

Drama and Theatre Studies

Transition Pack

2025/26

Theatre Evaluation

Theatre Evaluation:

As part of your Drama and Theatre exam you will be asked to evaluate a live piece of theatre that you have seen. To get a baseline understanding of your knowledge and skills we would like you to have a go at writing one of these over the summer ready to be handed in at the start of the course.

The evaluation will have a statement to which you must either agree or disagree using your knowledge of the production you have seen, your knowledge of drama and theatre and creative choices that are made and the intended impact and effect of those choices backed up with relevant examples.

In this pack you will find the criteria on which the evaluation will be assessed and some exemplars to give you an idea of the length detail and content of what we are looking for. If you have not seen a live piece of theatre and you can go and see something over the summer or look at websites such as Digital Theatre or Drama Online (The National Theatre site) which are both free to subscribe to and have productions that you can view. During the course we will go and see live theatre but may well review a digitally streamed piece as it has the advantage of being able to re-watch and revisit it to consolidate your understanding. The production we currently use is the National theatre's production of Frankenstein starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee-Miller. If you wish to use this then that is fine.

Theatre Review Statement 1: Choose either statement 1 or 2 (see page 13 for statement 2) **Do not answer both.**

Analyse and evaluate the live performance you have seen in light of the following statement:

'Live theatre today has no connection to the lives of young people'

Your answer should:

- *include analysis and evaluation of key moments from the performance you have seen and the contribution made by different theatre makers*
- *offer balanced consideration between your analysis and evaluation of the performance and your response to the statement.*

Assessment Criteria for Statement 1:

AO4 = 20 marks

This question asks the candidate to respond to a thought-provoking statement in light of their live theatre experience. At the heart of the statement is the debate that live performance has no relevance or interest to young people. Candidates will need to engage with the statement as informed members of the audience and discuss the contribution made by different theatre makers.

Candidates might refer to the following in their response:

- arguments that agree, disagree or offer a balanced reaction to the statement
- analysis and understanding of the role of the director and how specific production values have been used to communicate ideas and meaning to an audience
- analysis and evaluation of how dramatic elements have been used to create theatrical impact such as set, lighting, costume, sound, staging and acting
- the evaluation of key theatre makers, their collaboration and the contribution they have made to specific aspects of the production
- consideration of performance style, influence and theatrical interpretation
- analysis of and reference to key moments
- analysis of audience and audience reaction
- references to other art forms and the role of theatre in society
- analysis and evaluation of the overall aims and intentions of the production.

Marking instructions

In AO4, analysis is required in order to reach evaluative judgements and conclusions in the context of student's own work. Responses must show balanced consideration between analysis and evaluation and marks are equally distributed across these two elements.

Responses that demonstrate isolated analysis without evaluation can only achieve a maximum of 4 marks.

Level 1

- Descriptive, basic approach with underdeveloped analysis of live performance elements, supported by a limited knowledge and understanding and limited use of subject-specific terminology.
- Limited evaluation demonstrating limited ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact have been created by relevant theatre makers.
- Uneven treatment of analysis and evaluation with a tentative attempt to engage with the statement, resulting in a limited overall response.

Level 2

- Generally appropriate approach with partial analysis of live performance elements supported by adequate knowledge and understanding and use of generally accurate subject-specific terminology.
- Emerging evaluation demonstrating basic ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Generally sound response supported by emerging but inconsistent moments of analysis and evaluation, with a general attempt to engage with the statement.

Level 3

- Clear approach with competent analysis of live performance elements, supported by secure knowledge and understanding and accurate use of subject-specific terminology.
- Consistent evaluation demonstrating adequate ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Clear personal response with consistent and generally balanced analysis and evaluation, showing a secure reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Level 4

Assured

- Confident approach with assured analysis of live performance elements, supported by comprehensive knowledge and understanding and effective use of subject-specific terminology.
- Effective evaluation demonstrating assured ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Comprehensive personal response with assured and balanced analysis and evaluation, showing confident reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Level 5

- Critical and perceptive approach with sophisticated analysis of live performance elements, supported by precise knowledge and understanding and articulate use of subject-specific terminology.
- Perceptive evaluation demonstrating accomplished ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Sophisticated and in-depth personal response which perceptively draws together relevant and balanced elements of analysis and evaluation, showing sensitive reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Top Band Exemplar for statement 1:

On Wednesday the 8th of March 2017th I watched the performance of 'The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-time' at the Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury performed on a proscenium arch staging, end on.

