

GCE

Drama Example Materials

Candidate E - Example Work with Commentaries

Edexcel

GCE Drama (6DR01 paper 01)

2009

Oedipus Rex

<u>Character</u>	<u>Key Quotation</u>	<u>Meaning and Practical Application</u>
Oedipus	"You're blind all over, ears, mind as well as eyes"	Oedipus is mocking the prophet Tiresias for his blindness. This disrespect is dangerous as the audience believes Tiresias has magical powers of foresight and prediction, and so will be willing to believe that these words will come back to haunt him. In particular, these words spoken are able to show us the degeneration of language from that of a well respected royal to that of a childish mocking. Oedipus' face scrunched up in anger, violently pointing to the bent figure of Tiresias, mocking tone of voice, almost angry at the thoughts that Tiresias is trying to impose upon him. Standing CS, with Tiresias backed into DSR, Oedipus is using all of his power and influence to intimidate Tiresias.
Chorus	"Arrogant self-love breeds absolute rule, the tyrant who eats up money and man"	The chorus is a device used to teach the audience moral lessons. Here they explain the reason for Oedipus' downfall. Spoken poetically and clearly, the audience receive the teachings intended for the story. Strong imagery on the tyrant "eating" both money and man suggests a monster, devouring a population of both its physical and theological resources. The chorus would be steadily moving around the stage, miming the actions of greed, grabbing at the air and devouring the thought of money.
Creon	"There is something unclean in our city. Born here. Living here. It pollutes everything."	Creon is presented as a much more straightforward and open character than Oedipus, and is much more economic with his use of words. He uses simple language, broken into smaller sentences so as to receive full understanding from whoever he is speaking to. This is a stark contrast to Oedipus' language, skipping out the more elaborate and regal language to a much more basic level. This shows, in turn, Oedipus' elaborate nature and self-indulgence. The words are delivered in a harsh and loud tone, yet slow enough to be clearly heard so as not to confuse the situation.

Language

Metamorphosis

<u>Character</u>	<u>Key Quotation</u>	<u>Meaning and Practical application</u>
Mr Samsa	"His father for his part had no intention of making things easier by opening the door - but nevertheless wanted him out of the room as quickly as possible."	The way in which these lines are spoken gives an indication to the character - factual, distant cold narrative. Mr Samsa is portrayed as a stereotypical English father. He speaks with an eerily factual tone, saying nothing more than needed. This shows how cold Mr Samsa really is. He feels so little for the son that has supported for so long, just upon the way that he is presented. It is as though Mr Samsa is acting as a narrator towards the audience, his unfazed approach to his own actions are a testament to his personality. The way in which Mr Samsa speaks in a placid tone, staring straight at the audience, seeming as if he has no care for the situation in hand, allows the audience to realise how little respect or sympathy Mr Samsa deserves. He is using the 3 rd person to highlight his distant relationship with Gregor, and Gregor's isolation to the family. With Greta and Mrs Samsa SL, Mr Samsa would be pushing Gregor from CS to USC (his cage). Lit from above, Mr Samsa is speaking slowly and calmly, a direct contrast from the nature of the scene and of great Artaud styling. He is looking over his shoulder towards the audience, though his back towards them. Spoken in a constant volume and tone. All other characters in freeze.
Gregor	"I feel sick" [Dissolve]	Gregor says this sentence quickly and almost out of breath. The words themselves are all monosyllabic and this helps the audience sympathise with him, as he is factual and open with them. This short sentence shows anxiety and desperation, as Gregor cannot possibly understand what is happening to himself. He seems child-like in his complaining. This sentence is the last of the scene, possibly showing what is in store for the next scene, and implying that the Metamorphosis is beginning. Gregor would be standing CS, staring at the audience creating a direct connection between actor and audience. Spoken quickly in a constant tone, with a bug-like rasping quality. His family is arranged around him, Greta DSC, Mr Samsa SL and Mrs Samsa SR. Lit from all angles so there are no shadows, creating a feeling of pressure as there is nowhere to hide. As line is said, family step into blackout, leaving Gregor isolated.
Mr Samsa Greta	Greta: "Gregor!" Mr S: "Cash!" Greta: "Gregor!" Mr S: "Shoes!" Greta: "Gregor!" Mr S: "Cigars!" Greta: "Gregor!"	The family are calling out Gregor's meaning to them. Greta obviously wants Gregor's attention, more than the things he can provide, which is made more obvious by Greta's defence of Gregor later in the play. Mr Samsa is much more materialistic in his view of Gregor. As the family are calling to him, it highlights the way that he is providing for them instead of joining in with their activities. All family members would be stood in a line, apart from Gregor who is able to move freely, miming the work he does along to the sound of a ticking clock. The ticking noise is symbolising the routine Gregor endures to maintain his family. The repetition of words is used to show the family's demand on Gregor's time. Gregor moves double time to the ticking, showing the audience exactly how hard he has to work.

