



AIM: To examine and critique the production elements and directorial vision.



The Director's Vision

Director, Simon Phillips

Research the work of director, Simon Phillips.

<http://www.hlamgt.com.au/client/simon-phillips/>

Describe Simon Phillips's directing style in 3 words.

Score his direction of the play out of 10.



Extension:

You are a Sydney Theatre Company producer and looking to engage a director for your upcoming production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*.

Write a job description for the role of the director.

Include a mission statement describing what you are looking for in a director.

Include key responsibilities.

List key activities to be undertaken.

Describe expected outcomes and goals of the company in staging this play.

Write a job application response from the point of view of an experienced theatre director.

Address all the above criteria in your application.

Draw on your research and understanding of the role and responsibilities of a theatre director and your knowledge of the play.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

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The Designers

Set Designer, Gabriela Tylesova

Research the work of designer Gabriela Tylesova.

<http://gabrielatylesova.com/>

List 3 key features of her design style with reference to productions such as *Cyrano de Bergerac* (2005), *Volpone* (2002), and *Attempts On Her Life* (2000).

List 3 things you liked about the *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* design.

List 3 design elements that contributed to creating the physical environment of the play – specifically in regard to time and place.

List the key features of your favourite character costume from the production.

List 3 design elements that contributed to creating the social environment – behaviours and relationships between characters.

Lighting Designer, Nick Schlieper

Research the work of lighting designer, Nick Schlieper

<http://chunkymove.com.au/The-Company/Current-Creatives/Nick-Schlieper.aspx>

http://www.operaustralia.org.au/aboutus/our_artists/creative_teams/nick_schlieper

Give examples from the production where there was an effective use of lighting to create:

- sense of place
- sense of time
- temperature
- emotional mood
- atmosphere

Choose a key moment in the performance where lighting was critical in achieving dramatic effect.

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+ Extension:
Describe the overall mood and emotional tone of the production. How did the costume, set and lighting design elements contribute to achieving emotional effect?



Sound & Music

Composer, Alan John & Sound Designer, Steve Francis

Describe the use of music and sound in the production in 50 words.

Choose 2 moments where you felt the music and sound design added to the dramatic tension or mood of the performance.

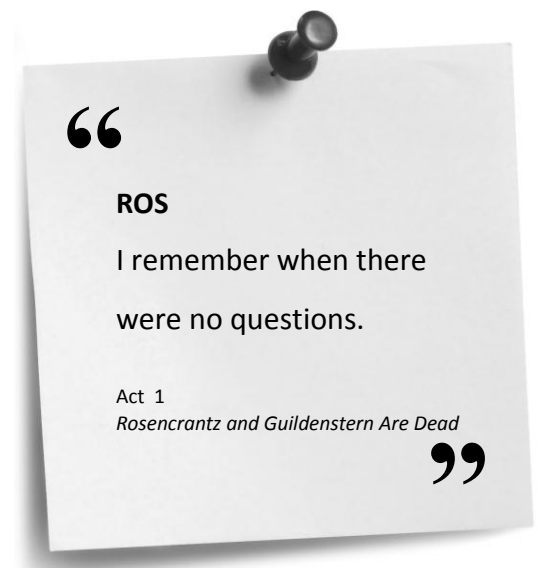
+ Extension:
Read Alan John's Q&A in STC's Back Stage article on his approach to composing music for theatre.

<http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2011/december/qa-alan-john.aspx>

Read & Listen to Steve Francis's sound designs

http://www.cinephonix.com/our-music/composers/Steve_Francis.aspx

<http://stevefrancis.com.au/Home.html>





AIM: To explore and respond to Stoppard's use of word games and word play as both an existentialist metaphor and a writing strategy in the text.



The Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Effect

*Two Elizabethans passing the time in a place
without any visible character.*

Opening Stage Directions

By not setting the play in a specific world Stoppard signals to the audience that the world of the play is the theatre itself. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been described as *Waiting For Godot's* 'Vladimir and Estragon dressed in Elizabethan costumes'. Both are like Beckett's characters waiting for something to happen in a timeless and placeless 'no man's land' where nothing ever happens. Like Vladimir and Estragon, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pass the time engaging in word and mind games and speculations on the meaning of life and death. How long have they here and why are they here are questions with no answers.

