

Our Country's Good

Social, Historic and political
Context

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joG38F2kAbw&safe=active>

And remember...

- There is loads more here-
- <http://www.bgsperformingarts.com/our-countrys-good.html>

Your Exam

- You will be given a section from the play, you will need to give an accurate overview of how you would direct the scene, focusing mainly on acting, but...
- *Your answer should include justified suggestions for the direction of your cast and for the design of the piece as appropriate to the style of the play and to your creative overview of it. You will need to provide sketches/diagrams and refer to relevant research.*
- *Knowledge of the play, social context, knowledge of how theatre works*
- The major thing is that you understand what the purpose of the scene is- ie what the audience need to get from it.

- A clearly formulated interpretation of the extract
- Reference to the significance of the extract
- Reference to the context of the extract
- Directorial decisions linked to precise moments from the given extract
- Coverage of the whole extract
- Consideration of audience experience
- A clear, well-labelled sketch
- Well-integrated references to research
- Detailed references to casting and costume

Your Exam

- The exam is marked on 2 things
- **1/3 of the marks (17) on; AO2- Candidates demonstrate knowledge and understanding of practical and theoretical aspects of drama and theatre using appropriate terminology** (*Your understanding of Theatre on the whole and how it works- in that using something specific will bring something across to the audience*)
- **2/3 of the marks (33); AO3- Candidates interpret plays from different periods and genres** (*Your knowledge of Our Country's Good's style, genre, period, playwright's intentions and how these effect the audience.*)

Director

- The question will ask you approach the question 'as a Director'
- What should a director do to prepare before and during the rehearsal process?
- This is essentially what the examiner is looking for you to show.

before

- Before embarking on the rehearsal process most directors:
- Engage fully with the play they are about to direct
- Strive to understand the play as a whole and the playwright's intentions in writing it
- Consider strategies to communicate that understanding to the audience in the production

during

During the interpretative process most directors:

- identify themes
- Undertake research into the period and geographical setting of the play
- Examine the play's context and ideology
- Explore the structure of the play in terms of its plot/sub-plot(s)
- Formulate an interpretation of the play based on a number of key ideas: - the 'creative overview'

- Envisage an imaginary world for the actors to inhabit
- Outline/envisage the stage picture for each section of the text
- Explore every character in depth

Final stages.

- 'Block' the action of each scene
- Direct the actors in terms of:
 - their stage position and movement
 - delivery of lines, listening/reacting
 - use of props
- Choose then use stage space, set design, costume design, technical design as appropriate to each section of the play, in order to make meaning for their audience

Themes

The effect Theatre can have on people

Class

the power of Language

Education

Reform

Punishment

(CLERP)

The play is designed to ask questions and raise debate. What style of Theatre is this?

The Convicts

This is a list of convicts on a Transportation ship in 1850

Name	Convict number	Age when sentenced	Crime	Trial place	Trial date	Sentence
William Bailey	75	21	House breaking	Central Criminal Court	1848	14 years
James Baker	48	48	Stealing towels	Exeter	1847	14 years
George Barker	39	23	Pick pocket	Yorkshire Assizes	March 6 1847	15 years
James Baxter	32	25	Violence & striking superior officer (Army)	Corfu	1847	14 years
Francis Best	73	32	House breaking	Worcester	1847	15 years
John Bradbury	66	24	Rape	Chester	1848	20 years
Samuel Brakes	26	35	Burglary	Peterborough	1848	15 years
William Branson	3	33	Sheep stealing	Leicester	1848	15 years
Arthur Bristow	51	31	Grievous bodily harm	Kingston-on-Thames	1848	15 years
Reginald Bristow	50	27	Grievous bodily harm	Kingston-on-Thames	1848	15 years
Joseph Brown	45	41	Stealing oats & drapery	Boston Sessions	June 1847	14 years
Charles Burgess	38	34	House breaking	Maidstone	1846	14 years
Solomon Burkett	19	46	Burglary	Peterborough	1848	15 years
William Carter	8	25	Horse stealing	Worcester	1847	15 years
James Cox	53	38	Stealing a watch	Dorset	1847	15 years

Round 1

- The Crimes of The Cast...

1 point for each, can you name the crimes committed by the following convicts;

Ketch Freeman Murder

Robert Sideway Pick pocketing

Liz Morden Stealing a pocket watch, prostitution

And for a bonus, which Officer admits to committing a crime and what is it?