Non Verbal Communication
Metamorphosis

In this scene I will be looking at the non-verbal communication from the character of Greta. This is a very important scene as the Samsa family have let other people into their house and are nervous that Gregor will emerge and scare them away, leaving them with no money. Also, the lodgers could find Gregor, in which case they would be too disgusted to stay any longer.

Mr S: [uncomfortably] Hmmph! [clearing his throat] There's er ... one thing you should know before you make a decision. *In this sentence I would put my hand to my face as if biting my nails to further tension.*

1st L: Yes?

Mr S: We ... er ... keep a pet in the back room. *- eyes wider, frightened of their reaction.*

All L's: Oh yes? *- step back/nervous.*

Mr S: I wondered if that would bother you? *- look apprehensive, scrunching up facial features in a fake prayer.*

All L's: Oh no, we're fond of pets. *- relief.*

Mrs S: I'll show you to your quarters and then you can have some supper. [She takes them out ... as she returns] They seem quite ... *- sink back, exhausted out of keeping composure. Glad the lodgers are O.K.*

Mr S: I hope they don't ... [Indicates Gregor's room.]

Mrs S: I shouldn't think they'd ...

Mr S: Mind? *head darting from one to the other, watching their reactions with intent. Unsure of what to think or feel.*

Mrs S: No!

Mr S: Let's hope he doesn't .. *- look of horror, imagining the worst, eyes wide.*

Mrs S: Of course he won't. *[The Lodgers return] - hides behind mother, intimidated.*

1st L: It suits us moderately well. *- beaming smile, being polite, happy at situation*

2nd L: Except for these articles which we would like to dispose of

All L's: Please. *[they all raise arms indicating objects.]*

Mr S: Greta! Take the Lodger's belongings with you and put them away somewhere. *- apprehensive at throwing away their belongings.*

[They pass the objects to her and she goes away to Gregor's room and throws them in - Gregor shrinks back. Meanwhile, the Lodgers are taking their seats.] *- looks upset at throwing away belongings and guilty that she is using Gregor's room as a junk-room.*

Taken from phase three, the lodgers (page 115-116)

Greta is a very unstable character, looking to others for guidance for how she is meant to feel. Seemingly immature about the entire situation.

Oedipus Rex

In this scene I am going to look at Jocasta's non-verbal communication. She has already realised the truth and is desperately trying to convince Oedipus to forget about the entire ordeal. She is a seemingly frail woman with no real sense of power and so is prone to becoming hysterical over certain situations very quickly.

- JOCASTA. What man ... ? What does it matter ... One shepherd or another ... - looking away from Oedipus out into the audience. Desperately wants him to stop.
What difference does it make? None of it matters.
Forget it. The whole thing. Don't pursue it.
- OEDIPUS. Forget it! Of course I can't forget it!
What nonsense! My birth's a mystery,
But with all these clues, I intend to solve it!
- JOCASTA. Listen to me in heaven's name, - becomes hysterical, hands shaking, turning to and fro
Listen. If you want to stay alive occasionally gesturing to Oedipus in a threatening manner as if to intimidate him or make him back down.
This search must end. It's making me ill
I'm sick with it already, isn't that enough?
- OEDIPUS. There's no need for such gloom! Suppose it proved
I was born a slave, from generations of slaves,
Would that sicken you? Or affect your standing?
- JOCASTA. Listen, I'm begging you! Don't go on! - Drops to her knees, grabbing Oedipus, showing her frailty and weakness.
OEDIPUS. I must go on! I must know the truth!
JOCASTA. I know! I know what I'm talking about. getting back up, arms open towards him. Begging.
I'm telling you this for your own good. desperately trying to end the conversation before it can progress any further.
- OEDIPUS. And when did I ever put my own good,
As you call it, before the service of the state?
- JOCASTA. My god, you're doomed, you can't escape! - slowly stepping away, shaking head slowly, eyes wide and mouth open slightly in shock and disbelief. Tears welling up.
I have one wish, and one wish only:
That you never discover who you really are.
- OEDIPUS. Hurry, one of you! Get that shepherd here!
My wife is too proud of her blue blood.
She's scared she may have married a slave!
- JOCASTA. It's finished. No chance now. You're doomed. - running away, holding her head, I've said all there is to say: all limbs shaking. Scared.
And my last word to you. Forever

Jocasta goes into the palace.

Taken from Episode 4, Jocasta to Oedipus (page 44-45)

Vocal Awareness
Metamorphosis

These directions are vital as it effectively describes the way in which all of the non-underlined words are to be said.

emphasis on this to show the rushed nature, very hard.

