

**GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

SPEECH AND DRAMA SG

POSSIBLE ANSWERS OCT / NOV 2006

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SECTION A

- ∅ Learners must respond to three different texts in Section A.
- ∅ Responses should show understanding of the dramatic principles.
- ∅ Dramatic principles must be discussed in the context of the socio-political background.
- ∅ The principles of OBE assessment will be taken into account when marking this paper.

MARK ALLOCATION

Section A: 3x30=90
Section B: 40
Section C: 20

SECTION A
PLAYS AND THEATRE HISTORY

**QUESTION 1
ABSURD THEATRE**

Absurd plays show a distinctive treatment of the dramatic principles. Discuss any THREE of these principles to show the influence of Absurd Theatre on the text that you studied for this examination.

Assessment strategy:

Learners must discuss three dramatic elements – 3x10=30

ABSURD USE OF SPACE

The stage, which had been reduced by Realism to represent a small slice-of-life, returned to its earlier image as a metaphor for the world itself in Absurd Theatre. The stage is stripped to its bare minimum symbolic of a void, simple and stark. The theatrical image conveys the experience of absurdity. The world/room is a contained space, devoid of meaning. Space is either infinite or totally confining. Beckett's space conveys a sense of oppressive emptiness. Ionesco's space is more cluttered but the feeling is the same: impenetrable meaning, created by a wall of things. Whatever the specific setting, it is what the fact of space says rather than what space is made to represent, that gives atmospheric quality to Absurd Theatre.

ABSURD CHARACTERISATION

Characters are a representation of mankind in general. Characters are an abstraction of human attitudes. They demonstrate or symbolise human properties. Exaggerated characters. Interchangeable: double act. No background information on characters. Social puppet

ABSURD STRUCTURE

It reflects the feeling that human experience has reached a dead end. It does not adhere to the characteristics of a well-made play. Everything operates on a flat plain of equal significance. The form is either circular or repetitious or displays a declining spiral into futility. It is not concerned with the presentation of events as much as the presentation of individuals in a situation – to communicate their experience of existence. The Absurd does not adhere to the beginning/middle/end formula – no vertical plotting building towards a climax. Some absurd plays display a declining spiral structure moving into futility and dissolution. The Absurd presents individuals within a situation in such a way as to communicate their experience of existence. The situation is full of activity – none of which changes the situation in the least.

ABSURD DIALOGUE

Language is not equipped to express knowledge or to define the meaningless. Rational language came to a dead end. It could not express the inexpressible. It has been reduced to making trivial statements. Language is irrelevant to existential problems. The use of circular and repetitious form communicates the lack of ontological meaning in life. Absurd theatre shows that language is not equipped to express knowledge or to define the meaningless.

THEMATIC CONCERNS

These plays present the author's intuition of the human condition. It is part of the movement that needed to break out of the narrow and detailed representational confines of naturalistic theatre. It displays an intense concern with the inner self that marked the dead end of the humanistic tradition. Man now finds himself in a world devoid of purpose. God, science, material progress – all seemed to have failed, leaving a vacuum filled with existential angst. Man seems to be lacking any sense of deep human purpose with which to fill the vacuum of self in a meaningless universe. Absurd theatre suggests an acceptance of the reality of human existence however harsh it may be. It advocates an accommodation of the truth of nothingness so that man may live positively with it. Dramatic forms attempted to mirror the fragmentation of contemporary life and reflect the search for meaning. Beckett conveys the experience of endless waiting and futility. These are generic principles. Differentiation occurs when learners apply these principles to different texts.

QUESTION 2 BRECHTIAN THEATRE

Discuss **THREE** of the following Brechtian dramatic techniques in an essay based on the Brechtian play you have studied this year

- Ø **Episodic structure**
- Ø **Historification and the use of costume and props**
- Ø **The actor and gestic characterization**
- Ø **The treatment of space**

ALIENATION

The function of Brecht's theatre was political, and had to be viewed with a critical objectivity. Alienation, otherwise known as "distancing," and in German *Verfremdungseffekt*, is possibly the most important part of Brecht's dramatic theory. It is directly related both to the political intention of his theatre and to his sense of "Aristotelian" theatre. Brecht rejected the Aristotelian idea of a common humanity with a collective response to the emotions in a play – a human spirit, timeless and unchanging. Brecht did not reject the place of emotion in human life and in theatre. Nor did he exclude pleasure and entertainment as a function of theatre. But the pleasure was not to be gained through narcotic emotional self-indulgence. It was not emotion per se that Brecht excluded, but the empathy that it produces. The function of the effect is not, as has sometimes been interpreted, to attack or offend the audience. Brecht wants his audience to be at one with the event, in such a way that the interaction raises its critical consciousness. A critical attitude is not a negative one; it is socially active and practical. Alienation has the function of freeing socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity. Alienation draws attention to the familiar by showing it in a new light.

