

42401 How to impress when answering question 4 (09 and 10) from 2010 exam on an acted performance in a live theatre production seen (Section C)

SECTION C STUDY OF A LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION SEEN

Question 4

Choose **one** live theatre production you have seen during your course where the actors created moments in the play that you found comic and/or tense. Choose **one** actor from this live production.

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 Describe in detail how your chosen actor used voice, movement and facial expressions to create comedy and/or tension in **at least one** scene or section. (20 marks)

AND

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 Evaluate the effectiveness of this actor's creation of comedy and/or tension in your chosen scene(s) or section(s). You should refer to particular moments from the production and give clear reasons to support your answer. (20 marks)

Response E (09)

Section C

<p>0 9</p> <p>⊗ noted clear</p> <p>Q focus. identify actor to scene</p> <p>final expression very clear</p>	<p>On the 26th may we went to see Gulliver's travels at the watermill theatre.*</p> <p>The actor that had the biggest impact on me was Morgan Philpott who played Lemual Gulliver.* The scene which was most outstanding was the final scene where he had just returned from his final voyage and found himself trapped in the mindset of a yahoo which changed to a houghnbnm as well as frequently reverting ^{back} to being himself.</p> <p>One of the key elements that he used was facial expression. When he was a yahoo he had a concentrated facial expression as if he were an animal stalking its prey, but used his eyes to</p>
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convey madness. This was effective as it showed how he felt ~~that~~ a yahoo (beast-like creature) would react in that situation. When he was a houghnhnm he had a gentler facial expression which showed the welcoming characteristics of the horse-like creature. When he was Gulliver he had a confused and distressed facial expression to show how he had lost self control and had degenerated over time. The actor used voice as well to show which character he was playing. When he was a yahoo he did not deliver any lines but used his voice to create viscious noises and sound effects (eg grunting). When he was a houghnhnm he had an enthusiastic tone of voice to show the welcoming characteristics of the

Content of character's facial expression

voice

Use of vocal sound

creature. This was comical as he acted similar to a child trying to do an impression of a horse. When he was Gulliver his voice was quiet and strained to show how he had lost his will to live. This was seen when he said 'I am devoted to my ^{own} self-destruction'. This was said with a distressed tone. This caused tension because the audience felt sorry for Gulliver but were not able to help. Philpott also used movement to create comedy and tension. When he was a yahoo he was aggressive and territorial, this set up tension as you could never be sure of what he would do next. When he was a houghnhnm his movements and gestures were comical. He used movement to show how. For example he rubbed his head like a horse. When he was Gulliver his movements were

Volume

Quite tone
Audience aware

how achieved?

Example given but not detailed

style
 move naturalistic, ~~and~~ although he was weak and unactive to show how he had changed.

* The play was semi-naturalistic and was in the story-telling genre. The time period was 18th century. They used end-on staging and symbolic lighting. The set was typical of 18th century period drama.

Actor and character clearly identified with some specific moments of acting skill as useful references (15)

Response E (10)

10
 This actor's performance was so effective in this scene because of many reasons. The main reason was that his deep characterisation and ownership of the tricolon of characters allowed him to easily fuse ~~into~~ between them. The actor (Morgan Philipott) was able to create comedy and tension throughout. He created comedy when he acted as a houghnhnm as ~~was~~ the character was harmless and had surreal movements and gestures, (e.g. he rubbed his head like a horse to show that he was not human). The actor was able to create tension when he was a yahoo because the audience could never be certain of what he did next, because he did not speak the audience were not able to familiarise themselves with the creature. He also created tension when he played Gulliver as the audience felt sorry for him and could not tell when he would transition into becoming a yahoo or houghnhnm again (this was good use of pathos.)

need for more on skills
 needs more detail.
 Audience aware
 better ground

how acted?

Another key element that made his performance so effective was his ability to interact and react to the other actors on stage. When he was a yahoo he kept himself away and was aggressive towards them (this could be seen when he leapt at them before retreating to hide in a corner.)
When he was a houghnhom he was enthusiastic to interact with the other characters to show the welcoming



how shown?

how acted?

energy

characteristics of the horse-like creature but kept himself slightly distant as though he had never met them before (e.g. this was clear the first time he became a houghnhom). When he eventually returned into the mind set of Gulliver he interacted with his wife and uncle desperately to show he had lost control and needed help. This could be seen when he cried into the arms of his loving wife. Although he also seemed slightly blocked from the other characters to show how he had become delusional.