The 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Effect' is defined by psychologists 'as entrapment in waiting situations'.

What do you understand by the expression 'entrapment in waiting situations'?

Have you ever felt anxious or uncomfortable when you have had to wait for a long period of time without knowing what was going to happen next? Do you know someone who has? For example, it is well documented that asylum seekers experience distress and anxiety from long periods of 'indefinite detention', not knowing how long they will be in detention for and when their claims for asylum will be processed by the Immigration Department.

Discuss the feeling of anxiety and entrapment often associated with long periods of waiting with reference to the play.

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Consider how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern experience waiting, when we and they already know their fate – death.

Reflection Question:

What strategies do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern employ to deal with knowing that they will die but not knowing when?



Extension:

Read the following excerpt from the play:

ROS: Whatever became of the moment when one first knew about death? There must have been one, a moment, in childhood when it first occurred to you that you don't go on forever. It must have been shattering – stamped into one's memory. And yet I can't remember it. It never occurred to me at all. What does one make of that? We must be born with an intuition of mortality. Before we know the words for it, before we know there are words, out we come, bloodied and squalling with the knowledge that for all the compasses in the world, there's only one direction, and time is its only measure.

Discuss how Rosencrantz's dilemma is a metaphor for the human condition?



Playing With Words

Stoppard does not reverse Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's inevitable fate but he does give them words to explore and represent their thoughts and feelings.

Find an example from the play when they engage in a word game or word play.

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Discuss Stoppard's use of word play and games as an absurdist convention. How do these writing techniques reinforce his exploration of the existentialist state of mind in the play?

Form groups of 3

Read the following excerpt:

ROS: Hamlet is not himself, outside or in. We have to glean what afflicts him.

GUIL: He doesn't give much away.

PLAYER: Who does, nowadays?

GUIL: He's - melancholy.

PLAYER: Melancholy?

ROS: Mad.

PLAYER: How is he mad?

ROS: Ah. *(to GUIL)* How is he mad?

GUIL: More morose than mad, perhaps.

PLAYER: Melancholy.

GUIL: Moody.

ROS: He has moods.

PLAYER: Of moroseness?

GUIL: Madness. And yet.

ROS: Quite.

GUIL: For instance.

ROS: He talks to himself, which might be madness.

GUIL: If he didn't talk sense, which he does.

ROS: Which suggests the opposite.

PLAYER: Of what?

Small pause.

GUIL: I think I have it. A man talking sense to himself is no madder than a man talking nonsense not to himself.

ROS: Or just as mad.

GUIL: Or just as mad.

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ROS: And he does both.

GUIL: So there you are.

ROS: Stark raving sane.

Highlight all words beginning with 'm' in the same colour.

Highlight (in a different colour) all the words beginning with 'h' in a different colour.

Choose another letter to focus on ('s', 'i').

Read the scene aloud.

Be as precise as you can with the words.

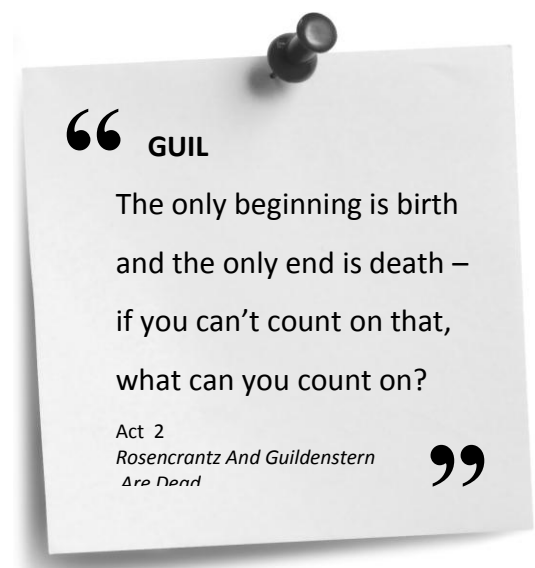
Let the humour and irony between the characters come through.

