

ENGLISH EXTENSION

[Moment: Gem City of the Plains] Extended Response

Explain how you directed the scene in order to gain the effect you wanted from your audiences, making reference to theatrical conventions and techniques employed.

Verbatim theatre is a form of theatre which seeks to present truth, incorporating the words of real people, as spoken in private interview or public record, into drama and often focusing on cultural narratives based on real events, as a “as a bridge between mainstream stages and community concerns”, like with The Laramie Project which documents the hate crime committed upon Matthew Shephard which had a universal rather than just local significance. Moment: Gem City of the Plains explores the intrusion of press after the beating and death of Matthew and the vulnerability expressed by the Laramie Community as a result. Through use of specific verbatim conventions and staging techniques such as lighting, sound use or incorporation of performance elements such as re-enactment, direct address of sotto voice, the moment draws attention to the media’s power in “sensationalizing” events and heightens dramatic tension in the scene to emphasise to the audience the negative repercussions on Laramie due to the Press invasion.

The actors used two primary lighting choices to change the dynamic of the Moment. The opening moment employed a blue glow, which connotes to technology with low brightness to create shadow and an eerie atmosphere. This added an element of theatricality and it shows how forced and unnatural the sensationalized press reports seemed to Laramie as it accompanied the invasion of the media on the town. The sudden change to bright white lights on the dialogue “it was huge” and the following description of “exposure” as a direct address, highlights to the audience the unwanted attention Laramie was receiving and their feelings of vulnerability in a personal way by breaking the fourth wall. This realistic and bare use of lighting gives the scene an organic element which would encourage the audience to consider the fear expressed by the town and media manipulation of the story.

Through the employment of sound effects, namely the use of news report videos playing from bright laptops, tension was created through the overlapping of voices to create the sense of chaos experienced by Laramie. This accompanied the actors’ use of sotto voice on the dialogue, and emphasized the overwhelming nature of the media intrusion and contributed to the unsettling and invasive mood created by the simultaneous use of the dim blue glow lighting.

Performance techniques were able to create a dynamic of both authenticity and vulnerability (such as Sergeant Hing’s direct address to break the fourth wall) and theatricality (through the use of sotto voice to overlap sound or the suggestive and invasive circling during Jon ... direct address to depict the media as predators). Additionally, the actors used characterization to highlight the contrast between the stiff and controlled body language and pronunciation of the News reporters against the colloquial language use but vulnerable gestures of the Laramie community. The use of re enactment (such as during the governor’s press release regarding his “sympathies” for the family and suggestion to not give “one group special rights over another”) encourages audience engagement and highlights the invasive nature of the press in that they intruded on reasonable personal space in placing their microphones so close to the governor’s face.

Overall, actor’s use of performance techniques in Moment: Gem City of the Plains added complexity to the press issue and engagement between the audience, contributing to the disconcerting atmosphere and tension established through the selection of lighting and employment of overlapping sound effects. The use of these Verbatim Conventions (direct address, re enactment, theatricality), and dramatic techniques (sotto voice, characterization, lighting, sound use) created tension and emphasized the role of the media in sensationalizing and the manipulating the events around Matthew’s death, a vast different to the sense of authenticity verbatim theatre attempts to present to its audiences.