

A LEVEL

Exemplar Candidate Work

DRAMA AND THEATRE

H459

For first teaching in 2016

Part 4

H459/11/12/13/14 Summer 2018 examination series

Version 1

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Introduction

These exemplar answers have been chosen from the summer 2018 examination series.

OCR is open to a wide variety of approaches and all answers are considered on their merits. These exemplars, therefore, should not be seen as the only way to answer questions but do illustrate how the mark scheme has been applied.

Please always refer to the specification <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242650-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-drama-and-theatre-h459.pdf> for full details of the assessment for this qualification. These exemplar answers should also be read in conjunction with the sample assessment materials and the June 2018 Examiners' report or Report to Centres available from Interchange <https://interchange.ocr.org.uk/Home.mvc/Index>

The question paper, mark scheme and any resource booklet(s) will be available on the OCR website from summer 2019. Until then, they are available on OCR Interchange (school exams officers will have a login for this and are able to set up teachers with specific logins – see the following link for further information <http://www.ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/interchange/managing-user-accounts/>).

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Exemplar 5

102 marks

Research Report

During our workshops, we have explored two main practitioners; these were Steven Berkoff and Bertolt Brecht. These practitioners have many similarities in their techniques, backgrounds and political beliefs. The two both share a Marxist ideology which often tied into the content of their theatre, an example of this would be in the play *Metamorphosis* by Berkoff. In one scene a Chief Clerk visits the Samsa household. In this scene, the Clerk has the highest status, despite being in another family's house. This portrays an idea of Marxism as the Samsas are able to be controlled by a person with more power than them. These practitioners also chose to reject the stylistics of traditional theatre pioneered and heavily influenced by Stanislavski. To Berkoff and Brecht, this meant that, instead of having an audience watch their theatre in order to enjoy themselves or escape real life, their works would exist in order to affect their audience in some way. Brecht's Epic Theatre used *Verfremdungseffekt* - or the alienation effect - in order to distance his audience and have his work more easily understood for the message it contains – making it a didactic piece of theatre. Berkoff, on the other hand, used his Total Theatre to create a piece of theatre that makes his audience uncomfortable. He used techniques such as bouffons and grotesque gestus to form extremely exaggerated pieces of theatre that can provide commentary on the characters that are being portrayed in a grotesque way.

Berkoff and Brecht also have many differences between their types of theatre. Steven Berkoff was born into a Jewish family, leading him to create pieces influenced by his experience growing up as a Jewish person. Being of the Jewish faith, Berkoff found himself often excluded or alienated by people. This personal experience with isolation has found its way into the characterization of some of his characters, one of which being Gregor Samsa from his play *Metamorphosis*. Gregor is isolated from his family and has to suffer the burdens of working to provide for his family by himself. This burden is depicted by Berkoff visually, having Gregor transform into a giant beetle.

Berkoff's Total Theatre encompasses the use of the actor's whole body, expressing a character in great detail. This was very important to Berkoff as he wanted his content on stage to be wholly and explicitly understood by his audience, he did not want anything to be misinterpreted or misunderstood. By using techniques such as *Mie* – a pose that uses the whole body incorporating the actor from head to toe resulting in an exaggerated depiction of a character - Berkoff is able to convey to the audience what kind of person one of his characters is simply through a pose.

Brecht's Epic Theatre was a new form of theatre that did not aim to allow escapism of the audience. Brecht did not want his audience to identify or emotionally engage with

who or what they saw depicted on stage. Instead he wanted to create a didactic performance that forces his audience to question what they were seeing and understand the messages behind it.

Throughout our research into Berkoff and Brecht as theatrical practitioners, we have utilized many rehearsal techniques. One of the first techniques we learnt in these rehearsals was how to make practical and effective use of tempo and rhythm as Berkoff used. In our first exercise, we had to improvise a scene from a given stimulus and have the pacing of the scene match the tempo played of a set of drums. An example of this was a fast paced casualty scene with many people rushing around set to an up tempo beat. We then explored how the scene would be impacted and affected by altering the tempo from the drums. This time around, we improvised a slow paced casualty scene. Instead of portraying a wife desperate to see her gravely ill husband as I had done in the first iteration of the scene, my role became much more sombre and sincere, quietly sobbing stage right. We discovered that by changing the tempo of a scene we could influence the audience's reaction to and perception of the given scene considerably. For example, the fast paced version of the scene gave the audience no opportunity to empathize with the characters as it passes so quickly, whereas the second scene has a much more tragic atmosphere. The audience are therefore given time to analyse what is happening and, if slowed down further, they are being removed further from the naturalistic sense of the scene and seeing the detail of the characters.