How do the sounds, repetitions and patterns of sounds create mood and tone? How do they contribute to the dramatic irony of the dialogue?

References:

The Death Of Representation and the Representation of Death: Ionesco, Beckett, and Stoppard. Zoran Milutinovic, (2006), *Comparative Drama*, 40 (3).

Factors affecting entrapment in waiting situations: The Rosencrantz and Guildenstern effect. Jeffrey Rubin, Joel Brockner, (1975), *Journal of personality and social Psychology*, 31(6).





AIM: To examine and explore the character of the Player as a commentator on the function of tragedy and the role of the actor in society.

The territory of tragedy raises the profoundest questions concerning our relationship to the gods, to destiny and to the transcendental.

Jacques Lecoq
The Moving Body



Discuss this statement with reference to your understanding of tragic drama.

Do you think *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is more weighted in the comic or the tragic? How much in terms of percentage would you measure the comedy vs. tragedy in the play – 50% comedy, 50% tragedy?

Post-Performance Reflection:

List 3 comic moments in the production. What made you laugh?

List 3 tragic moments. What made these moments tragic for you?

Do you think the director went more for the tragedy and pathos in the play or more for the comedy and irony? **Give** a percentage measure for the tragic elements vs. the comic.

How did you feel at the end of the performance?



The Player

Stoppard shifts the audience's attention from Shakespeare's Hamlet as the flawed heroic figure to the two minor players as the focus of his tragicomedy. Shakespeare isolates Hamlet from the other characters but keeps him in the foreground of the action, whilst Stoppard foregrounds Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as the protagonists and re-positions Hamlet as a minor player. Hamlet in Shakespeare's play is a high status character and Rosencrantz and **ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD.**

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Guildenstern are positioned as low status characters. Their deaths occur off stage and are reported to the audience ensuring our sympathies remain with Hamlet when we witness his dying onstage. Stoppard plays with classical hero conventions and extends them to the low status characters of Shakespeare's play. The Player acts as a comic counterpoint to the tragic elements of Stoppard's text and becomes a vehicle to comment on the construction and function of tragedy.

Read the following excerpt:

PLAYER: They're hardly divisible, sir - well, I can do you blood
and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and
rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three
concurrent or consecutive, but I can't do you love and
rhetoric without the blood. Blood is compulsory -
they're all blood, you see.

GUIL: Is that what people want?

PLAYER: It's what we do. (*Small pause. He turns away.*)

Rewrite in your own words what you understand the Player is saying about the performing of tragedy and the audiences.

Discuss the role of the actor in society. What is your understanding of what actors 'do'?

Discuss the Player's anger at Rosencrantz and Guildenstern missing the performance:

You don't understand the humiliation of it. To be tricked out of
the single assumption that makes our existence bearable;
that somebody is watching.

Is the Player only referring to being literally seen on stage? How do our relationships with others determine how we see and value ourselves?

Extension:

Research the work of actor Ewen Leslie

<http://www.au.timeout.com/sydney/theatre/features/11835/how-i-act-ewen-leslie-writes#picture0>

Watch this video featuring Ewen Leslie, which includes an interview with Cate Blanchett and STC Artistic Director, Andrew Upton.

<http://www.abc.net.au/arts/stories/s2988526.htm>

Compare & Contrast what Leslie says about being an actor (and what others say about him) and what the Player says:

Don't you see?! We're actors - we're the opposite of people!

+

Extension:

Research the work of comedian and musician, Tim Minchin.

<http://www.timminchin.com/>

Read the STC Back Stage article on Toby Schmitz

<http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/magazine/posts/2012/september/archive-toby-schmitz.aspx>

Read about Tim and Toby's former history in performing the play as teenagers in Western Australia.

<http://www.timminchin.com/2012/09/07/rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-dead-at-the-sydney-theatre/>

Post-Performance Reflection:

Which actor's performance did you enjoy the most?

Give 3 reasons why you liked their work with specific reference to how they interpreted and performed their character.

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