It could be argued that "Technology is more important in live theatre today than the play itself" which from watching this highly technological performance could be argued as being true due to the director, Marianne Elliott's decision to present the life of Christopher Boone played by Scott Reid in a highly technological, immersing way to show us his internalised world and allow us to see Christopher's life through living with autism through his own eyes. One scene within this play that supports the favourable statement is the London tube station scene which was Christopher's presentation of Christopher going on his own journey to my and his mum

It could be argued that it was lighting director paulie constable and sound director Ian Dickinsons combined technological elements and decisions which created the intense, overwhelming, vulnerable impact of this scene. Constable used proper over ~~shots~~ on the gridded black box staging to reflect the London tube stations names in a confusing meaning and disorientated manner, creating a distorted view of the tube station being ~~present~~ jumbled and uncomfortable reflecting combined with kids acting reflecting the prominent fear of Christopher and his overactive hypersensitivity to social situations. Furthermore, the Dickinsons decision of using non-diegetic sound including ~~spoken~~ speaking words such as "hikes" "London" "train" "tube" repeatedly enhanced the uncomfortable atmosphere Constable had created exposing ~~Christopher~~ Christopher as novel representation of his own mind as being prone and fearful to new social situations and vulnerable with James going from quiet to dominating (and reflecting the fearful situation Christopher

feels trapped within when searching on his own for his mother. The combination of the sounds ~~overlapping~~ of jumbled words, squeaking train wheels and rushes of air combined with the rapid projected movement of lightning creates the disorienting impact on us as the audience, exposing Christopher's distorted reality and. Therefore, supporting the statement with the combination of technology being a greater impact than the acting style of Reid with technology being "more important" within a deep live theatre.

Additionally, the scene of Astronaut flying could be argued as supporting the statement with the combination of light and sound creating the impact and bringing to life the original acting style of flying, using Croheim and Hoggen's practitioner style of Frank's Assembly to elevate Christopher into the "sky" above them, smoothly flying him across the stage. It could be argued that it was Frank's assemblies acting style that was impressive however, I believe it was the combination of costumes and pictures.

light and sound which created the mesmerising impact bringing to life the flying technique overall. The led lights in the constables decision sprinkling with the combination of the Dickinson's monkey, Joseph and eerie sounds created the impact, capturing me into the world of Christopher and experiencing the excitement of his dreams and aspirations. The walls built with led panels allowed the led lights to take over the theatre, mesmerising and capturing us within his multi-media performance consuming me and penetrating our minds controlling us to be pulled into the intertwined world of Christopher, successfully creating a capturing impact through the use of technology combined, supporting the statement.

However, although highly technological it could be argued against the statement that the "play itself" is more important than some of the most memorable and inspiring scenes being from raw acting

ability, and away from technology. For example, the rain scene between Reid playing Christopher and Micheal playing his dad, Edelle. ~~was~~ Director Elia's decision to put them on stage centre downstage with Micheal slightly behind looking at Christopher with a concerned facial expression of love and worry with Reid looking up onto us, as the audience was arguably the most emotional moment of the performance. Reg Bism used Frank's Membership technique prolonging the pause looking out onto the audience in a silent manner. This elongated pause and acting ability to portray an intense loving relationship of father and son through raw ability and facial expressions captivated me most, as an audience member. Having myself to be hailed in to the love and relationship of them, making myself and others feel admiration and overwhelmed as a result, ~~therefore~~ the combination of ~~actors~~ projected while

light and non-digetic sound of rain was effective however, it was the elongated pause and acting ability that built the intensity, of being serene and undisturbed as in the state of peace we experienced within the highly meric performance. This overall, ~~the~~ argues successfully against the statement with our emotions being manipulated by mere acting connection and "technology" not being as captivating and impressive as the acting capability.

