

Candidate Exemplar materials

A-level Drama and Theatre Studies

DRAM2 and DRAM4 Supporting Notes



Contents

| DRAM2 Supporting Notes – The Wooden Frock (Kneehigh) | Pages 3 to 7 |
|---|---------------|
| DRAM4 Supporting Notes – Down in Wonderland (Creative Adaptation) | Pages 8 to 14 |

Drama Supporting Notes

Section 1

The practitioner my group chose was Kneehigh, a dynamie and innovative theatre company that we were inspired by for their creativity and exuberance. The key aspect of Kneehigh that enthused us was their unique way of storytelling that is woven into each of their plays. Kneehigh has been called "the company that has put the soul back into storytelling". Kneehigh use physical theatre and eccentric characterisations to add to the quirkiness of their storytelling which was appealing to our group as we wanted to push ourselves to find new strengths enabling us to create challenging, innovative, emotionally-charged work as Kneehigh do. Another crucial feature of Kneehigh is the relationship and interaction with the audience: artistic director of Kneehigh, Emma Rice, says she "doesn't want the fourth wall". She "wants the actors to speak to their accomplices, look at them and respond to them". What interested my group was the idea that the audience are not just observing the play but are in fact part of the play, and we were keen to be free from the restrictive barrier between audience and actors. Kneehigh often rehearse outdoors in the rural spaces of Cornwall to bring out spontaneity and risk-taking in their performance whilst using techniques such as improvisation to help with the development of characters.

The play that we thought the best means by which to demonstrate our understanding of the practitioner Kneehigh was *The Wooden Frock* by Tom Morris because the script gave us plenty of scope to work with and was very adaptable and suited to a wide range of audience. We read that the intoxicating story "is a darker version of Cinderella which combines fairytale frothiness with physical humour and uneasy undertones" so we thought it could embrace many of Kneehigh's techniques.

Having read the script, we realised that roles such as the Prince's drunken Mother will allow us to create exuberant larger-than-life characters that we so often see in Kneehigh plays. For example, in this play the Prince's Mother seems to be eccentric and flamboyant whose characterisation could provide an opportunity for comedy also. The character was not dissimilar to that of the "dragqueen / impresario" Lady Lydia in Kneehigh's play *The Red Shoes* which we read in class, or to the character of the Pumpkin Man in *Midnight's Pumpkin* which we saw at the Battersea Arts Centre in December 2012.

We found that *The Wooden Frock* also lends itself to potential for audience interaction; another key trait of Kneehigh. In scenes such as The Replacement Queen where the text directs that 'the audience are the townspeople' we imagine that the actors could involve the audience by searching amongst them for a female suitor for the King. This would eliminate the 4th wall between actors and audience members like Kneehigh often do achieve as we saw in their performance of *Midnight's Pumkin* where the audience played the role of guests invited to the ball.

We have understood from the text that there is gaggle of geese that appear throughout *The Wooden Frock.* This would give us an opportunity to reflect another Kneehigh technique as they often have a chorus of animals which feature in their plays to provide comedy, narrative, music or props. For example, in Midnight's Pumpkin there is a group of buck-toothed mice acting as the chorus that provide comedy for the audience in between scene changes. In Kneehigh's *Tristan and Yseult*, the chorus take shape in the form of 'love-spotters' who's role is sometimes narrative but mainly to

Page 3 of 14

provide music and props. In *The Wooden Frock*, the chorus of geese could provide humour due to the comical nature of the "Ong" sounds which they make according to the script.

The set for *The Wooden Frock* could provide further opportunity to demonstrate our understanding of Kneehigh: Kneehigh often perform in their 'Asylum' venue in Cornwall which is a nomadic tentlike theatre space where they act in-the-round. Our set design could have audience on three sides which would echo the style of the 'Asylum' venue whilst creating a sense of intimacy to enhance the bond between the actor and audience members.

