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Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459/31
For first teaching in 2016

Question 6 Level 3 sample answer with commentary: Amadeus

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.

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The sample assessment material for this answer and commentary can be found on the A Level Drama and Theatre web page here: http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242806-unit-h459-31-analysing-characters-for-performance-sample-assessment-material.pdf

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SECTION A QUESTION 6

Explain how an actor playing a leading role could communicate tension within the family. Justify your ideas with examples from at least three scenes from the performance text you have chosen for this question. **[15]**

SAMPLE ANSWER

Theme 3: Heroes and Villains

Salieri is the main villain in this play and this answer will focus upon how lighting and sound can be used to highlight the wrong doing of this man.

The play centres around the rivalry between Mozart and Salieri. Salieri was a composer in Vienna during Mozart's time. He himself was famous in his own right and was a well respected teacher, yet he was intensely jealous of Mozart's talent and later claimed in old age that he murdered him. Shaffer portrays him as a dark and tragic character.

When the audience first see the role, it is an old man; dark lighting should be used and he could even wear a mask to hide part of his face - this would symbolise the hiding of his dark intent. Lights could be shone down on the character so that we do not always see all parts of his face and he should seem more mysterious and dark, lighting could also be used to help cast shadows behind him. We could be a little confused, at the start, whether he is a villain or not and the audience should spent most of the first act trying to work him out.

At the end of the first act however he could remove this mask and lighting on him should seem clearer. He could now be lit from the front rather than just from up above during the moment when he speaks directly to the audience and tells them that 'the creature would be destroyed,' It is now that we see his darker side and his need for revenge. He wants to start a war against God and Mozart because Mozart was 'God's preferred creature.' As he speaks this line, the stage should be dark behind him to create a tense atmosphere. It is now that we should realise he is the villain of the play.

Sounds can be used at the start of the play to help the audience to see that Salieri is the villain. The play could start with the siginificant sound of 'snake-like hissing' and eventually this hissing forms the word, 'Salieri!' This word is repeated and this sound is used to show that Salieri is a character to be wary of. The hissing could start off quiet and then become louder and clearer. Speakers could be placed at the front of the stage so they audience can hear this clearly. There also has to be the barely distinguishable word 'assassin' within this hissing. This effect could be produced by layering sound upon sound using a mixing table. This should be done to enable the audience to connect the character of Salieri with the idea that he is the one who possibly killed Mozart. Sounds like this need to be used in order to convince the audience that this is the villain of the play and for them to understand the context or historical rumours surrounding these people.

As the first scene progresses, more overlapping is needed but this time with 'whispers.' This could either be done through more layered sound effects of live voices whispering, perhaps in microphones to help make it louder and seem a little more distorted for the audience. It might be better to use recorded sounds for moments such as this because with recorded sounds, you can use a sampler machine to add effects to them or distort them, for example a sound designer might want to re-pitch these sounds. This could help the whispering sounds to start to gel together with the hissing sounds and it could even start to sound like a strange piece of music. The sound needs to be used in the very early stage to provide an unsettling atmosphere for the audience, especially where Salieri is concerned.

As well as using modern technology to experiment with the sounds, a sound designer should also take into account the context of the play. It might also be useful to have an orchestra who could replicate the live music of the 18th century Vienna court. This orchestral music could also be used to help convey time differences within the play. When events rewind, such as when we go back to the events half a century earlier, the violins could be used to create the sound of it being re-wound.

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Sounds should be used to demonstrate that not only is Salieri a villainous man, he is a man who also seems a little paranoid and troubled. At the end of Act One he dramatically declares war on God and this makes him seem a little paranoid and strange. From this point on, any music played should seem a little distorted to reflect the strange inner workings of this man and his inaccurate way of looking at the world. At points in music, there could be notes played that are deliberately out of tune or very high pitched so it is jarring for the audience. Sound effects of laughter could also be used as if to suggest that Salieri believes God to be taunting him.

However, he is not a villain through and though. There are moments in the play when Salieri seems to show hints of remorse or wants forgiveness. There are moments when he is enchanted by Mozart's music and the music played for such moments should seem serene and soft without any jarring notes. The lights should also appear softer and warmer.

Level 3

Commentary

There is a reasonably competent knowledge and understanding of the text and role of the villain. It is difficult to specifically identify three scenes and ideas reflect more of an overall approach to the use of lighting and sound. Clear decisions are made regarding lighting and sound with some imaginative ideas which create an atmosphere which is effective and enhances 'wrong doing'. There is focus on the question and a basic understanding of the historical context. Ideas are linked and there is a line of development seen. Examples of creative decisions and how these communicate with the audience are clearly understood.

Improvements

Improvement would require clarification of the three scenes and a wider range of creative ideas explained in extensive detail.

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