EPISODIC STRUCTURE

Epic theatre employs a narrative not linked to time. It displays a loosely linked series of events – episodes. Brecht used the term *epic* for his theatre in the German sense of the word: a narrative not tied to time. It did not necessarily have the connotation of a heroic scale, but simply the idea of a loosely linked series of events. It moves in an episodic manner. While making a thematic whole, each episode of the epic is complete in itself, illustrating one specific aspect of the totality. The spectator can reflect upon this, as he is not anxious to press on to discover how the story ends. There is no story in a plot sense. Like Shakespeare, he used whatever suited his needs to create a nuclear form moving on several levels of time, space, and narrative at once. What resulted was a clear, coolly delineated chain of events presenting a body of evidence from which socio-political lessons might be drawn in a detached and lucid manner. The episodic structure, calculated to break the audience's emotional continuity and thus its empathy, had a strongly dialectical basis. The thesis-antithesis structure of an argument was present in the relationship of scenes.

HISTORIFICATION

Brecht insisted upon the historification of his theatre – the setting of its events in the past. This was again in the cause of alienation. Historification will shut off the conditioning forces of society and allow the audience to sit back and critically consider events placed in the past. However, these events will have significant connections with present circumstances. Alienation has the function of freeing socially conditioned phenomena from the stamp of familiarity. Alienation draws attention to the familiar by showing it in a new light.

COSTUME AND PROPERTIES / TREATMENT OF ACTING AREA

Though Brecht didn't operate on any kind of realistic premise in his use of space, he took extreme care that costumes and properties create the correct socio-economic impression. Simplicity and selectivity were, again, two principles on which he operated, but to these were added a strong functional and utilitarian sense. Brecht wished each scene, or episode, of his plays to have a basic tonal *gestus*. This developed with the play to underscore the total *gestus*, or thematic idea. Costumes had to show the evidence of wear, and the props were not realistic but in fact real. Brecht would have them made not by theatre technicians but by actual craftsmen, the simple, well-worn human artefact appealed to his sense of man's dignity and aspirations seen in a social and historical context. He was as careful over the correct use of properties as he was of the correct performance of work on stage: scenes of building, cooking, mending, and other basic human tasks had to be done with workmanlike accuracy. Work, the economic produce of labour, was, after all, at the basis of Marxist philosophy. Brecht's emphasis upon the correct detail of costuming and properties was due to their direct social and economic function within his theatre. As props and costumes relate so specifically to character, the way in which they are worn or used can make them part of a character's *gestus*.

THE ACTOR AND GESTIC CHARACTERISATION

In epic theatre an actor will build his part from a social perspective. He is not looking for emotional, psychological, or metaphysical motivations for action, but for the social gist of his part. The actor must examine his part carefully to discover the political dialectics of the play, and the function his own character has in the presentation of the theme. Rather than try to develop an emotional persona for the character, or write up an imaginary biography of his past, an actor should make a skeletal outline of the events and action of the play and underline where his part fits in. Look for the socially determined insights and impulses and establish the modal points of the character's function in the story. Ask of the character: What happens to him? How does he respond? What opinions does he express and confront? The basis of physical characterisation is *gestus*. This is both a physical attitude and a point of view. The physicality embodies meaning in a precise, almost hieroglyphic way. The starting point is an external one, not arising from generalised aspects of human behaviour, but from those physical elements that will delineate a socio-political individual in a specific time, place, and class structure. Strongly defined body rhythms and centres of energy are fundamental to the delineation of character *gestus*.

The above constitutes generic information to be discussed in the light of different texts.

QUESTION 3 SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE

Write an essay on at least TWO of the most important themes portrayed in the South African play that you studied this year.

[30]

- ∅ Learners must discuss at least TWO themes – 15x2=30
- ∅ Some of the themes that could be discussed are mentioned below.

1. **Apartheid**

- The separation and isolation of people with laws that enforce inequality.
- Unjust laws: Group Areas Act, homelands policy separates and isolates
- Historical events: Sharpeville (1960) Soweto massacres (1976), the Crossroads conflict and Steve Biko's death.
- Pass book system: a black person needs a permit in order to work.
- Section 29 - police detention
- Detention without trial
- Appalling conditions in prisons
- Poor treatment of workers: no increases; no proper lunch breaks; exploitation with the threat of having their salary reduced, being laid off or being sent back to the homelands if they disobey which leads to strikes
- Police attacks on Soweto at night with dogs, stray bullets, roadblocks and tear gas.
- Lack of equal opportunities for all South Africans
- Education denied to blacks
- Freedom of speech and association denied to blacks
- Fear of terrorism and communism
- Huge discrepancies in wealth between the rich and the poor
- Freedom fighters/resistance struggle put people on opposite sides

2. **South African Protest Theatre**

Theatre is used as a communication channel, to give oppressed people a voice. It attempts to bridge the barriers between people. (Apartheid)

Protest: shows the oppressor what has been happening to the oppressed.