Gregor: [Crying out - a guttered voice - a creature less than a human - his words become less distinguishable to them. They all rush to the door.]

Sir, I'm just going to open the door this very minute ... slight illness an attack of giddiness kept me in my bed getting up now just a moment longer - sudden attack - be as right as rain soon no Foundations in your reports - no-one said anything to me obviously you haven't looked at my last order spare my parents - I'll catch the eight o'clock train Don't let me detain you please make my excuses to the chief.

First sentence spoken fast, rushed and in panic.

The word "attack" would be spluttered, almost choked on, to further emphasise the harsh nature of the word

The 'you' and 'your' are said in a much more violent tone, angry at the clerk for being so noisy. He screeches these words in a very high pitched manner.

[Image - total family confusion - figures twist and whirl around each other like a frantic dance.]

'spare my parents' and 'make my excuses' are said in a breathy and gasping manner. Shows he is less human and his desperation over these words takes so much energy that he becomes tired,

During each of the 13 hyphens "-" in this section, Gregor would breathe in a rasping, guttered quality. He would suck as much air in as possible, to then use it all on the next few words. - Gives a greater emphasis into the struggle he faces as an insect to do something as simple as talking.

Oedipus Rex

Our agonies are beyond telling, ← soft female voice, stresses words and
 A whole city slowly dying makes 'agonies' and 'slowly dying' much longer.

A unison of male vocals, harsh and intimidating → From an enemy no man can fight.
 → Slime and fungus on orchard and meadow, ← orchard + meadow said childishly + sweetly
Death in the womb, and birth in the shadow
Of death, and in the mother's sight. the words 'Die' & 'Death' are constantly over stressed, with the each time being in an echo, to further emphasise the amount of death.

All chorus members in unison - representing the power of the fire. → Men die without number, like birds flying,
 → Like fire consuming, despairing, crying,
 → As they pass to the shadows of the night. ← said one after another in a choral effect to stress the idea.

The smell of the dead, the street stinking, ← said whilst breathing heavily in, showing their disgust. Again stressing the idea of the dead and death.
Breeds death and more death, beyond all counting.
No tears as her children die
 → From the girl wife and the grey-haired mother,
Tearing their nails at the crowded altar,
Accusing the implacable sky. ← all speaking towards the sky, as the god's representative, the chorus are angry at being forgotten. said in a harsh and disbelieving tone.

bright First said with young voice, the other creaking and old, to represent the character. → over-stressed and said slowly, to prolong the image to make the audience more disgusted about the situation.

Healer Apollo, Athene all-knowing,
 Can you not hear a whole city screaming,
 Will you not answer our city?

The Social/Cultural/Historical and Political context

Metamorphosis

Berkoff found drama a means of escapism. Escapism is seen as mental diversion by means of entertainment or recreation, as an escape from everyday lives or stress. Berkoff found himself inspired by the way that actors could communicate through many different means, with few boundaries, and the ability to change into different animals or objects by the use of voice and body, allowed him to escape from his reality, into a world where anything is possible.

Berkoff tries to communicate many different themes to the audience in *Metamorphosis*. He shows the audience ideas of religion, stress, mental illness, disabilities and euthanasia, which all lead to the larger topic of social exclusion. As soon as Gregor has morphed into a beetle he is an outcast from the people he loves and the society he lives in. Once he is discovered he is unwanted and seen as a lesser being. He may have the appearance of a beetle, but is still the same person underneath. He suffers the same oppression that all people who are different from the accepted norm face. Similar to racism or bullying, Gregor is isolated, filled with pain, loneliness and social exclusion. Berkoff shows this by separating Gregor from the rest of his family and the main action onstage, in his little cage, living and surviving separate to everyone else.

Oedipus Rex

The concepts behind *Oedipus Rex* are strongly related to society at the time the play was written. Sophocles' writing was influenced by his background, by other famous playwrights and the culture surrounding him. The play can also be interpreted in a modern way as the meaning is on that a modern audience could relate to.

Myths and Legends are a large part of Greek tragedy. The idea of fate and destiny is one that is not idealised so much in a modern society, but the idea of a tragic flaw is one that a modern society would agree with. Former president of the United States, Bill Clinton's flaw was lechery, and it cost him his job and the respect of the country. Also, successful music artist Kurt Cobain was idolised by many, but he descended into taking drugs and eventually committed suicide. Another idea is that of women and society, as the only major female character is Jocasta, and she brings no valuable information to the play. She only acts as a mother-figure and to stop Oedipus and Creon "squabbling like boys". This lack of power is made apparent by the end of the play, where Jocasta hangs herself, seemingly taking the 'easy' way out of the situation, whereas Oedipus decides to live in disability, presenting women as a 'weaker' sex. This of course is not a modern day idea, but was true for many centuries previous to modern day, and especially at the time the play was written.