Throughout the play there were few scenes when he was not on stage. His energy in the final scene showed his enthusiasm for each of the characters. This scene was the most physically demanding as it also required agility (e.g. he had to balance on an unsteady plank in the character of a yahoo). His truth, conviction and emotional conviction in the final scene engaged the audience and kept me interested to the very end.

Enthusiastic response that suggests skills without fully developing an analysis of them

A reasonable response with some evidence to act skills. (9)

The focus of this essay is the preparation of students to aim for A* responses; by definition this is a small minority of the responses submitted in any one year. The written Response E contains lost opportunities or under developed arguments but still achieved a mark of 24 which is of high B standard if it had been accompanied by a Section A response of similar quality.

The approach to question 09 is one where what the actor actually did on stage is the matter of the response, with particular emphasis on voice, movement and facial expressions. If these aspects of the performance are not a feature of the response then the candidate will not reach the clarity of a top band response. The acting is further refined by being undertaken for comic and/or tense purposes, but it is what the actor actually did on stage that should dominate the response. Question 10 retains a focus on the comic and/or tense intentions of the actor but now requires some judgement; why it was considered successful. Candidates aiming for exceptional responses would be best served by considering some of the study work done in class; the actor's success in relation to the candidate's clearly expressed understanding of the play's style or genre, or of the playwright's intentions, or of the candidate's expectations informed by their own practical work on the text, or of the way the acting in this scene or section contrasts with or complements the actor's acting elsewhere in the play, or of the reactions of the audience to the comedy or tension, or of the juxtaposition of the acting in this scene or section with that of a scene or section immediately adjacent to this one, or any other clearly expressed mode of evaluating the performance elements described in 09.

The response to 09 mentions comedy and tension and there is enough detail of voice, movement and facial expressions to be considered a clear response and therefore band 2, but the response to 10 does not extend to sufficient analysis, and an example of this was identified in the following sentence;

'when he was a Yahoo he kept himself away and was aggressive towards them (this could be seen when he leapt at them before retreating to hide in a corner)'

The acting implied in this statement needs more evidence to add to any clear judgement of the quality of acting and it is quite reasonable for an examiner to note the lack of practical detail that would have resulted in a better response, i.e. '...he leapt at them in an instant leaving the ground for a moment, with teeth suddenly exposed, hands tensed into claws and wildly staring eyes. This was particularly humorous as, until this moment, this Yahoo had sat still and passive, almost dozy. The swift change was dramatically and comically effective with the audience around me reacting with an audible gasp followed by a sustained laugh.' It should be noted that both parts of the question are quite rightly concerned with acting for it is necessary for responses to retain this focus.

Good understanding of performance theory will be credited but there must be evidence of understanding not just a mention of a technique or style. For example a reference that suggests knowledge of Brechtian theory could be useful. To use this in response to question 4 (2010) it would be totally acceptable for a candidate in 09 to consider the selected actor's use of Spass and to mention a Brechtian approach as a description of style (or genre) but in 10 this candidate should indicate wider understanding and application; it might be used for example to explore the fact that in workshop at school the acquisition of Brechtian style had seemed false or unfunny or embarrassing but that this selected actor from the production seen had been able to make the application of this style a riotous success. Similar discussion could be around the use of *verfremdungseffekt*. The key factor is that this material must be used purposefully in support of the evaluation in 10.

A third example might be the description of an actor's very tense acting at the start of a scene (09) but in 10 the candidate might give some indication of the way the effect of tense silence was made more effective

because of the noise and bustle of the preceding scene or of the loud, bombastic acting from the selected actor in an earlier or later scene, indicating the actor's range present in the overall performance while still concentrating on the originally selected scene or section.

A final word of caution. The commentary in this summary makes exclusive reference to the questions set in 2010 and these will not be the same as those set in the future, although they will emanate from the specification descriptions on pages 7 and 8 in the same way. Also the above discussion is of the quality of discussion that is likely to impress and reach the small minority of responses that would be awarded A*. What must be borne in mind is that the responses should be the personal response of the candidate. Similarly, while this document has concentrated on the very highest achieving responses, the exam is intended to attract a full range of responses from the reactions of the least able to the most articulate and balanced discussions of high flyers. It is likely that the majority of candidates will respond in an unremarkable manner, but one that is considered to be reasonable in quality of understanding and they will gain a mark in the middle band. If candidates can respond with clarity and purpose to the unseen questions of the exam, they will access the top marks and ultimately the top grades.