This use of tempo also relates to Total Theatre through the technique of Jo-Ha-Kyu. Though found originally in Japanese Kabuki Theatre, the technique was frequently used by Berkoff in his own work in order to control pacing and flow of his performances. The phrase Jo-Ha-Kyu relates to three separate states of pacing within a piece, meaning slow, fast, stop respectively.

We also explored the techniques used by Jacques Lecoq as many of Berkoff's techniques influenced by and developed from his work. Lecoq specialized in mime and the movements of the actor. The first thing we did for this workshop was go through each of Lecoq's seven levels of tension. These are, in ascending order; Jellyfish, laid back, neutral, alert, reactive, passionate and tragic. For example, in being at level one tension – the jellyfish – I dragged my feet along the floor as everything the jellyfish does takes great effort. Having learnt how to express seven individual and recognizable levels of tension, we had been able to extend our neutral movements and exaggerate them towards both ends of the scale, extremely slow and fatigued to extremely frightened and petrified. We were able to transfer the techniques from our Lecoq research into our work concerning Berkoff. In order to achieve total theatre, Berkoff thought that an

actor should find their neutral level of tension or general neutral stance and then build onto that. This Berkovian technique links to Berkoff's ideas about makeup and costuming. Berkoff would have actors wear white makeup in order to remove any distraction of who they really were. They became neutral and blank as they were just before they performed. They could then build on top of that with their character.

We also looked at the use of burden found within both Brechtian and Berkovian Theatre. For this exercise I chose to focus on the character of Mickey Johnstone from the play Blood Brothers. At the start of the exercise, I struggled to portray the worry and paranoia of the character through exaggerated physical means as I found that the majority of Mickey's burdens are due to the paranoia that is internalized within Mickey's mind. We attempted this task a second time and I believe I improved as I was able to translate the mental burden into a physical burden. I made all of my body language extremely reserved, for example, hiding my face and drawing my arms and hands inward. This exercise was beneficial as I learnt that to exaggerate an internal burden, the movements can be exaggerated inwards instead of large, outwards movements that you may typically associate with exaggeration. This technique strongly links with Brechtian theatre as in the play Mother Courage and her Children by Bertolt Brecht, the title character of Mother Courage carried with her a large cart for the entirety of the play. This heavy and inconvenient cart is symbolic within the play of Mother Courage's burdens through a physical means; the cart is a burden to her and she must carry and pull this burden with she goes in her life, even during a war zone. But also, without her cart she is nothing, she needs her cart to survive.

Next, we explored the techniques that Berkoff used, this time in relation to the play Metamorphosis. First, we investigated mie and I chose to portray the character of Mr. Samsa. We had to create a Mie that conveys our chosen character. For Mr. Samsa's mie I bent my legs and lent back – giving the impression of a larger stomach - I also held my arms in a way suggestive of holding onto braces. My head was tilted back slightly putting my nose in the air to demonstrate a smug expression. This would also link to how Brecht would convey the status of his characters in his pieces. We next had to create a walk for our chosen character and add a gesture also. The gesture I added to my walk was the action of smoking a pipe. We then combined all of these elements into a sequence of movements that consisted of a mie, walking into position and sitting down, and a gesture, all set to an underlying base pulse. Of all of these elements, the base pulse was the most challenging as, being able to coordinate with other actors without an external beat - in order to ensure that you are all in sync and working to the same beat - took time to perfect.

We also developed how we could best use our voices in order to enhance the performance as well as follow the style of Berkoff and ensure that the dialogue and messages we were showing would not be misconstrued, misunderstood or misinterpreted. For this, we focused on the character of Gregor Samsa or The Beetle from the play Metamorphosis by Steven Berkoff. We began by reading aloud an extract – delivered by Gregor – as a group, each of us taking turns to read one word at a time. We found that the first time we tried this, we sounded very robotic and emotionless. We read through the text a second time, this time, consciously trying to remedy the ways we had delivered the words initially, and placing emphasis upon the words we say. For example, the word 'hideous' would be said in a tone and cadence that reflects the word, such as sounding disgusted or horrified as the actor says it. By adding emphasis to the text, Berkoff wants to guarantee that the meanings are explicit to the audience and there isn't anything they don't understand. We then added an action to a chosen word from the text. This is an extension from adding a certain emphasis to a word. For example, if a character were to look anxious as they deliver the word 'hospital', the audience would have a clear understanding that hospitals make the character anxious without this information being said out loud.