Characterisation

Gregor Samsa

Gregor Samsa begins the play as a respectable and successful textiles salesman working extraordinary hours in order to pay off his father's debt, to buy all of the things the family need, and to pay for their house. One night he has bad nightmares and the next morning he wakes to find himself a beetle. Gregor's thought process at this time is presented as pure disbelief. Throughout the play, Gregor deteriorates both mentally and physically further into that of a beetle. The restrictions placed upon him are shown through both his physical and aural properties. His stature, once proud and tall, although strained by the pressures he faces supporting a family, has now been completely disfigured into the broken and disfigured shape of an insect, on all fours, arms crossed on the floor, fingers working as feelers, moving independently from each other in small claw shapes. His voice starts as that of a stereotypical human, with all of the conventional accents and tones of joy, sorrow, excitement, anger and so on. This also changes hugely as he becomes a beetle. His vocal chords are changed, and he can no longer express the same feelings through tone and expression. His words are monosyllabic and filled with a creaking, rasping and deformed sound of words, each syllable is strained out of his 'mouth' as he is slowly changing.

Oedipus Rex

Oedipus Rex is renowned as a strong and proud leader, both strong and intelligent, trying desperately to lead his people to a bright future. He starts the play as a self imposed god figure to his people, as if he has divine right, and no-one can disagree with his course of action. Although still presented as a caring man, of deep family ties and a caring father. His arrogance is apparent through both posture and vocal quality. In the first few scenes, Oedipus stands proud and tall, over exaggerating movements and arms outstretched when delivering words, over-acting his feelings with mime and physical imagery. His voice loud and booming, mocking and childish at times, emphasising his mood swings and ever changing decisions, both eloquent and elaborate, as if showing off. Once paranoid, his voice becomes faster and more prone to losing his calm composure, with jerky, quick movements, he becomes less of a ruler and more of a common man. Once he learns the truth behind his opast he becomes a broken man, his posture is lost and he moves freely, limbs working out of habit rather than choice, hunched shoulders and drooping head give away his true feelings. He loses the ability to speak loudly or emanate power, and becomes quiet and sullen with no real vocal emotion.

The Visual/Aural and Spatial Elements of the Production

Metamorphosis

Directorial Aim

I am to put on a performance in which everything reflects the abstract Berkovian style. I want the performance to be visually striking and the images to be memorable. I want to make all movement and sound very stark and strong, and for the dark mood of the play to be shown through the design. I want all design aspects to challenge the audience into thinking about the reasons behind my choices, and I want all directional choices to help emphasise the meaning of the play.

Spatial

Minimal set pieces used. A cage USC made out of scaffold poles, extending across the stage walls, Gregor uses these poles to move around the stage as a beetle. The cage dwarves the stage, this is to show, no matter how hard the Samsa's try to forget about him they can't, as he is always at the back of the stage and the back of their minds. CS, the stage would be quite bare, only 3 stools from which the family would use to sit and mime daily routine. The audience would be in proscenium arch, acting as the fourth wall of the Samsa's house. The cyclorama would be behind Gregor's cage. A door SR used for entrances and exits by all characters, and a window SL, with shutters drawn. The only time the shutters open is at the end of the play to symbolise when Gregor passes.

Visual

A cyclorama would be used when Gregor is positioned in his cage USC, holding a beetle position. During the flashback scenes, a yellow wash would be used to give the set a more rustic feel, also would give an insight to the much happier feel of how things used to be, before all of the confusion and metamorphosis. In most scenes containing the family, the lighting is harsh white on black. Made by a powerful floor light positioned DSC. Symbolising the present is hard to bear, the harshness and brightness of the light symbolising the pressure that society has over the family. The costume I will be using is based around the Victorian period. As to compare with their Victorian styling of family hierarchy. Mr Samsa wears large black 'army' style boots, black trousers, braces and a long sleeve white thermal top. He is also presented with a large, Victorian influenced moustache, to create a notion of power. Mrs Samsa wears a long black dress, extending to the ankles. She wears her hair tied up elaborately and wears a heavy amount of powdered make-up. Gregor, although being the main focus, wears a simple costume of black shoes, black trousers and a long sleeved white button shirt, tucked in and buttoned appropriately. There seems to be nothing special about Gregor's costume, to reflect the feeling that he is no hero, or great man to suffer from a tragic flaw, but a simple man who is pulled down by his family in the ever-increasing pressure of the contemporary society. Greta wears a dress similar to Mrs Samsa, but wears a grey cardigan over the top, to give the image of a schoolgirl, to reflect her immaturity.