Word Count: 684

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Drama Supporting Notes

Section 2

From the start of the project my group knew that Kneehigh was renowned for its distinctive physical style of storytelling. Mike Shepherd, artistic director of Kneehigh, says "we find ourselves creating challenging, accessible and anarchic theatre for a diverse audience" - this made us want to recreate a magical experience of storytelling that strives to captivate the audience, using the glittering fairy-tale of *The Wooden Frock* which so seamlessly lends itself to Kneehigh.

Our first intention is to create comedy as one of Kneehigh's key aims is "to find new depths, new joys and new excitements for the audience" and therefore it is essential that our audience have fun. We aim to create a continuous flow of comical moments. For example, in one scene two of the actors are on stage playing the role of geese. To create comedy here, we intend to heighten our physicality in order to resemble that of a goose. We enter on stage in a stout waddle by bending our knees and sticking out our " bottoms. Our arms are folded behind our backs with our elbows sticking out so as to create the flapping wings of the birds and our necks jut forward. We form a gaggle centre stage and deliver our lines in a high pitched squawky tone whilst jerking our heads in different directions. Then on the group lines (a repeated "ong" sound) we use different tones of interest/approval/disagreement or curiosity to show our personal geese characterisation. We have incorporated flippers into the costume to resemble the geese's webbed feet. We intend for this amuse the audience by making them laugh at our creation of the gossiping gaggle of geese.

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Our second intention is to incorporate audience interaction within our scenes as this is vital to Kneehigh's style. We have included this in our scene where Ronald is sent on an impossible task of finding a dress that resembles a meadow. We intend for him to make a journey through the audience squeezing amongst them whilst asking them for directions and advice on where to find this dress. We aim for this to provided comic relief for the audience following the previous scene which was the Queens tragic death. As well as conjuring playful humour, we intend for this to make the audience feel more involved with the creation of the story (by breaking down the barrier of the fourth wall) in order to make their Kneehigh experience more personal and enjoyable.

Our third intention is to create innovative visually imagery which is shown in the scene where Mary escapes home and travels across the sea in her wooden frock. We intend to use a screen lit from behind and paper cut-out puppets which we physically move to create a shadow effect depicting the journey of Mary across the sea. By using different colour gels and lighting angles we aim to create a mood illustrating the danger and tension in the scene and we intend for this to amaze our audience.

Our final intention is to multi-role on stage by using techniques of physical theatre. For example, in the first half of our adaptation, an actor plays the character of Ronald who is the Nurse's dim-witted sidekick but in the second half, their character changes to a young, posh Prince. In order to make clear her change in character, the actor must enhance the differences in physicality and vocal range. For example, in a scene where she plays Ronald, the actor's posture is hunched to show her characters lower status and she moves in an indirect, clumsy gait with her head slightly bowed. The lines are said using a high pitch and childlike, excited tones. This contrasts to the actor's scenes in which she plays the Prince as her posture is more masculine – her shoulders are pushed back and her chest sticks out to give the impression of a broader physicality whilst her chin is slightly raised. She walks in a direct striding gait and speaks in a deeper tone with a posh accent. We intend for this to captivate our audience and draw them in to the telling of the story by charming them with the range of contrasting characters within our piece.

Word count: 700

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Drama Supporting Notes

Section 3

In our adaptation of *The Wooden Frock*, I found that the characterisation of my role, Mary Woodenfrock, was not defined enough. In order to strengthen my characterization, we did an exercise in rehearsals that was based on the techniques of Jacques LeCoq. This involved choosing one of LeCoq's seven tension states that we thought most appropriate for our character in a particular scene and embodying that level of tension in our physicality and vocal tones. For example, I chose the scene in which I first encounter the Prince in my wooden frock. This exercise helped me to discover that my level of tension is very high here, therefore I chose Le Coq's 5th tension state: 'Suspense'. The tension is concentrated in my eyes - they are watchful and dart suspiciously at the Prince. My breathing is heavy while my posture is crouched, my shoulders are raised and upper body remains rigid to reflect Mary's awkward stance while wearing the wooden frock. I move in a steady, cautious gait as though someone is about to attack me but I try not to bend my knees so that my legs are stiff when walking, enhancing the idea that the wooden frock is restrictive and difficult to move in. I speak to the Prince in a defensive tone with fierce qualities. We hope that this heightened physicality will render the scenes more gripping for the audience as the characters are distinctive and believable.

