a ciggy instead.

He gets a light – it's almost friendly.

The priest says he will pray, which is a way of helping Ill to accept that he is to die.

Pray for Guellen – everybody needs help.

The policeman drags Ill up by his hair and calls him bastard. He hates Ill for what he did and wants to kill him, even though he is the law.

The policeman is in a hurry to get it done as he hates him. This is very visually powerful. The murder is done behind the tangled knot of all the men huddling together so the audience don't get the details and nobody knows who actually snuffed out his life at the end.

The reporters come back, they have finished eating and want a story to write now.

The doc says heart attack to pretend that nobody killed him.

When she comes in she says nothing like thank you for killing him. She just orders him to be draped at her feet so she can look down on his body. This is a real visual moment.

She brought a black panther on the train and now he looks like that animal now he is dead. It is a visual moment.

She is ready to walk out to go to Capri for his funeral, but hasn't paid her money to the mayor.

The cheque is a symbol of the bad bargain that they struck – a million for Ill's life.

Lots of still images showing the prosperity. They must rotate round in groups so they can be lit and be in the centre when they say the lines. They must change clothes to show the money is being spent.

It might be good to have some images on the wall to show how rich they are.

Commentary

The first part of the question asks for the candidate's directorial vision for staging the extract. The second part asks for the extract to be annotated to show how the actors could be directed to create a visual impact.

This response contains a number of references and directorial points, which needed further development and exemplification to make them clearer.

There is some understanding of the directorial role and on staging requirements. There is discussion of still images and lights and some techniques, but these also are simply stated and insufficiently developed.

There is reference to music to support stage effects and the ground is laid for the visual impacts to be considered. The annotations take this further, but do not expand the ideas. There are some flashes of more thoughtful observation, such as the one about a prisoner's last meal.

Over all, this is marked in Level 2, basic references to theatrical practices, basic understanding of how the performance text has been constructed and how the artistic choices influence outcome. More could have been forthcoming on historical, social and cultural contexts.

Question 2 Candidate style answer

– Low level

As a director, explain and justify how you could use staging in a present-day performance of *The Visit*.

[30]

Directing this play will be quite hard. It is set in a foreign country, say Switzerland where Durrenmatt lived, so it will have different cultural values from the UK. It was produced in the 1950s so it was so long ago that much of what it is talking about will seem unreal. People only travel on trains to work and do not come like Claire does with loads of cases, a panther and a coffin.

The first scene is at a railway station but only one train a day stops there and everyone is waiting for her off that train but she comes early by getting off an express. It tells you it is a sort of comedy.

Directors need to show that after that she shows her real reason for being there and that is to get someone else to kill Ill for a lot of money. He betrayed her when they were young and their baby died when she was a prostitute in another city. But she wants him dead. She has a lot of money.

She must wear clothes and have a big bag to show how rich she is. She says that a million pounds is nothing but to them it is huge. They have nothing. Everything is sold or closed down. Ill's kids go off to look for work instead of having breakfast with him.

At first they say they won't take the money because they don't want to kill Ill, but then they start borrowing money to buy yellow shoes. They will pay it back when they get a share of the million. This makes Ill very upset and he knows that she will have him killed.

The actors must be clear in voices, clear in movement for their age. Claire is very old and has a wooden leg so must walk slowly with it. Ill is even older but he can still walk. He walks to his death when they put the lights out and the moon shines through. The school teacher gets pissed so that actor must play him falling about all over the place.

My play of this would have to follow all the instructions. Some are a bit confusing, like the chorus near the end so the chorus must explain what the play is about. This is an ancient Greek idea of a chorus.

There is a panther in it but that would be impossible so I might have the actors just imagining they can see it and if they make it believable the audience will go along with it. There is some parts where the town wants to welcome Claire home so they have speeches and food. This must be done with lots of drums, fancy clothes and lots of marching about on a big stage.

The play has been written in three acts with an interval after act two as Friedrich Durrenmatt says. The story is not hard to follow so the meaning should be clear to the audience, but it might need some extra highlighting. The bits of going back to their youth are worth showing up with lights and close standing together.

When the mayor comes over all up himself and introduces his family to the rich old woman, then that should be highlighted with loud music because he is important. Well he thinks he is. All the servants that Claire brings with her are a bit weird. They wear weird costumes to show that and speak in squeaky voices. Some even copy each other in strange mad voices that show this play could be taken in several different ways.

Commentary

The question asks candidates as if a director to explain and justify how they would use staging in a present-day performance of the whole play.

The response has some knowledge and understanding of how to use staging – lesson the actual space of performance and more on set, furnishings and some proxemics. What was needed was some further development of the ideas.

There is an amount of motivational thinking for the evolution of the characters and of narrative, summarising aspects of the overall plot, when analysis was needed to justify staging decisions. Certainly there needed to be a better linking of the ideas to what would hold a contemporary audience.



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