Aural

Contemporary and minimalist sounds would be used to create the sense of a dysfunctional family, for example, the work of post modern serialist composers.

For the flashback scenes I would use classical tracks to reflect the change of time. The audience would realise the change from the cold modern to the warm past.

Speakers would be placed in each of the audience's headrests in their chairs. This would serve two functions.

Would immerse the audience much more effectively as they are in direct contact with an element of the production, and would also limit the amount of audience interaction with one another, helping to create the world of isolation Gregor feels.

The sound of a clock would tick throughout the piece, excluding the flashback scenes. The ticking would give a sense of a countdown, possibly to Gregor's death. The clock puts much more pressure onto the family as it seems that they are being rushed to sort out their situation. Another sound effect would be the door knocking. The knocks would be deep and resonating, as if the door was made of metal, a bunker from the outside world, as the Samsa's are so scared of what other people would think about their son.

Mr Samsa uses short snappy sentences, like that of a drill sergeant in the army. He uses pauses and clears his throat when in an uncomfortable position. His voice is cold and uninviting, lacking emotion. Mrs Samsa has a quiet, timid voice, speaking quickly, as if scared that she will talk out of place. Her voice has a warm and welcoming glow, yet she doesn't use it for this purpose. Gregor uses large screeches, loud eating sounds, beetle style clicks and groans, alongside his normal voice. His human voice is devoid from much emotion, simply used to put a point across. Greta is similar to Mrs Samsa, yet with a higher pitch and a stereotypical girly slur on her words to convey a sense of immaturity.

Oedipus Rex

Directorial Aim

I wish to make the performance in keeping with the traditional Greek style that Sophocles would have intended as it will give a context to the play. However, I think it is important that a modern audience will be able to understand the meaning of the play, so I will make certain aspects of the production much more in keeping with aspects of today's society.

Spatial

The set will be of traditional Greek styling. With the audience placed in the Proscenium arch, before the great steps of the palace. The audience will feel as if they are taking the place of the citizens of the city. A large palace door is at the top of the steps, which is used for entrances and exits from the palace. When Jocasta has hung herself, Oedipus opens the doors and she is there for the audience to see, making the image much more striking. A large platform in front of the door, extending to each side of the stage is where the main action takes place. It is elevated to show the character's importance over the audience, as the audience are the citizens, and Oedipus and his companions are mostly royalty. The choral odes are done below the steps, in front of the audience, DSC, closer to the audience, interacting with them much more effectively.

Visual

Costumes will be mixed from ancient Greek and modern day styling. The chorus wearing toga styled cloth, similar to that of ancient Greece, but Oedipus will wear a black suit with a white shirt and black tie. This costume would be effective as this is the type of 3 piece suit that the leaders of the modern world wear. It would show him as different to everyone else, modern, and seemingly sophisticated. Tiresias would wear Greek styled robes of dark colours, as if to show he is the bringer of dark news. All of the other characters would be in traditional Greek clothing, further emphasising the difference in status between Oedipus and all others.

Lighting throughout the performance will be stark and cold, with main blue washes, highlighting the death and suffering that has plagued the land. During the choral odes, they will be lit from behind with stark white lights, to give the scene a much more eerie feel, making the silhouettes of the chorus all the more impacting as they describe the horrors that have taken place. When Oedipus delivers his final speech, he will be lit from above with a red flood. This will accentuate his features and create deep dark shadows to contrast with the red, symbolising blood and death.

Aural

There will be a small orchestra pit, for live music. Mostly classical in style. Trumpet fanfares when Oedipus enters to create sense of royalty and importance. During scenes of more tension, the flurry of picked, pizzicato strings will help emphasise mood. During messenger speeches, slower, more prolonged notes on violins and cellos would create a much more mournful tone. During choral odes, the music will be more abstract with long, held notes, to echo around the theatre to enhance the reflective mood.

The chorus will use different techniques such as unison, canon, call and response and factual narrative, in keeping with the traditional Greek style. Oedipus begins with a loud, arrogant tone but as he begins to decline, his voice becomes weaker and more vulnerable.

The Response to Practitioner Metamorphosis and Artaud

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) created the 'theatre of cruelty'. He believed that theatre didn't have to be realistic. He believed that realism had become traditional and that newer styles needed to be introduced. He said that realism was unable to create "life's truth on stage". It was a false reality that had no real meaning other than to tell a story, and that theatre like that lacked any real emotion.

His new theatre used the influences of dance, extreme visual images and absurd comedy.

"I am well aware that a language of gestures and postures, dance and music is less able to define character ... but whoever said theatre was made to define character" Artaud.

