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Candidate Style Answers

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459/31
For first teaching in 2016

Question 4 Level 3 sample answer with commentary: The House of Bernarda Alba

Version 1

www.ocr.org.uk/drama

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 4

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 2: Family Dynamics

In this play there are many tensions between Bernarda Alba and her youngest daughter Adela. Bernarda Alba is a widow who wants her daughters to obey and respect her rules, especially her rule that her daughters must spend eight years in mourning for their father. The daughters, especially Adela, see this is as very old-fashioned and strict and this causes many tensions within the family. Bernarda Alba uses threats and aggressions in an attempt to control the five daughters but this often leads to more tensions.

For an actress playing the role of Adela, her youth must be emphasised. She is only twenty years old and is the youngest of all of the daughters. This could be shown through her costume, hairstyle and colour choices. However, it also needs to show that she wants to display her sexuality - something that her mother represses and wants to control. This causes more tension to a mother who is so strict.

Colour is important to Adela. She wears a green dress following the funeral of her father and this dress shows how different she is to the other daughters. This causes tensions within the family. She also gives her mother a colourful fan in Act One which causes even more tensions because it is not the traditional black colour of mourning. Adela should always be associated with vibrant colours to show that she does not really respect the rules of mourning that her mother is imposing. The set design could also be used to highlight this.

From the start, Adela has to be different to the other girls. For example, she is nothing like Amelia, who is 27 and is frightened of her mother's threats. Adela is not frightened and will happily ignore her mother's commands. She should run around and seem more energetic such as when she runs around with the chickens in Act One. The sisters make jokes about her and the chickens and this causes more tensions between the sisters. Adela is used to the outside world and is more wild than the other sisters hence her running around with the chickens. She should seem wilder in her appearance and movements and could even have some feathers stuck in her hair. Her costume and make-up could also help to show this idea.

Another source of tension is the affair that she embarks upon with Pepe who is interested in her older sister. In Act Three, she should show that she is unafraid of this affair as she announces that she will continue to be his mistress. She is not bothered about the shame that it will bring on the family and should speak proudly and loudly about it making eye contact with Martirio as she delivers her lines. This will cause much tension in the family and even causes her to break her mother's cane (which their mother beats them with) showing her strength and stubborn nature. Volume or a sound effect could be used at this point to emphasise this important action. This act causes many tensions will which ultimately lead to tragedy and Adela's suicide.

In conclusion, the actor playing Adela must convey her individual and free nature in order to convey the many tensions that she brings into the family when she goes against her mother's strict rules. An actor must show what happens when people try to repress the freedom of others and the tensions this can cause.

Level 3

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Commentary

The candidate has answered the question focusing on the role of Adela and the tension seen between her and the rest of the family. There is knowledge and understanding of the text although there is a lack of understanding of the reasons behind Adela going out to the chickens where the implication is that she is meeting Pepe. The youthfulness of Adela is a good point but there is a lack of full description in order to show how this will be done. The physical contrast with the mother is appropriate but there is no reference to what the mother would wear. A secure answer reflecting some competent knowledge and understanding.

Improvements

Much more specific detailed practical ideas need to be explored to demonstrate how the tension is communicated. Some statements are made that are not explored and it is unclear how things would take place on stage. A more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the text is required for higher level answers.

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