Another part of the performance that was highly successful in disproving the statement, with limited usage of technology was the beach scene where ~~the~~ Christopher mums swimming, ~~was~~ played by Emma Beattie with the style of frantic assembly. Hoggett and Crabtree's lifted in Eunie in the bodies lifting her back were mimicking the water and Beattie being

Theatre Review Statement 2:

Analyse and evaluate the live performance you have seen in light of the following statement:

'Technology is more important in live theatre today than the play itself'

Your answer should:

- *include analysis and evaluation of key moments from the performance you have seen and the contribution made by different theatre makers*
- *offer balanced consideration between your analysis and evaluation of the performance and your response to the statement.*

Assessment Criteria:

This question asks the candidate to respond to a thought-provoking statement in light of their live theatre experience. At the heart of the statement is the debate that technology in the theatre may enhance/dominate a performance. Candidates will need to engage with the statement as informed members of the audience and discuss the contribution made by different theatre makers

Candidates might refer to the following in their response:

- arguments that agree, disagree or offer a balanced reaction to the statement
- analysis and understanding of the role of the director and how various production values have been used to communicate ideas and meaning to an audience
- analysis and evaluation of how dramatic elements have been used to create theatrical impact such as set, lighting, costume, sound, staging and acting
- the evaluation of key theatre makers, their collaboration and the contribution they have made to specific aspects of the production
- consideration of performance style, influence and theatrical interpretation
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- references to other art forms and the role of theatre in society
- analysis and evaluation of the overall aims and intentions of the production.

In AO4, analysis is required in order to reach evaluative judgements and conclusions in the context of the work of others. Responses must show balanced consideration between analysis and evaluation and marks are equally distributed across these two elements.

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Level 1

- Descriptive, basic approach with underdeveloped analysis of live performance elements, supported by a limited knowledge and understanding and limited use of subject-specific terminology.

- Limited evaluation demonstrating limited ability to formulate and

justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact have been created by relevant theatre makers

- Uneven treatment of analysis and evaluation with a tentative

attempt to engage with the statement, resulting in a limited overall response.

Level 2

- Generally appropriate approach with partial analysis of live performance elements supported by adequate knowledge and understanding and use of generally accurate subject-specific terminology.

- Emerging evaluation demonstrating basic ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.

- Generally sound response supported by emerging but inconsistent moments of analysis and evaluation, with a general attempt to engage with the statement.

Level 3

- Clear approach with competent analysis of live performance elements, supported by secure knowledge and understanding and accurate use of subject-specific terminology.

- Consistent evaluation demonstrating adequate ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.

- Clear personal response with consistent and generally balanced

analysis and evaluation, showing a secure reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Level 4

- Confident approach with assured analysis of live performance elements, supported by comprehensive knowledge and understanding and effective use of subject-specific terminology.
- Effective evaluation demonstrating assured ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Comprehensive personal response with assured and balanced

analysis and evaluation, showing confident reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Level 5

- Critical and perceptive approach with sophisticated analysis of live performance elements, supported by precise knowledge and understanding and articulate use of subject-specific terminology.
- Perceptive evaluation demonstrating accomplished ability to formulate and justify personal judgements of how ideas, meaning and impact are created by different theatre makers' use of production values and dramatic elements.
- Sophisticated and in-depth personal response which perceptively draws together relevant and balanced elements of analysis and evaluation, showing sensitive reasoning, interpretation and engagement with the statement.

Top Band Exemplar for Statement 2:

When we entered the Fortune Theatre we were greeted with a somewhat decrepit looking stage, a shabby gauze backdrop, creaky seats and a stained stage floor. It was instantaneously clear that this was not the usual set up which most 21st century theatre-goers are used to. After an initial feeling of disappointment and confusion I began to appreciate the mood and atmosphere that came from such a set up, the intimate aged space of the auditorium lent itself well to the telling of a ghost story, and the unexpected, basic set made me wonder what surprises this production held. Upon reading the programme, the director, Robin Herford's, intention with this basic set became clear, if they had used more complex technological set up they would have "been in grave danger of losing the essential simplicity and innate theatricality with which [they tell their] story'. This simplicity, interspersed with very occasional moments of complex technology, I believe, was the key to the success of this production and proved that it was the story, not a huge array of technological advancements, which made the Woman In Black such a thrilling and immersive Theatre experience.

The play's opening was again unconventional, the lighting state did not alter which made myself and fellow members of the audience wonder if the play had even begun. I found this opening refreshing; my attention had not been caught through a flashy technological gimmick as is frequently used in the opening of modern theatre productions, but the very lack of such technology is what created this essential sense of intrigue. The set designer, Michael Holt, had created an extremely simple, yet versatile set consisting of a wicker skip, some buckets, a chair and clothing rail, this set not only added to the sense of unease through its run down looking appearance, but was extremely well suited to the manipulation of different settings. It also allowed for the flexibility of the time period: set in the 1950s but flashing back to the 1920s. This staging combined with the image of Old Kipps shuffling on stage with the houselight still on was totally unadorned with any technology - yet managed to captivate the entire audience into silence, excepting a few excited whispers.