The main part of Artaud's work that Berkoff was influenced by, was the acting and the language. Artaud believed that the acting should be incredibly physical, almost athlete like, using the ability to scream and mime with a variety of different objects to create scale. Berkoff uses the extremes of physical actions by moving Gregor as a beetle, rolling into positions and holding awkward freezes for continued periods of time.

The way that Artaud used language was another important influence to Berkoff. Artaud taught the use of signing and body language to create emotion and feeling was more effective than dialogue in most situations. Berkoff uses this when trying to portray Gregor as a beetle, with the family standing in positions with their limbs representing Gregor's legs and body. The use of gestures, posture and cries, mixed with mime, was a break from conventional theatre. Mr Samsa stands with fixed angular limbs, like elbows, portraying a robot-like quality through both physical presence and mental emotion.

Oedipus and Kneehigh

Kneehigh theatre company are a deeply original style of company, with its initial work being for children, it retains a strong element of comedy and fairy-tale aspects. Kneehigh work as a whole to fragment a play and re-establish its story through their own personal styling, so that only a small remainder of the original text will be kept, but the powerful imagery and dramatic techniques used help create an extraordinary experience that stays faithful to the main plot. In all of Kneehigh's work, there is strong emphasis on the essential elements of story and plot, focusing on the parts that appeal to the deeper aspects of human nature, including myth, legend, folklore and fairy-tale. The actors create strong bonds with the audience and this is apparent through the choral odes and messenger speeches, where the audience are directly involved and the actors use the audience's morality and thoughts as a process to justify their own. The child-like nature of the company allows the insight into much deeper issues as it is approached in a light-hearted way, creating an original, and in turn, effective piece of theatre.

Interpretation

Metamorphosis

staring out into audience. No facial expression. Little or no emotion present.

Mr S:

As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning - Moves CS, holding arms out at right angles, speaking in monotone, no facial expression

Mrs S:

He found himself transformed in his bed - joins husband CS, does similar action into a gigantic insect ... but with arms at different angles.

Greta:

His numerous legs, which were pitifully - similar to Mr + Mrs Samsa, CS, thin compared to the rest of his bulk, waved - all 3 move arms on these lines, helplessly before him. jerky and animated movement, highlighting themes.

Moves DSC, look of shock, staring at limbs

Gregor:

What has happened to me? ← heavy, breathy vocal tone.

Family:

He thought. - monosyllabic, unison. No emotion.

Gregor:

It was no dream. - look of shock

Greta:

He looked at the alarm clock ticking on

Moves forward, to look around Gregor's shoulder

Gregor:

the chest. - cold, distant narrative, staring out into audience.

Half past six and the hands were quietly moving

on. - cold and factual, looking stressed. fidgeting with his hands, Gregor, Gregor? - warmly and brightly moves to SL looking out into audience

Mrs S:

Said a voice.

Mr S:

That gentle voice ... - smiling at the thought, daydreaming.

Gregor:

It was his mother's ... - calmly, emphasis on the 's' sound, like a whisper

Greta:

His mother's ... - quieter, more calm, moves back into blackout.

Mr S:

His mother's ... - almost a whisper, moves back into blackout.

Mrs S:

all movement and speech getting slower and quieter over time, to emphasise the feel of a dream/nightmare.

BLACKOUT

Oedipus Rex

Chorus

Chorus disperse and stand freely around the stage.

all chorus mimic Oedipus' exact actions, moving when he does and screaming in agony just as loudly.

after they have done these actions they slowly retreat back SL and SR to their initial positions.

Chorus are holding Jocasta in the air as if she is hung from the ceiling by an invisible rope

Oedipus

- The king ran to her, loosed the rope - Oedipus runs to Jocasta and lifts her down. And lifted her down, all the while groaning - whimpering like an animal, howling. Heartbreakingly, like an animal. - pure grief on his face, moving slowly and He laid her gently on the floor, with utmost respect.
- And then - this was unbearable, the worst Of all - there were two golden brooches, Pinned on her dress. He opened them up, Held them high in the air, at arm's length, And plunged them down into his eyeballs, Screaming and groaning that his own guilt And suffering were too great for his eyes to see it That now they would both be in darkness forever, That he would never see again Those he should never had seen, nor ever Love those he should never have loved.
- slowly unclasps brooches from Jocasta's dress. and looks at them with intent.
- actions follow script exactly. Oedipus' face is screwed up in deep concentration, gritting his teeth and screaming loudly.
- slumps down, both exhausted and distraught. Cries loudly and screams in rage. so angry at situation.

The messenger pauses for breath at several different occasions. He speaks in a general informative tone and speed. Occasionally breaking up out of the horror he has witnessed.

