

Individual performing jerry, from jim cartwright's play "road" essay sample

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Just the opening bleak image of Sam Irvine's interpretation of Jerry from Road, by Jim Cartwright, sets a fitting theme for the rest of the performance. Wearing a saggy bow tie and pale, faded coloured clothing, it seems appropriate for the character of Jerry, an old man who just can't let go of the past. His use of minimal staging compliments the monologue, as it shows the futility and emptiness of Jerry's current life; despite having many memories, the bitterness of being alone has tainted his view of life. Irvine's delivery of Jerry is also made far more prominent by the absence of many visual and aural elements – his interpretation is given in muted white lighting, with no background sound or music, and the only props a shoe cleaning kit and a rocking chair, which Irvine sits in throughout. This emptiness intensifies the quiet, vacant mood of the monologue, which attributes greatly to the pathos-filled aura of Irvine's performance.

Irvine's performance is certainly one which has delved deeply into the subtext and meaning of the original text, whilst also putting a personal spin on the interpretation. Irvine chose to cut certain lines of the monologue, to make it fit to a two-minute deadline. In doing this, he cut lines which focussed more on Jerry's bitterness at the world, which occurred towards the end of the monologue. This created a far softer Jerry than the unedited version, a Jerry who was truly lost in the modern world and turned to his memories for comfort, evoking great pathos in the audience and producing a convincingly sympathetic character, whilst still incorporating the playwright's intentions for Jerry, making him angry at some force unknown to him for these changes in his life. His interpretation extends into the physicality of Jerry too – without having spoken at the beginning of the monologue, it is

already clear to the audience from his slightly hunched posture and slowness of movements that he is a more mature man, and by small movements such as clenching the arms of the rocking chair, he portrays the quiet desperation of the character.

Irvine's vocal work captures the entire being of Jerry; from tiny hints of a Northern accent by dropping his 'g's and softening his 't's, and slightly heightening his pitch at times, which intensifies the sense of his being a broken and tired man. He also speaks at a low volume, which in the beginning makes him seem shy and introverted, but as the performance goes on this evokes a sense of the anxiety his detachment from modern life gives him.

Irvine also performed outstandingly through his use of facial expressions. He subtly balanced looking distraught; by grimacing, both bowing and shaking his head, and blinking rapidly as if trying not to cry, with a sense of forcing himself under control, by gritting his teeth and biting his lip, without overdoing it or seeming hammy in his actions. His use of eye contact with the audience also really strengthened the performance, as it not only included the audience in his quite personal conversation, but also created a bond between them, resulting in the audience feeling more connected to his grief – which was certainly reflected in their reactions, as after just two minutes, many of the audience were crying for Jerry.