

Review writing

THE FOLLOWING HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM THE DRAMA REVIEW GUIDELINES WRITTEN BY HANNAH MCCARTHY-OLIVER FOR STATE THEATRE COMPANY'S 2018 PRODUCTION OF *THAT EYE, THE SKY*.

Drama Review Preparation

INITIAL RESPONSES

- When the audience entered the theatre, what did they think, feel and see?
- List up to six adjectives to describe the experience of the production.
- Source/record a number of direct quotes from the performance. Use these throughout your review to enhance the points you make.
- Write a one sentence statement introducing the play to someone who has never seen it.
- Who is the author of the original story? Who is the playwright?
- What is the plot?
- What messages were the author and playwright trying to communicate to their audience?
- List the central themes that were explored in the show.

DIRECTION & CAST PERFORMANCE

- What was the director's intention? What did they want the audience to experience?
- What are some examples of how the cast brought their characters to life? E.g. Vocal and physical expression, energy, focus, interpretation of role etc.
- Did they do this successfully – were they convincing? Why? Why not?

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

The key here is to be as descriptive as possible and to show that you understand how all these elements worked together to create the audience's experience of the play and to tell the story. You need to read the show 'visually', listen, observe and evaluate.

- Describe the overall look and feel of the design for this show.
- Choose four adjectives to describe each of the following: the performance space, set, costumes, music, lighting and soundscape.
- Who were the designers?
- Did the set/performance space look like anything you have seen before? Describe.
- Did the design elements enhance the story being told? Were they successful? Why? Why not?
- Describe and evaluate the lighting choices used in this show.
- How did the lighting assist in creating different moods and atmospheres?
- How did the lighting direct the audience's focus to different locations in the performing space?

- Describe and evaluate the costumes, accessories and makeup choices.
- How did the design of the costuming and makeup aid in visually showing the audience who the characters were?
- Who was the music/audio created and performed by? What do you think their motivation and intentions were?
- Describe and evaluate the music choices/soundtrack used in the show.
- How did the music assist in creating mood and evoke emotional responses from the audience?
- Choose one key scene. Describe in detail everything the audience saw, heard and felt during this scene. How did all the technical elements work together to create this scene?

AUDIENCE REACTION

- How did the audience respond to the scene listed above?
- How did the audience respond/react to the play as a whole?
- What would the audience be thinking about as they left the theatre?
- What did the audience experience and learn from viewing the play?

FINAL STATEMENTS

- Come up with one statement to summarise the play.
- Can you source a quote from someone else or the script that you think also summarises the whole show? (See quotes and interviews in this guide.)
- How are the themes explored in the story relevant to today?

Write your review

When writing a Drama review, you are required to describe and evaluate the choices made by the cast and technical team. Your writing should capture the whole experience, going into detail about specific technical elements and evaluating what you witnessed.

REVIEW WRITING TIPS

- It is preferable for Drama reviews to be written in past tense. The show you saw is over.
- Throughout your review, write the show title in italics or underline.
- Write as if the person reading your review has never seen the show.
- Ensure that the spelling of all names and theatrical terminology is correct.
- When writing about specific designers, directors, actors etc., write their full name the first time you mention them. When you reference them again, you only need to use their last name.
- Ask someone else to read through your review and seek their feedback, particularly whether they understand everything you have written.
- Avoid using the words 'I' or 'You'. Instead write from the perspective of 'the audience'.