Taken from the messenger speech, Episode 6 (page 52)

Live Theatre Review

Live Production: 'Hamlet' by 'The Little Touring Company'

Seen at the Egg Theatre, Bath. Wednesday 5th March, 2008

Adaptor: Jesper B. Karlsen, from the original by William Shakespeare

Director: Marc van der Velden

Composer: Jesper Egelund Pedersen

It is rare to find an original adaptation of Shakespeare ... many are too scared to take on the monolith task, so to extensively adapt and add modern lines to the seemingly reverent story would be an assumed act of madness. Karlsen not only does this, but effectively invents another dimension into the world of Hamlet, *Morten Nielsen*, and of his closest friend, Horatio, *Peter Holst*.

Starting with the fresh-faced teenagers, we are invited into the carefree world of their youth. Karlsen has created a scene where *Nielsen* and *Holst* can effectively set the benchmark for their character's state of mind. With poignant music being created by double bassists, *Jesper Egelund Pederson* and *Christian Glahn*, the audience are transported to a place in the story they had never been before.

Playing towards the audience, their lives before the King's death, their all-too-real anxieties and troubles over macho appearances and unrequited 'love' are shown as innocent and good fun. We all understand his embarrassment as he unsuccessfully tries to woo Ophelia, and feel the nostalgia of the pair bounding across the stage, wielding invisible swords, and dying in a spectacular, over-dramatic, highly amusing manner. We all feel that somehow Shakespeare left out the beginning of the play, and Karlsen just remembered to put it back in! The originality of the scene does nothing to take away from the feel of the piece.

It is in startling contrast that we travel with *Nielsen* and *Holst* through the events of Hamlet's grief over his father's murder, watching the bright-eyed boy turn into a dark, paranoid man, feasting over the thought of his father's killer, his mother's hasty re-marriage and his seeming disinterest in a former love. His meeting with the ghost, an eerie skull placed on the head of a double bass, dances across the stage, at first we would be unsure of how to react to such a sight, but the severity of *Nielsen's* reaction, and similarly that of the audience, steal any signs of humour from such a dark topic.

Double basses, although providing the effective, yet understated score to the production, are used uniquely. Producing not only sound effects of creaking ships, horses hooves, seagulls, comic voices and movement, it is also a multi-tool of props, in an otherwise bland space. Creating dancers, shields, the ghost, Ophelia's coffin, a ship and various other objects that would otherwise be non-existent. *Pederson* and *Glahn* employ their instruments so lovingly to the task that they give less of the impression that they are actor-musicians, but rather, the double basses are actors themselves, creating much more diversity to the piece that many actors never could.

The stage, being small, and the audience being intimate, was the perfect conditions for such an emotional set of events, with little room for set we see a simple red velvet curtain across the back, and a wooden bench, formerly found in the local school gym,

now making its debut as a ship's mast, castle battlements, pillars and of course, a bench!. The Egg, being a small venue is used to the childish playing of workshops and comedy acts that so commonly move around the country, we are greeted by the smiling faces of Nielsen and Holst as we enter the space, and are invited to sit, rather than expected to. By no means are they going to start when we aren't ready, between acts we are spoken to, giving details about the plot.

Although seemingly a small budget production tour, every aspect of audience entertainment was catered for, from the relaxing breaks between acts where we are encouraged to relax and stretch, actively participating with the actors, taking them off of the stereotypical pedestal that most semi-pro actors seem to place themselves on, and rather met by a group of friends, telling an interesting story, with no falsities or overreactions.

Although named 'the little touring company' and only containing four actors, that is where the similarity with the word 'little' ends. Big emotions. Big characters. Big music and BIG audience reaction! Each member sitting either in front of, or above the action was enthralled from beginning to end, myself included. As an audience we leave as we entered, to the smiling faces of Nielsen and Holst, knowing full well they have spread their version of the already popular play, and both being so different, there can be no direct comparison, one is just as strong as the other.

With so many characters and so few actors, you would imagine the predicament the boys faced in creating such an effective production, but as with everything else in the play, they were unfazed by the corners they had to cut. As *Holst's* jacket slid off of his shoulders to his elbows, becoming a primitive shawl, he turns to face us as Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Although the initial grins and gestures from the audience provide some well needed comedy in an otherwise dark scene, the concept of *Holst* being Gertrude is quickly accepted, and in turn, many of the audience later said that he was a more convincing female character than many other women playing the same role. This is surely a testament to the skill of the actors, and their unwavering loyalty to telling the story, rather than presenting themselves as a character.

After hearing the words "He was my best friend" we all reach a dark place in our minds, the bitter truth that we could all befall the same loss, empathy flooding from the audience to the stage. *Holst* shows us he is heartbroken, there is no denying his emotion over the situation, and we all feel the sting of the words moving into our hearts and minds. The friendship created by *Nielsen* and *Holst* is no illusion, and this only furthers the sadness created by the scene.

