

# Live Theatre

Amelie Friess, Year 10

On the 21st of January, I went to go see a production of 'The Woman In Black' at the Leicester Curve theatre. The two-actor play shows two men, a director and Mr. Kipp, trying to perform a manuscript Mr. Kipp has written to tell his family of the haunting experience he had when on a legal trip for a deceased client. Through multi-role play, the actors immerse in the character's journey, effortlessly breaking the fourth wall and switching between two men creating a performance and the cast of characters that appear in Mr. Kipp's story.

Since there are only two actors in the play, multi-role play and small pieces of costume were the only ways to the many different characters that appear in the production. Because of this, the actors had to ensure that each character had defined, distinct mannerisms ensuring we did not confuse them in the story. One such character was old Mr Kipps, one of the two men at the theatre who are creating the performance together (not another character in the story). To create the image of an old man, the actor used a slight tremor in his hands, and although his back was slightly bent, he kept his head high to show he was a man of class and still young enough to be able to actively participate in the events. In the opening scene, he adopted many mannerisms that helped further create the image of older man. As he read from the manuscript, he would smack his lips between lines, and craned his neck forwards to show a loss in eyesight with age. When agitated, he would wave the leather-bound manuscript over his head with both arms, in a strained but controlled movement that showed doing such a thing was becoming difficult at his age. To vocally show his age, the actor playing old Mr. Kipp would use a higher tone, with a wobbly tinge. This also showed the difference between him and the actor playing the director While his voice was quieter, and more strained, the director had a loud, crisp, delivery, showing that he is an actor, but the old man is not.

At another point in the play, the actor used his body language and mannerisms and to create a distinct, separate character from old Mr. Kipps. This was the horse and trap driver, Keckwick. Keckwick was given very different mannerisms to ensure the audience understood he was a different character. His facial expressions and body language were much stiffer, showing he was a tougher, more masculine character. His hunched, sturdy posture hid most of his body, and his facial expressions rarely changed. This showed Keckwick to be a more reserved character, giving him an air of mystery that would help add to the spooky, gothic tone of the piece. Keckwick rarely spoke, but when he did it was in a low, gruff voice. This helped add to his uninviting image and ensured that his character was defined and could easily be tell apart from others played by the same actor.

Ruby Harris, Y10

On the 21st of January 2020 I went to see a production of the Woman in Black at the Leicester Curve theatre in Leicester. The production followed the story of a young Arthur Kipps who travels to a village to investigate the estate of a recently deceased woman. However, the Eal Marsh House was not the place he expected. The Ghost of Jennet Humphreys roamed the isle and killed young children to get back at her sister for taking her son away from her. The play is set in the modern day, when a much older Arthur Kipps is looking back on the dark times in his past.

Lighting is used to differentiate between the past and the present, a burnt sienna wash was used to show the theatre Arthur was telling his story in. The theatre was slightly run down so the wash allowed the audience to get the feel of an old theatre after hours. When transitioning to the house a Gobo was used to produce an image of Eal Marsh house on the back curtain, this technique involves putting a metal stencil over a light to project a silhouette. An intense white would then fill the stage creating a bleak atmosphere and would transport the audience to the foggy village.

A candle was also used onstage to create a scary atmosphere. When roaming about the rooms of the house the lights are out and the stage is filled with darkness creating a scary atmosphere and filling the room with suspense. The candle is used to not only provide light onstage so you can see what the actors are doing but it also allows the actors to use the shadows cast by the candle as a prop to project images of their wands around the theatre. These projections elongate when they go round corners which at first glance look like dancing figurines.

During the ending scene we hear a horse and cart racing towards its bitter end. We never actually see this tragedy happen onstage but the lighting creates the tension by flashing on and off at a fast pace. This creates panic within the audience as flashing lights surround you and you cannot really make out what is happening onstage till you hear a scream and it all goes dark again. This clever use of lighting makes for a more exciting viewing experience and emphasises the feeling of panic and fear.