Next, we worked on how the Beetle should be formed. We took turns in smaller groups to configure each other into the shape of a beetle. Generally, we found that the beetle tended to have bent legs, a hunched back and arms either above the head or bent out to the sides. A feature I felt would be effective for the creation of the beetle was out turned feet. This, combined with bent knees, created an uncomfortable position to perform in as well as to watch. This adds to the inhuman nature and grotesqueness of the beetle, therefore achieving the aims of Total Theatre.

We looked at Berkoff's technique of miniature stage. This technique confines the actor to a chair, stool or similar object. The actor is then restricted to working within that immediate space only. We first practiced this technique by attempting to recreate our daily routine whilst remaining in our seats. We found that, in order to still be able to explicitly convey our actions to the audience, we had to over exaggerate every one of them. Every action, according to Berkoff, has to have a purpose and be thought out very precisely. As a part of Steven Berkoff's style of Total Theatre, the ultimate function of this technique is to eliminate any other distractions on stage and direct and focus the audience's attention to what is taking place in the small space given to the actors. We also expanded our experiences with how we voiced the parts of our characters. By using narrators and mime. We experimented by having these narrators stand in different locations on the stage. One that we tried was having the narrators standing

behind their respective acting counterpart. The actors were confined to chairs as a form of miniature stage. We found that this was an effective technique to use in order to help an actor if they are struggling with what actions they are delivering on stage. For example, if an actor tends to have moments on stage in which they find that they are not using any gestures or actions, this activity highlights that.

Berkoff and Brecht are similar in the respect that they share their views on naturalistic theatre which was often considered the norm for theatre. As the two practitioners both wanted the content of their theatre to be explicitly understood by their audiences – Brecht for the reason that his pieces had specific messages for his audience to discover and think about after they left the theatre, creating a didactic piece of theatre. This aim behind their theatre clashes with the conventions of naturalistic theatre pioneered by Stanislavski through The System. A key difference between the naturalistic theatre of Stanislavski and the non-naturalistic theatre that both Berkoff and Brecht use is how their styles affect their audiences and the purpose of the performance for the audience. The effect that a non-naturalistic piece of theatre would have on an audience is that they would not be emotionally engaged in the performance and, in the case of Berkoff and Brecht, they would take a message away from the performance, likely one commenting on politics, class, status, or wealth.

Word Count: 2281

Examiners' Commentary

Band 4 for the research report

Research Report AO1	25/30
Portfolio AO1	17/20
Analysis and Evaluation AO4	26/30
Artistic Intention AO2	9/10
Devised Performance	25/30
Total for unit	102/120

Research Report

The candidate has explored **Berkoff** and **Brecht** with the text *Metamorphosis*. The candidate introduces us to both practitioners with well-developed research on both practitioners. The candidate then moves to exploring Berkoff through a series of exercises designed to experiment with the practitioner. The candidate explores a key Lecoq exercise, which helps to put Berkovian practice in context and helped define Berkoff's heritage. The candidate evaluates each exercise linking it to Brecht and then the text explored. This practical exploration of a practitioner's heritage is seen as good practice allowing the candidate to experience the roots of practice.

The candidate is confident in their exploration of *Metamorphosis* introducing a number of Berkovian techniques to work on the text. This research report follows an effective structure of evidencing an exercise, analysing and evaluating it before moving onto text. The focus is heavily on Berkoff and there is room for the candidate to explore exercises unique to Brecht to develop the report further. The candidate gets the balance between research and evidencing practical work right with the majority of the report focussing on practical exercises and using Berkoff's techniques with *Metamorphosis*.

The performance that stemmed from this practical exploration of Berkoff and Brecht used these key exercises to structure the devised piece allowing the candidate to achieve a Band 5 Artistic Intention mark.

The candidate further analysed and evaluated confidently in the portfolio achieving a top Band 4 | low Band 5 across both.

This research report highlights how important structure is. The candidate could also have used subheadings to support the report to further aid the evidencing of key exercises and practice.



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