At the beginning we are confronted by the notion of Horatio fulfilling the dying request of his best friend. "Tell my story". He didn't do it ... instead he took us on a journey, showed us for ourselves what we needed to see, and only intervened when necessary. It is surely true, that in the right hands, a single action can speak louder than a thousand words.

GCE
Drama Example Materials

Candidate E - Commentaries

Edexcel
GCE Drama (6DR01 paper 01)
2009

Commentary on Exploration Notes for *Candidate E*:

Language:

The candidate has a firm grasp on the language of both texts. He explores it through looking at key lines for different characters. There is effective use of stage specific vocabulary and abbreviation, bringing a sense of authenticity to these notes.

There are some excellent proposals for the way sections of the play might work in performance and he has a good grasp of how an audience might respond to them. He also explores elements of characterisation, such as in his section on Creon. There is insufficient detail of how practical exploration has resulted in these very sound ideas and understanding.

Non-verbal communication:

The candidate has carried out a close textual analysis of two sections of dialogue. This produces some excellent ideas for how actors might tackle these scenes. However, these ideas are not explored: there is insufficient practical justification, no use of the word 'because' for his proposals.

Vocal awareness:

The two text extracts explored here have more justification than in the previous section. Some decisions taken about how particular lines can be interpreted by a performer are explained, in the sense of how meaning might be communicated. There is no detail as to how ideas have been arrived at.

Characterisation:

The two characters chosen, Gregor and Oedipus, are dissected and explained. The candidate does not let us into how he went about acquiring his opinions about the characters, however, so these tend to become assertions, rather than the results of exploration. There are a lot of ideas here that an actor might find very useful in preparing to play Gregor or Oedipus, but few clues as to the method of that preparation.

Social, cultural, historical and political context:

This section is evidence of the candidate's very good understanding of the contexts of these plays, both historically and as pieces of contemporary performance. He makes interesting links with things that influence life today. It is a pity that he does not explore these links through references to his own practical work because this would have been a fruitful avenue to follow.

Visual, aural and spatial elements of a production:

The section on *Metamorphosis* is a clear proposal for the candidate's own interpretation of the play. The work is highly detailed and ideas are justified. We get a clear sense of how this production would develop the meanings in the text, through its production values. He gets to grips with the idea of a production, rather than just a performance, so we see how he envisages the whole package. The candidates' use of theatre specific vocabulary is outstanding, showing how much experience he has in this arena.

The section detailing the candidate's production proposals for *Oedipus* is less successful, but does achieve his wish to communicate the idea of a whole theatre experience. The candidate's suggestions for the lighting for *Oedipus'* final speech, for instance, are clearly founded upon a depth of understanding of lighting design.

The response to a practitioner:

These sections explain how Artaud and Kneehigh developed ideas for the theatre. There is no evidence that the candidate has explored these texts by employing either of these systems or sets of techniques.

Interpretation:

The candidate uses two sections of text and annotates them with ideas for their interpretation. Some of his ideas are justified successfully but there is a lack of coherence or a unifying idea for each scene.

Moderator comments:

The candidate has explored the texts and produces evidence of practical thinking about how he might approach their interpretation. There is insufficient detail of practical observations made during the exploration process, though some sections successfully communicate the candidate's ideas to excellent effect. For instance, the visual, oral, spatial section is very well written and it is clear to see how his production ideas are justified.

There is very good evidence of understanding of the characters of both plays, as well as of the language and how it might be expressed. Overall, the candidate's notes show how his practical work has resulted in some clearly expressed ideas about these plays and, with some more evidence of how this actually happened, he could access very high marks.

The quality of the written communication is excellent.

These notes are far too long.

Band 2

Commentary on Theatre Review for Candidate E:

The evaluation of live theatre evokes the experience had by the audience. The candidate thoroughly enjoyed himself at the theatre but also manages to remain largely objective about how the performance worked. He explores the adaptation of the original play, explaining why it worked so well and places it in context. He shows how the audience reacted and explains why they did so, illustrating his ideas with clear examples. A good example is his description of the use of the double bass where he clearly draws the line between the text and its performance. He illustrates the emotional landscape of the piece very clearly, communicating the joy and the intimacy of it.

This is a successful piece of writing that reviews, rather than evaluates, the effect that a production has on its audience, it explores the technicalities of the performance and supports with very detailed and accurate examples. However, the clear sense that this is a review, rather than a detailed evaluation, means he does not attain top band marks.

Some minor changes of tone and a more evaluative approach would push this mark up.

Band 2