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In addition, we hope to create a mood of excitement particularly in the Ball scene in which the Prince falls in love with Mary Woodenfrock. This scene has potential to create an atmosphere of anticipation among the audience however, a challenge we faced was that we only have a group of four actors therefore it proved difficult to create the effect of a bustling ballroom heaving with chattering guests. To overcome this problem, we devised a dance routine using hats to represent the other guests at the ball. This scene has the potential to be quite comical (thus fulfilling our first dramatic intention) because we talk to the hats and dance with them melodramatically as if they are real guests at the ball. Another way in which we overcame the issue of having to create the bustling atmosphere at the ball was by using audience members to dance with. Interacting with the audience helps us to achieve our second dramatic intention and we hope that it will create an atmosphere of excitement in the auditorium.

Furthermore, we hope to engage and captivate our audience. For example, in the scene where the King realises he must marry his daughter Mary, there is potential to create the effect of evoking sympathy from the audience. Playing the role of Mary, I found it difficult in rehearsals to show a vulnerable side to my character that the audience can empathise with. To overcome this, I developed and practiced a definite set of physical skills to use in this scene. For example, when the King announces that he will marry Mary, he kisses me on the hand and I look away in disgust with winced eyes and my mouth turned down in distaste. Upon the Kings exit, I stand alone centre stage and my posture shrinks to give the idea of vulnerability. My head is bowed and I begin to sob, occasionally taking quick sharp breaths to show my sense of panic and horror. Then, I engage direct eye contact with audience members and whisper "Help me" in a raspy vocal tone – I hope for this to have the effect of evoking sympathy amongst the audience for Mary and her situation.

In terms of health and safety factors, the nature of physical theatre demands regular exercise and practice so before rehearsals we would do a vigorous body and vocal warm-up to prevent injury and to give us energy. In addition, some of the props that we use, such as a saw and flippers, can be hazardous and cause injuries if left lying about. To resolve this, we assigned each member of the group to certain props which they are responsible for putting away after each rehearsal.

Word count: 700

A-level Drama and Theatre Studies DRAM2 Presentation of an extract from a play

Play chosen: title and playwright: The Wooden Frock by Emma Rice and Tom Morris

Practitioner: Kneehigh

Details of extract: Selected scenes

Nominated skill: Acting

Part(s) played (Acting candidates): Mary

Part (b) – Supporting Notes

| Section | Assessment criteria | Maximum mark | Mark awarded |
|---------|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Evidence of exploration and understanding of the chosen practitioner; justification of the choice of extract (AO2) | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | Clarity of dramatic intentions in relation to the extract and the influence of the chosen practitioner (AO1) | 5 | 5 |
| 3 | Assessment of the interpretative/rehearsal process and of the potential effectiveness of the piece; awareness of H and S factors; use of specialist terminology (AO1) | 5 | 5 |
| | Total | 15 | 15 |

Commentary

Section 1 – Very clear and concise evidence of detailed exploration of Kneehigh; well justified and personal application of techniques.

Section 2 – Clear dramatic intentions. Interpretation of geese discussed in detail. Link between practitioner and text interpretation is clear.

Section 3 – Honest assessment of own characterisation; very clear on potential effectiveness of own role. Could be more on play as a whole.

Section One - Creative Adaptation

We have chosen to adapt the story of 'Alice in Wonderland' by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson¹ in the style of a Creative Adaptation. Our creative adaptation involves a teenage girl, since we know our audience will be mostly teenage, who struggles to cope with her father's death and on magically entering Wonderland, finds her true self.

