

Cosi – feature article



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mad actors are bad enough, but mad men??|By Cassandra ParkinsonThe play Cosi written by Louis Nowra forces the audience to consider their own place in society, whether they dominate, or are dominated; whether they allow others to live fulfilling lives, or lives that are controlled by others. This play has qualities that ensure that it has a continued relevance for a modern society, primarily in its investigation of madness and what is considered normal in everyday life. Lewis Nowra has presents themes and techniques throughout the play which held to highlight that Cosi will remain relevant to modern day society.

The main theme that is presented is the theme of madness and insanity and the line between what is considered ??? sane??? and ??? insane??? this theme has been presentented throughout the play. Early in the plot Nowra suggests that mental illness does not mean a person should be excluded from society. In Justin??™s dialogue with Lewis this idea is made clear for the audience. Justin tells Lewis that ??? the first thing is, and you??™ll discover this; is that they are just normal people??|??™ This idea is furthered through positive connotation that Justin applies to the patients: ??? they are just normal people who have done extraordinary things, thought extraordinary thoughts??? The play not only focuses in the development of Lewis, but also suggests the need for personal growth in the patients. This idea is made evident by Justin who continually restates the purpose of the play: ??? part of this project is to bring out people like Henry??? and also ??? the important thing is to bring them out of their shells??? this occurs in the final scene of the play when Justin tells Lewis ??? came right out of their shells. They blossomed, Blossomed!??™ Julie uses figurative language in her attempt to

describe the effects of drugs for Lewis. Lewis engages her in a conversation about the appeal of drugs. Julie describes it using similes: '??? like lying in a warm cloudy river??™' and '??? felt like mercury ??'; everything became real slow like time standing still??™. The burnt out shell of a theatre in which the play is performed becomes a symbol for the patients themselves as they live within their own shells.

The patients have problems and these affect their ability to function within society, just like the theatre has problems with its lighting wiring: '??? oh, oh, trouble with the fuse box??™'. However through commitment, faith and effort both theatre and the patients shine on performance night. Henry??™'s toy soldiers are used to symbolise real soldiers.

Throughout the play, from the moment Henry enters the action. The toy soldiers are used to remind the audience that while the play is being rehearsed in the asylum young men are in battle in Vietnam. This is made clear for the audience in Act Two Scene One when Henry asks Lewis '??? do you think they??™' I get the idea that the toy soldiers symbolise real soldiers??™. Humour is created through the inappropriate comments and observations made by Doug. Doug criticises Roy??™'s decision to cast Henry in the play '??? who does Henry play A hero suffering from verbal diarrhoea??™'. The use of humour in relation to madness is an effective technique used by Nowra as it allows the audience members to relate to the patients and see them as not too dissimilar from themselves.

Repetition is also used to create humour. After Nowra alludes to the audience that Doug is a pyromaniac, the patients repeatedly tell him to '??? go burn a

cat??™. The repetition of this line from all of the patients also works to symbolise Lewis??™s acceptance into this group of people. Foreshadowing is used effectively by Nowra to create suspense in his audience. When Justin warns Lewis early in the play to ??? keep a close eye on Doug??™ the audience anticipates that this may form a complication later in the play. The audience is not disappointed as this is the case, with Doug eventually lighting a fire in the toilets.