

Women in black essay



On Tuesday 2nd March, we went to see, “ Women In Black” at Fortune Theatre in London. The play is about a man named Arthur Kipps who seeks advice from an actor. He is then telling the story, of himself, as a young solicitor who goes to Eelmarsh house to deal with affairs that are about to confront him. At the house he discovers a mysterious woman in black called Jenet Humphrey’s.

The setting takes place in the town of Crithin Gifford. Through evidence presented in the production we are able to tell the time period is the 20th century. For example, the steam trains and the old colours and outfits. Jenet Humphrey’s was forced to give up her baby because she was not married.

In those days this was forbidden, Jenet’s sister Alice Drablow adopted the child and rejected Jenet from seeing the child. The use of the set was really effective because of the different staging and gauzes. In the beginning of the play and also throughout the play, it appears as a run down theatre. This is shown by many things, for example, the material, the wood, scaffolding, the tatty gauze, the bucket collecting the drips, the clothes rail and the chairs.

The set looks simple but versatile. The main prop that enhanced the set was the wicker basket. It added depth to the set because it was a small prop yet still brought detail such as the information, documents and letters inside the box. The steps that the woman in black stepped down onto were effective as she was “ walking in the grave”. This made it seem mysterious. The most effective theatrical tool used in the production was the gauze.

Gauze is a screen that when the light is shone directly on, it is opaque. But becomes transparent, allowing the audience to see previously hidden areas,

when light behind the gauze is used. The use of the gauze was fantastic as there were three main settings: the 'run-down theatre', the nursery behind the first gauze and the gobo of the staircase behind the second gauze. A simple sheet was used to cover the furniture and appear as a graveyard before it was exposed to reveal the nursery. The nursery was really detailed and this made the audience understand and realise how much the child was loved by all the amount of toys and things the child had. The nursery was realistic and was the only naturalistic set.

The use of lighting and gauzes added dimension to the set and was effective because it uncovered hidden areas that made a small set appear much more realistic and bigger. The door could only be seen when the light shone on it, which was quite clever as it was only seen when needed and was effective as this added more intensity. I think the set was simple, yet the gauzes were effective in creating the proper atmosphere for the play. The use of colours were limited, however when used were used well.

Sepia was the main colour, it was used for the gauze and the door. It was effective because it gave you an antique affect, of the 20th century. The light changes were used effectively. For example, the clicking from the low lights to the house lights during rehearsals. When the house lights were brought on, it made the audience feel safer.

The blackouts were really effective because it allowed the characters to move around without being seen and made the audience uncertain what was going to happen next. The use of torches created an eerie mood among the audience. In one of the scenes where the actor was sleeping, a blue light was

shining on him, this was effective because it appeared as the moonlight and was the only light around. A rosy red colour was simply used to appear as a sunset, this occurred when the actor was first in the house. The uses of the gobo's were used well and enabled the set to be changed in a simple way. The gobo was used for the train; the cross and the house, each of them were effective.

The way the torch was shining on the audience to distract us from the upcoming shining of the face and the actor was really good, as you did not expect it to happen and it frightened the audience. As soon as the lights went down, the audience anticipated the next turn the play would take. Sound was the main aspect as it created a mood and a terrifying atmosphere. Without sound, none of the scenes would have been as moving and effective as they were.

Sound created and built up tension and it also created different moods. For example, each location had a different mood; in the London Street an atmosphere of a typical busy place was produced. Also, throughout the play, the pony and trap noise was heard and this usually occurred before something frightening happened. This was effective because it created tension by building the audience's fears up. The noise was occasionally used to trick the audience in to believing something scary was about to take place.

The train announcements were really effective because it made the audience feel as if they were at the train station too. This was created using surround sound. The way the actor changed seats to represent him changing trains

was really efficient as it was so simple yet interesting and he didn't need to do much to get his point across. Also in the scene at the pub, the sound affects were really effective because it was a typical busy, crowded area and you could imagine it happening.

One of the most memorable sound affects for me personally was in the church as you could hear the voice coming from the priest and it was in a big empty church. This gave a feeling of a cold and scary atmosphere. I thought this joined with the dimmed lights was really effective. Another memorable scene was the rocking of the chair and this was effective as the noise was coming from above, in the attic.

This gave a feeling of mystery and created tension as the audience were left in suspense just waiting to be scared. Also, the way the noise was coming from upstairs and not just on the same stage, was really good as it gave another dimension to the scene and added a big olden time effect. When the actor was reading the letter, this was performed effectively as the actor started reading and then him and the lady said one line together and then finally she took over. I thought this was really good because you could see it was the actor reading the letter but you could hear her voice and it was interesting to hear. The use of surround sound was effective because you could hear the noise coming from all areas, which was superior because it was as if the scene was happening around us.

The noise of the pony and trap was interesting because it was used in two areas, one in which was when the child was killed and the other was used normally. The play was playing with your mind and your expectations. The

noise travelled from one speaker to the next, which built up the tension as you heard the noise. The only non-recorded sound throughout the play was the music box.

This was effective because it was the only live sound, which also was a typical horror sound. I found that the noise in the house grew louder whenever the tension was being built and the atmosphere was getting scarier. The way the pony and trap noise was used twice was effectual because the audience were prepared that something was going to happen when they heard the sound again. Once you have identified the sound affect, you're more aware. The use of voice was one of the best sound affects especially when the actor was asleep and it was silent until the sound of the rocking chair was heard, in an empty house, which woke him up. This created tension and left the audience in suspense.

He then started talking to the dog, " what is it spider? " and the actor himself created tension whilst he was in bed, by looking away and his sudden movement looking at one side of the stage and quickly turning. The way he slowly reached his hand for the door and this in a way dragged the audience with him, waiting for the outcome. The old mans character and his change of roles were extraordinary, the audience identified the difference between him and his characters during the " rehearsals", by the way he puts his glasses on for the actor role and how he adjusts them round his ears to become the character. The actor played Arthur as the solicitor when he was younger. When Arthur was describing his child dying, it created a more upsetting mood and he looked devastated as he was speaking.

I thought the play was affective how Arthur told the story and the actor was playing Arthur Kipps instead. The ways Arthur's voice varied for each character was effective because it showed the difference between each character. Between each role his movement was interesting to see because it changed for each role. For example, when he was Keckwick, the driver of the pony and trap, he hunched his back a bit.

Also when he was the clerk, he was more northern and during the first part of the, 'rehearsals', whilst he was reading the script, he read, "he sniffs". This showed his bad acting. Arthur Kipps also played Sam Daley who was the owner of spider the dog. The use of communication between him and the dog was interesting and affective because although there wasn't a real dog, the actor and Arthur made the audience really believe there was.

He also played Gerome, who was the man he went to the funeral with. When Arthur played Keckwick, he wore a duffel coat, a big scarf and gloves. When he played Sam Daley he wore cashmere Hammel coat, as he was a smart businessman. The women in black's outfit was set in the 1840's, she wore a long black cape and wore a bonnet. The only real flesh you could see was her pale luminous face.

If her face was lit, then you could only see her face because the light was shone on her and you couldn't see her cloak. The different use of coats identified the different characters on stage, and it helped the audience realise the changed characters. Overall, I really enjoyed Women In Black; I thought it was a well-performed play. The tension was being created throughout the play and managed to scare the audience. I found the play

enjoyable, the way the tension was built and how everything was unexpected and unpredictable. I found it fascinating how the play was so well performed and by only two main characters.

I really liked how Arthur Kipps was telling the story and how strong he was for a delicate man at his age. I hope to see Women In Black again in the future as I thought it was brilliant.