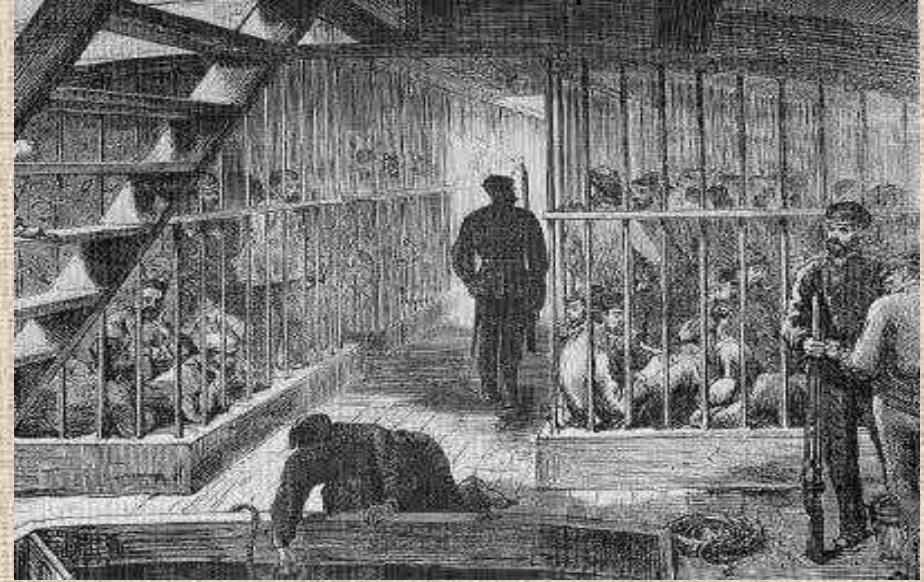
Harry Brewer was an Embezzler

Conditions for the Convicts

London, 1780



On The Ship



Arriving in Australia



In Australia, "On The Chain Gang"



The Officers



The officers in charge would generally have seen action in wars. They were often Naval soldiers rather than foot soldiers, so even Governor Philip would have seen action in war.

Being sent to Australia as an officer was not seen as an honour, except for governor Philip; who was entrusted with a great deal of power, as he was in charge of all of Australia.

Ralph and Campbell are clearly ineffective soldiers and you could imagine that Ross' attitude could have landed him in a great deal of trouble



The Real Governor Philip's house

Interesting Facts

- Two hundred years ago, poor people were a lot shorter and scrawnier than the average person is today. This was because during the important growing years of childhood, their food had not been very nutritious or plentiful. Most of the male convicts were under 173 cm. Many of them were only about 160 cm, which nowadays is quite short even for a woman.
- The children that the convicts gave birth to later in Australia looked very different to their fathers and mothers. With a better diet and climate, they tended to grow up tall and broad, and were not as pale and hollow-cheeked as their parents.

Interesting facts

- There was an active underground system of criminals, run by bosses. They had their own language [examples of which are in Liz's speech at the beginning of Act Two] and helped each other. They had a strong code of honour, which nearly does for Liz near the end, but which gave them a devil-may-care attitude and a very real courage in the face of death.
- Steal items valued over 3 pounds was a hangable offence

Round 2

Split your group into 2 mini groups with each group

From seeing the pictures and with the interesting facts;