Advocates resistance: asks oppressed to rise up and fight back. (Black Consciousness Movement)

Appeals to the conscience of the audience: makes them aware of rights/wrongs.

Entertains: very funny, satirical while laughing, realise a point.

Satires: to criticise, expose, protest against and make fun of the Apartheid regime.

Attack on the Apartheid regime: a general indictment of the society that sustains it, rather than the blaming of specific individuals.

Comments on divided society in a society with a Black/White awareness.

Evokes an emotional response: makes us angry, sad, and ready to participate in action.

Enlightens and informs: provides information on unknown events.

This form of theatre emerged in S.A. in the 1970s.

It was first criticised by the Black Consciousness movement but after the '76 riots it became the dominant form of theatre by those opposed to Apartheid. Protest theatre was synonymous with "Black Theatre". It is essentially theatre against Apartheid and the evils thereof. For fifteen years (1976 – 1990) Black Theatre was concerned almost exclusively with a cultural call to arms. It makes use of repeated formula: people's recognition of their oppression through a clear assertion of how to emerge from this oppression. Play deals with essentially South African issues. It uses South African settings, South African characters, names and South African languages. It aims at South African audiences. It gave rise to Workshop Theatre. It is essentially participatory and communal in nature and deals with socio-political issues. It is based on democratic methods and was therefore, a most suitable method to be used in the struggle against the Apartheid regime.

QUESTION 4 OWN CHOICE

Write an essay on the way in which the own choice play that you studied this year gives us a glimpse into the world in which it was created. Comment on ways in which the characters, dialogue and themes are used to reflect the socio-political background to the play.

Learner must discuss the relevant socio-political background in relation to characterization, dialogue and the treatment of theme.

3x10=[30]

TOTAL FOR SECTION A: [90]

SECTION B
SPEECH

QUESTION 5

Write brief notes on the importance, for a performer, of the following aspects:

- 5.1 Using correct breathing for voice production
- 5.2 Using pauses when performing a monologue
- 5.3 Dealing with tension when performing a piece
- 5.4 Exploring vocal resonance in performance (4x10=40)

Breathing for voice production

The performer needs sufficient, controlled, supported breath: air exhaled under controlled pressure so that vocal folds vibrate without disturbances. Central diaphragmatic breathing = ideal, most efficient, full capacity, can be controlled by action of diaphragm, stomach and back muscles. Achieve quick, efficient inhalation, strengthen the diaphragmatic and intercostal muscles and release the lower body (stomach or pelvic floor) so that the diaphragm can do its work. Connect the sound with the breath. The support that you need in order to empower your voice comes from breathing correctly.

Pause

Mention at least THREE kinds of pauses and explain their purpose. Breathing – pause to allow intake of breath at the end of a long sequence. Pause for effect to enhance mood. Dramatic pauses to create a certain expectation. Sense pauses to assist intelligibility/meaning. Discuss the importance of correct pauses to support exploration of meaning.

Relaxation and posture

The body needs to be freed from any unnecessary tension. A neutral posture should be achieved so that voice work can occur without the hindrance of tension; this step is important in order to combat performance nerves. In order to relax you need to explore your own body and identify your personal habits and ways of dealing with tension. Some performers may tense up in the shoulder area while others lock the knees. Once you have identified your own habits, you must work on the release of set habits towards the relaxed state that will enhance vocal support. This will more often than not mean that you have to exercise daily in order to release tension habits. Relaxation does not imply going to sleep – this should be an energising start to the warm-up.

Resonance

Resonance: amplification and modification of the basis laryngeal tone by means of vibrations in body. Achieving a free, rounded, rich, interesting voice which is capable of creating different qualities, pitches and volumes; building tonal energy; developing a responsive voice in terms of freedom of pitch and inflection, changing qualities. Good resonance is achieved when different resonators resonate at the same frequency; occurs on vowel sounds, which carry emotion, and on continuant consonants.

[40]**TOTAL FOR SECTION B: [40]**

SECTION C
CREATIVE INTERPRETATION

QUESTION 6

You are the director for ONE of the plays that you studied this examination. Write down the name of the play you are going to produce and then the rehearsal process with your cast. Explain how many weeks you have to prepare for a production and how you will use the time to rehearse for a production.

Assessment:

- Blocking
- Characterisation
- Running in sequence + technical
- Final stages – dress rehearsal

Four paragraphs – 5 marks each.**[20]****TOTAL FOR SECTION C: [20]****TOTAL: 150**