After seeing 'War Horse', an adaptation of the famous novel by Michael Morpurgo, I was inspired especially by its dedication to play's message of animals' innocence. The story focuses on a unique friendship between Albert, a young boy from Devon and his horse Joey whom he seeks to rescue from the battlefield. We were immediately drawn to the plot because our plot idea also involved a journey. On a technical note, the performance comprised of multi-media such as projections of sketches made by the Major or bleeding poppies symbolic of the loss of life. This inspired our use of projections such as a busy city street or falling rose petals as the Queen of Hearts enters. Its use of meta-theatre, such as when the puppeteers are seen adjusting the movements of the puppet horse inspired us greatly, and the abstract environment of our own play allowed us to use meta-theatrical elements such as the use of representational props, e.g. Mad Hatter's hat. The person playing this role would wear the Hat whilst playing the Mad Hatter and take it off whilst narrating the story or playing the rabbit. This was particularly useful for the purpose of mutli-roling and making our characters clear for the audience

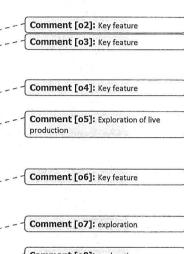
'The Man with the Luggage' by Oliver Jones was produced by the 'Trestle Unmasked' company and adapted from a work by Eugene Ionescu. It is an original story about Damir who strives to find his homeland and a sense of identity. The play was performed in the style of physical theatre, using masks and multimedia elements such as live music and projections. I was particularly inspired by its use of a composite set intended by Jones to aid the audience in focusing on the storyline's important subject matter. For instance, when Damir drove inside of a car, the actors used their bodies and diegetic sounds to create a car-like environment with representational props of sticks used as windscreen wipers. Also, the use of dance by a couple telling the story of their village being overthrown was very effective as the visual enactment evoked more sympathy amongst the audience. This was a huge inspiration to our group to inform the audience physically, particularly in the more emotional scenes between Alice and her mother where we portray, using Dance, the contrast between their joyful relationship in the presence of Alice's father and the strained and sorrowful one after the latter's death. I was fascinated that the play only involved three actors, similarly to the size of our group and multi-roled throughout. This technique inspired us to use multi-roling throughout our

performance. By doing so, we would be able to create a very meta-theatrical effect on stage. Our occasional dance drama movements were inspired particularly by Practitioner Matthew Bourne and Dance- style adaptations such as his recent 'Dorian Gray' production. This adaptation, particularly this interaction in the image, with the actors' use of levels and a rigidity of movement, gravely influenced a Dance-style scene between the two Alices. The 'Wonderland' Alice, in attempting to

free the 'Natural World' Alice of the Jabberwocky², grabs her arm fervently and, as she resists, the 'Wonderland' Alice pulls harder and bends below her until she finally frees her. These rigid

Comment [012]: key features





Comment [01]: Dramatic intention

Comment [08]: exploration Comment [09]: key feature

Comment [010]: key feature

Comment [011]: key feature

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identified, justified play choice

¹ Published under a pseudonym of 'Lewis Carroll'.

² Jabberwocky: Alice's anger and hatred.

movements, we hope, will portray the strained and anger-filled 'Natural World' Alice of which the 'Wonderland' Alice is trying to free. Comment [013]: Dramtic intention Dramatic intentions: To show Alice's journey of self-discovery. . To evoke sympathy amongst the audience for Alice in her • need of escapism. To illustrate the contrast between the real world and the • fantasy world. To evoke sympathy for Alice's mother in her sorrow at the distancing relationship between . herself and Alice. Comment [014]: Clearly define dramtic ----intentions We hope to achieve this through: Physical Theatre: Creating all our surroundings physically to enhance the abstractness of • Wonderland ... Media: To use non-diegetic sounds such as the busy city life to illustrate the real world and use projections. Multi-Roling: show very diverse characteristics whilst playing different roles. Meta-Theatre: use representational props throughout Comment [015]: jusification Word Count: 700 Plays Seen 'Alice in Wonderland' - Lewis Carroll 'War Horse' - Michael Morpurgo/ Director - Nick Stafford 'The Man with the Luggage' - Oliver Jones -----'Dorian Grey' Oscar Wilde/ Matthew Bourne Comment [016]:

Theatre Studies - Supporting Not



Section Two

After having found this picture, we all thought that the girl looking in the mirror, representational of a parallel universe, looked a lot like Alice, from 'Alice in Wonderland' and this simple concept inspired us all to adapt this wonderful story. We began by brainstorming our potential themes and ideas involving the purpose of Alice going to Wonderland and her relationships with each of our characters. As a group, we discussed themes of escapism and self-discovery which, we thought, were more suited to an adolescent girl rather than a young child and this is how we have established our adapted version of 'Alice in Wonderland' and too, our teenage target audience and our aim for the viewers to sympathise with Alice throughout the performance.

Our next step was to storyboard our scenes chronologically in order to have a clear vision of our piece and after going through the

What I found particularly challenging in our creative adaptation was playing 'Tweedle Dumb' and 'Dee' at the same time. After my spontaneous improvisation of the role, my group had noted that there isn't enough of a contrast between Dumb and Dee' It was also difficult to multi-role two characters at the same time, switching between the two. I felt this was important to achieve and this feedback led me to research into my role; after watching the 1933 adaptation of 'Alice in Wonderland', I was inspired by its characterisation of the Tweedles and my aim was to make the character of Dumb slow and low-toned and to contrast his characteristics with the quick-on-his-feet, high-pitched Dee and present this in a very physical way; having widened eyes for Dee and bending my legs for Dumb In our spontaneous improvisation of the 'Cheshire Cat', we started with the concept that the cat should be performed by one actor but after receiving some feedback from our teacher, we agreed on solely presenting the Cat's 'floating' head. I became the head whilst other members of our group were the paws and the tail. This was very suited to our style and it reminded us of how the horse was created in 'War Horse', despite not using a puppet, we felt that we had successfully adapted the idea. Just like in 'War Horse', with one puppeteer controlling the ears to

Comment [017]: strategy

Comment [018]: strategy

Comment [019]: refinement due to audience

Comment [020]: Stratergy

| | Comment [o21]: strategy |
|-----|--------------------------|
| - 1 | Comment [022]: research |
| | Comment [023]: Stratergy |
| | Comment [024]: strategy |

Comment [o25]: refinement based on feedback.

Comment [026]: feedback

| | Comment [027]: refinement based on research and feedback |
|-----|---|
| | performance skills |
| - 1 | Comment [028]: refinement based on feedback |

| show emotion and the other controlling the tail, we aimed to present the cat in a similar way by using | |
|--|---|
| a feather boa as the tail. ³ | Comment [029]: research refinement |
| As part of our refinement process, we invited an audience to watch our work in progress and asked | |
| whether we have fulfilled our dramatic intentions. Our audience affirmed the contrast between the real | |
| world and Wonderland was not entirely clear and so from this feedback, we decided to use our | |
| physical skills to become the environment of Wonderland. We used our bodies to create trees, by | |
| having researched images of trees, and used diegetic sounds of wind. We were told that there needs to | |
| be more of an emotional connection between the audience and Alice's mother to evoke sympathy for | |
| her situation and so we had helped the actor playing Alice's mother to create a monologue and | |
| express her feelings directly to the audience | Comment [030]: refinement, performance skills |
| Word Count: 700 | Comment [o31]: |

³ The actors in 'War Horse' had also used their voices chorally to give the horse's voice more power- we descided to do this also with the chesire cat- seeing where we could layer our voices to add a surreal element to the cats speech.