1. How can an actor playing a convict in this era could show the conditions?

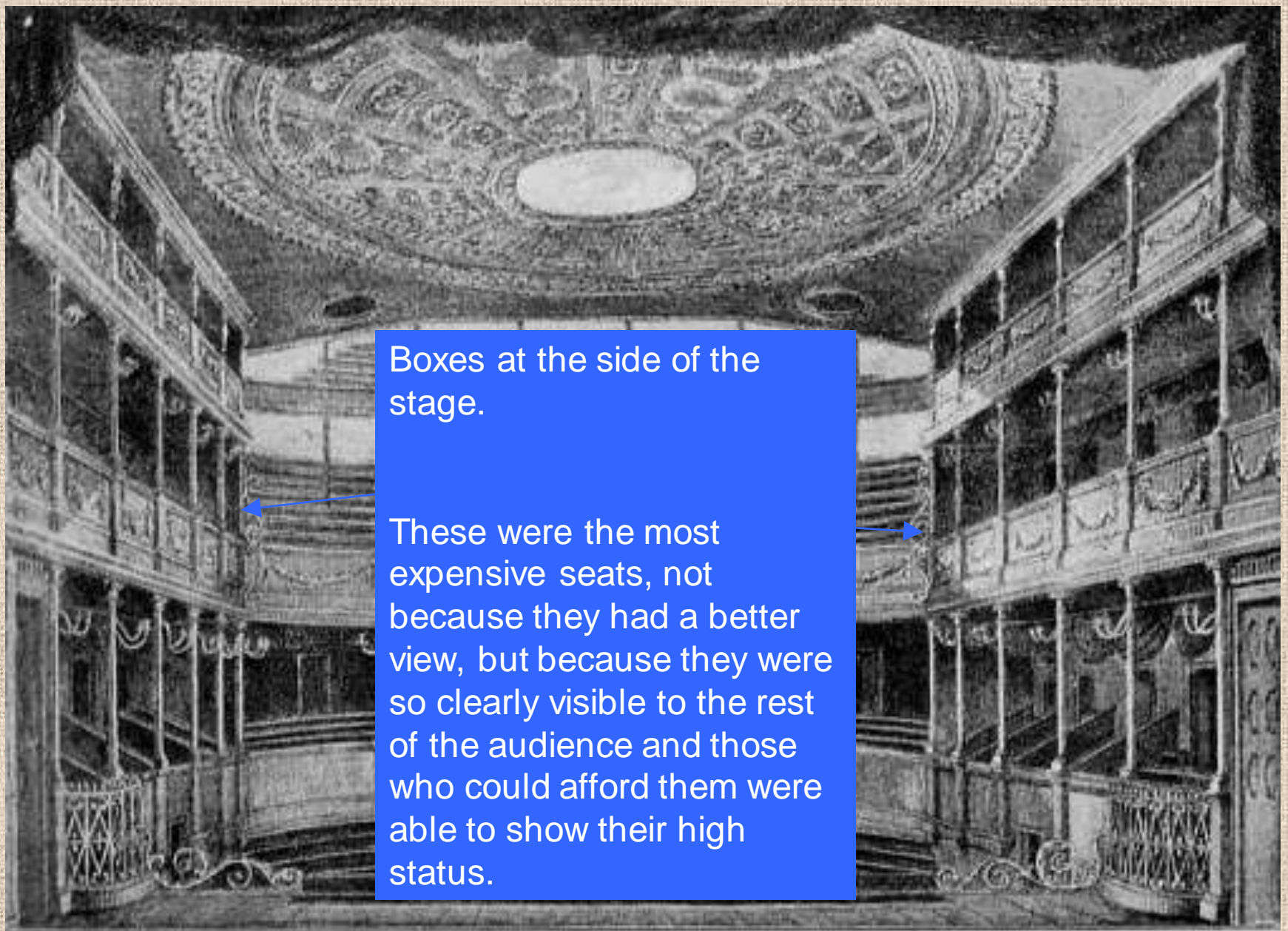
(Gingerbread man)

2. What would you look for in the appearance of someone you cast and how could you costume them?

- Bare in mind;
 - All the actors who play convicts also play Officers, so any decision made in casting would also have to take into account that they must also play an officer. So appearance and costume have to be adaptable.

Theatre in The 18th Century

- While *Our Country's Good* is a modern play in its style (Epic Theatre), it is set in 1789, so it is important to understand the theatre of the time.
- Theatres were only really attended by the Wealthy classes and was very popular, Though audiences went to Theatres more to show their status- in that to show they could afford to go, rather than interest in the play.
- Actors were considered more important than the plays themselves, very few new plays were written. But actors of the time are still famous today (even though you have never heard of them.)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIJXaBflc30&list=PL67F0BA569959F4FB&safe=active>



Boxes at the side of the stage.

These were the most expensive seats, not because they had a better view, but because they were so clearly visible to the rest of the audience and those who could afford them were able to show their high status.

THE DRURY LANE THEATRE AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

David Garrick... The Man who is scared of what is coming from his right

- Garrick was a major Theatre star in late 18th Century.
- Theatre's stage was in Drury Lane (1790), which affected how actors were staged.
- Actors had to Over act (this led to the popularity of melodrama). Also because audibility was an issue, movement had to be big and reflected the text very closely.
- This is shown by *Sideway* in Act I scene 11 *The First Rehearsal*



Acting style

- Loud voices
- Everyone facing the audience at all times (this required walking sideways)
- Big gestures that help illustrate what you have just said.
- Over reaction to others line.
- The style is commonly known as melodrama.
- Garrick was the first actor to go against this style

- Most of the convicts would have never seen Theatre, only Sideway seems to have.
- The Officers experience of theatre would be of these social occasions where Theatre was a spectacle, but not something used to challenge or educate.



Ironically, The Convicts talk about becoming the character (a stanislavskian notion) and Ralf talks about trying to present something believable on stage. This is all shown in Act 2 scene 7 *The Meaning of Plays*

The style of the OCG is also different; with its multi-rolling, presenting of questions to the audience, multiple short scenes, social issues. This is also evident in *The Meaning of Plays*, where the convicts and Ralph talk about their play (*Recruiting Officer*), but this actually symbolises discussions of the play itself (*Our Country's Good*). The play itself asks many questions of what Theatre can achieve.

Round 3

Act 1 scene 1

We are going to attempt to stage the scene,

As a bit of an overview- how can this be achieved?
What are the needs of the audience?