All of a sudden, the bright, clinical flood lights snapped onto the stage as the Actor, played by James Byng, made his entergetic entrance from behind the audience. The sudden flash of the lights caused a mild shock amongst the audience and the actor's appearance from behind them informed within us the expectation that, in this production, we could expect thrills from every corner of the theatre. The actors began by discussing how best to tell Kipp's story and introduced the idea of its being a 'play-within-a-play' and created a Brechtian sense of distancing from the audience as well as some humour. This informed the audience of the standard of technology they could expect as the play progressed, to emphasise this point the Actor frequently consulted Bunce, the imaginary stage technician - thus our expectation was set up to only anticipate 1950's level technology. We were

certainly in for a shock... After this first scene there was a snap blackout on the line 'it must be told' which added emphasis to this moment and set up the beginning of the ghost story in a traditional way, again emphasising the importance of TELLING a story, over the use of complex technology to keep audiences engaged.

One of the most clever manipulation of simple props occurred in the train scene, where, using nothing more than trains and impressive physical skills - the actor was jumping around and moving, using nothing more than his body to create a very real impression of the movement of a train. I was struck by the skill and versatility of the Actor here, I understood his movements exactly and could imagine everything happening before my eyes - even without any technological mechanics. The powerful manipulation of props in this way extended to the use of the wicker skip to represent the pony and trap - again, simple uncomplicated props creating a sense of reality and guiding the audience's understanding of the story. All of a sudden, as the train went through a 'tunnel' there was a snap blackout, and a chase effect using three gobos. The incredibly loud sound of the train passing through the tunnel came from the speakers right next to the audience, and many audience members, including myself, screamed in shock. This was a brilliant piece of design collaboration from the sound Designer, Gareth Owen and the light designer, Kevin Sleep. It absolutely defied our expectations about the simple technology that would be used. What was so effective, was the sparing use of such technology; Robin Herford said 'the only aspect of the play that has any claim to complexity is its sound design', and it was this clever, subtle use of terrifying sounds which stood out over the otherwise basic technology.

The final moment which particularly caught my attention was the funeral scene, and our first sighting of the woman in black. By this time, the audience had been waiting 40 minutes to get a glimpse of the title character, and unfortunately, it appeared that for some audience members, a compelling story was not enough to keep them in their seats since the people sat in front of me left during the interval, no doubt due to the lack of technological stimulation they had become accustomed to as theatre goers. The setting of the church was presented, characteristically, in a very simple manner with a simple cross projection using a gobo falling across the gauze, and a colourless stained glass window effect falling across the actor's faces. Once again, I was struck by how the simple use of lighting could conjure such a clear and eerie image, if they had gone to the effort of creating a new set for the church - I believe this illusion would have been ruined. Another excellent collaboration from the designers followed when the priest's pre-recorded voice, rang out 'godlike' into the auditorium. The reverb effect that had been used created a sinister feeling and the fact that there was no actual priest present added to the sense of the Priest's isolation, which is a key element in the story so it was nice being reminded of that fact here. The Woman in Black herself appeared from behind the audience, which caused quite a stir. This is exactly the type of effect that can never be reproduced in a film, for example, despite all its complex technology. There is something raw and immersive about being in the theatre which makes moments such as these absolutely thrilling. The entrance of the Woman in Black was not only behind the audience, but behind the actors, which gave us a sense of dramatic irony and increased our fear on their behalf. Much of the success of the story came

through the relationship developed between the audience and actors, using the power of acting alone, which is why it was a rather terrifying moment.

In conclusion, it was the wonderful simplicity of the Woman in Black, the directors intention of keeping the story as the central aspect of the play, which made it such a thrilling theatre experience for myself and the other members of my class. In the words of Stephen Mallatrat, who adapted the novel for stage, 'the intent of the show is to frighten ... the fear is not on a visual or visceral level, but an imaginative one'. It was the forcing of the audience to use their imagination, without smart technological effects, that truly created the sense of us witnessing an honest ghost story. The focus consistently remained on the quality of the acting and the story being told which proves now they are the truly essential elements of theatre.

Any questions or queries please email me:

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Good luck and see you in August!