Supporting Notes - Section Three

As a group, we have created an innovative piece of theatre in our chosen style of a Creative Adaptation, with a strong moral of learning to appreciate family closure in times of distress, and themes such as self-discovery. One of our intentions was to make this moral clear for our audience. I also feel that we have been successful in our aim to evoke a sympathetic response amongst the audience towards Alice

I feel that our use of physical theatre, multi-roling, meta-theatre and multi-media has, overall, been very suitable to our style of a Creative Adaptation and successful in terms of our potential for an audience. Through our use of physical theatre, for instance, our manifestation of Wonderland in which we became trees, bushes and caterpillars, by, for instance, lowering my body as the tree and stretching my arms far out in a jagged position, and using diegetic sounds such as that of a wavering bush, the audience were enabled to enjoy the vibrancy of our physicalized style and hopefully be visually overwhelmed. To enhance this effect, in the same scene we have also added elements of media such as a projection of Wonderland and atmospheric, non-diegetic music such as when Alice tries to get past the tree and I make a hushed sound of wind. When performed to an audience, they claimed that this scene, in its calmness, was very successful as it contrasted with the fast-paced Rabbit scene beforehand, adding an element of suspense for the audience.

The use of multi-roling was particularly challenging to me because I have intended to physically create contrasting qualities in each of my roles. As mentioned, playing the Tweedles came with great difficulty as on many occasions, I found myself being more pre-occupied in clearly presenting the contrast between the two, distinct roles, than actually focusing on my interaction with the rest of the characters and the plot. Also, playing the Queen's guards/servants was often very challenging. Because their characteristics of ineffectiveness were quite similar to the Tweedles themselves, I had received feedback from my group about a need to make this role more original and distinct. Thus, during lessons and after-school rehearsals, I thoroughly practiced my vocal skills in order to speak in a high-pitched and, as opposed to Tweedle Dee, a slow-paced tone. Here, I aspired to make this role as visually effective for our audience as possible. I also wanted to present the Guard's uselessness by having raised eyebrows and stuttering on my words. This would not only be quite comical for the audience, but hopefully they would find my use of multi-roling effectual, in the sense that they would be aware of the difference in my role. Overall, I thought I had been successful in achieving my aim to create dynamic characters, contributing to our aim for the play to be visually effective for our audience.

I also found that I had to develop my characterisation of the 'Cheshire Cat'. When we created the head of the Cat, physicality then became restricted and I had to rely on my voice and facial expressions to deliver the Cat's ominous nature and sinister character traits, and thus engaging the audience in the suspense of our play. I achieved this by widening my eyes, raising my eyebrows and having a wide, unstoppable smile. I also aimed to vary my tone throughout, at times soft and subtle, and other

times loud and low-toned, to exemplify my



madness. This was very challenging and so, before each rehearsal, I had warmed up my vocal chords

Comment [032]: Evaluative judgement

Comment [033]: Effectiveness for audience, own contribution

Comment [034]: Effectiveness for the audience

Comment [036]: Own contribution to

Comment [035]: Development of skills

effectiveness for audience.

 Comment [037]: Potential for audience, own contribution Dev of skill

700 words______ Comment [040]:

A-level Drama and Theatre Studies DRAM4 Presentation of Devised Drama

| Title of devised piece: Down in Wonderland | |
|---|--|
| Theatrical style: Creative Adaptation | |
| Nominated skill: Acting | |
| Part(s) played (Acting candidates): Tweedle Dum/Tweedle Dee, Cheshire Cat | |

Part (b) – Supporting Notes

| Section | Assessment criteria | Maximum mark | Mark awarded |
|---------|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Exploration/research into the chosen style; justification of choice; use of specialist terminology (AO4) | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | Development of devising strategies/performance and production skills; critical evaluation and refinement of work (AO4) | 5 | 5 |
| 3 | Assessment of the piece and its potential effectiveness; awareness of H and S factors (AO4) | 5 | 5 |
| | Total | 15 | 15 |

Commentary

Section 1 – Clear and concise evidence of practical exploration and research. Useful links to a range of live productions made relevant to the group's work.

Section 2 - Clear details about the process with useful examples about refinement.

Section 3 – Purposeful assessment, well-supported examples – less than detailed Health and Safety but detail on performance lifts to top.