

could have been more explicit to the question for AQA
sorry

Live Theatre Essay

How → Briefly explain how one or more performers used their vocal and physical skills to engage the audience at particular moments. Analyse and evaluate the contribution of the performer(s)' use of these skills to the total dramatic effectiveness of the production. [25 marks]

→ Plan. Hamlet: A lone paranoiac, madness and corruption. actor is Hamlet played by Samuel Blenkins.

TDE was v. powerful, political message as well as a comment on the human condition.

Scenes - Take or not to be

- change in emotion, interpretation of character, liberally in column

- Fight scene

- animalistic, metal, cracking + graphic to engage

- ghost at the start (sees and is stunned)

- so sudden + stunning.

On Saturday 7th June 2025, I went to see a production of Hamlet at the Stratford RSC theatre directed by Christine Jones and Steven Hoggett. The Shakespearean tragedy was transformed into a blend of physical theatre and naturalistic acting, which was a strong comment on the role of corruption, paranoia and revenge can play within human minds - the Radiohead album chosen to soundtrack the performance 'Hail to the Thief' is echoes these themes and includes fear and in particular political corruption - part of the effectiveness of this performance was its relevancy to our government today.

The tragic hero and focus of the play, Hamlet (played by Samuel Blenkins) exemplifies these themes - he spends the play searching for an identity but is pushed away by his potential wife, Ophelia, separates himself from his mother, Gertrude, feels uneasy about revengeing his father's death, and can't see his previous self in his increasingly

immoral actions. In this way, Hamlet falls into insanity and violence and contributes most importantly to the total dramatic effect by serving as a moral warning to the dangers effects of corruption.

By playing Hamlet as a slightly more vulnerable character that the audience can feel sympathy for, Branigan masterfully interprets his character's madness and murder as a result of his grief and in particular the disgusting actions of his uncle, Claudius, in order to create fear in the audience at the results of political corruption.

The

The first moment Branigan appears on stage, he is confronted by the ghost of his father, telling him he was wrongfully murdered and to revenge his death. Horatio ^(played by Alistair Baldwin) and Hamlet enter through opposite sides of the upstage wall and are running in quite a playful way.

When Branigan rises his arms high and almost bounces to a stop, but is moving his head quite quickly around and never focusing on one thing, constantly changing eye contact and keeping his hands hovering around his thighs and twitching. This nervous and childlike body language creates an extremely uneasy mood in the opening scene, an atmosphere used again and again in the play, and instantly creates concern and tension in the audience for Hamlet.

When the ghost appears, Branigan almost jumps backwards and swings his head violently towards upstage (where the image is being projected). At this point, he begins breathing rapidly but shallowly ^{through his mouth}, ~~without me can see by his chest~~ and the dialogue from him and Horatio is cut out until after the ghost has spoken - even then Hamlet can not talk and keeps his eyes trained on the upstage wall where the ghost was. This scene shows how deeply affected Hamlet was by this as a young and not particularly fierce-willed man, and Branigan brilliantly sets up the descent into madness after seeing this apparition and the damage, to him and the rest of the court, caused by Claudius's greed in murder.

In the most famous soliloquy of the play, beginning with the line 'To be, or not to be,' Blenkin portrays his character beautifully to show his unstable state of mind caused by the chaos and abundance of difficult decisions surrounding him, demonstrating an unrecognisable change in attitude between the start and end of the monologue.

Blenkin enters upstage left into a column of light with Ophelia (played by Ami Tredrea) standing diagonally across at the other end of the stage. Hamlet is interpreted as being almost truly insane at this point, which is such a striking image - the uncomfortably large space between the two characters as he delivers begins shows their collapsing relationship and creates an unease as ~~they are moving~~ Ophelia is uncertain about approaching him. Blenkin walks slowly, almost shuffling and barely moving his feet off the floor with straightened knees and a tight torso. This repeats a childlike body language which shows again his vulnerability - however, combined in this scene with total postural rigidity and, wide open but absent eyes and a slightly hanging mouth (that leads to poor enunciation and a raspy tone), the audience feels tension, unsure whether to pity him or be afraid due to the perfectly blended body language physicality. On the repeated lines 'To die, to sleep,' Blenkin repeats mumbles of these words each time afterwards before picking up the next line and exhales slowly and which creeps into his voice as a breathy and nervous sound. This opening clearly shows Hamlet is unwell so effectively by leaving the audience in a state of two different responses of fear or sympathy.

As the soliloquy progresses, Hamlet begins to become more coherent and ponders more clearly - his posture straightens but loses some of the tension, particularly from the shoulders, and his enunciation, particularly of the harder consonants, becomes clearer. Blenkin shows a gradual and almost uneventful unnoticeable change to aggression - once he has reached Ophelia, he goes straight

to pace back and forth restlessly, but slowly - this picks up gradually and the gait is completely changed - Blerkin now stomps around the stage with heavy footsteps and a more violent mood - he looks dangerous. This sudden change in attitude shows Hamlet is not in a good state of mind as a result of the influences of corruption and grief. Even his vocal skills change to increase his volume significantly and put stresses on ~~the~~ each word for more - "and lose the name of action," Blerkin whips his head around on the fiery ^{on} ~~and out of~~ breath the seethed and struts it hoarsely (after taking for a while) - he is encouraging himself into action. These emphases show an aggression and lust for more power or, influence or revenge after being cheated by Claudius (a dangerous and uncharacteristic attitude of our previously meek Hamlet) which highlights the total dramatical journey.

Finally, at the end conflict between Hamlet and Laertes, in which Gertrude and Claudius die in addition to those two, we see a climax of Hamlet's aggression - this scene emphasises his animalistic decay over the course of the play from reason to madness through a combination of stunning physical theatre and frenetic music - this defies the effect of corruption and revenge - complete decay and destruction, as Horatio and Hamlet end the play by warning about this.

As the duel begins, Hamlet and Laertes are in the stage, and circle each other, intently holding eye contact. Blerkin repeatedly slaps the floor by raising and fling his arms downwards and lowers his bodged body, bringing his back close to the floor. This takes the image of a wrestler's stance, and more powerfully shows the devolution to this almost a private - like fight. Blerkin roars outward with a lower guttural shout, raising his shoulders in anger and bringing his hands forward, clashing into Laertes forearms at the shoulder as the fight starts and that will inevitably end with one dead. This is a gory, violent and yet shocking conclusion, heightened though the abstract physical expression, that is the final striking message of the play - this destruction is the product of corruption.