

Select performance skills associated with a theatre form or period.
‘Theatre of the Absurd’

The overall purpose of the play and the Absurdist ideas in general are present in the extract I perform. The fact that I am able to take snippets of dialogue from both acts and fuse them together shows the lack of development or progress for my character, symbolic of the whole purposelessness of existence. The 'plot' is non-linear. All my attempts to find meaning or a way forward are thwarted. My scene also features the absurdist conventions of minimal development and cyclic or repetitive action. A prominent motif in my scene is sleeping, a state which I appear in four times. Thus throughout my scene the idea of cyclic and repetitive action is strongly reinforced by the fact that I always return to sleep, and achieve no plot development within my scene. ①

Another key element within the scene is the idea of memory that is often prevalent in Absurdist theatre. Since there is no specific sense of place or time within the piece, there is also no tense; no past, present or future. Thus it is impossible for my character to remember what has gone on previously, and in the scene, as in Absurdism, there is a consistent reiteration of forgotten dialogue or actions. This idea is made evident by the line "if only I could sleep. I'll try". The character is completely unaware that he has already successfully fallen asleep twice in the scene, which conveys this idea of severe memory loss and amnesia and alluding to the lack of chronological setting and tense within the scene. The fundamental idea of my scene was that talking signified meaning in life, and my consistent attempts to try and do represented that everlasting philosophical battle to find such meanings within life. I try every approach conceivable and yet am still fruitless in my efforts; only when I accept failure do I gain the ability to speak. The implication is that only when humanity accepts that there is not necessarily a meaning in life, or that it is impossible to determine such a meaning, do we gain some sense of resolution in this concept. My character accepts the impossibility of talking, and knows that he has "tried everything" and will never be able to speak. When he comes to this realization, he is able to speak once again. ①

Despite rising and falling actions throughout the play, Estragon and Vladimir continually repeat the "*Waiting for Godot*" motif, signifying that little or no progress has been made and their attempts to achieve objectives or fulfil motivations has been fruitless. In my scene my initial motivation is to discover why I cannot seem to talk or make any noise, and despite my numerous efforts: shouting, talking, whispering, theatrically shouting, crying, and "trick" shouting, I still remain mute. In this sense my characters motivation, or failure to fulfil said motivation, is a typical absurdist convention, in which the scene gradually builds to a point where the tension seems about to climax, but instead falls away and the audience is left with unresolved drama.

Rising action is abruptly brought to a halt when Estragon falls asleep, at the beginning and end of my scene. ⑥

This is typical of every mini -action and motivation, which will seem to be leading somewhere, but always fail to get there.

Even worse, the characters can never be certain even of their uncertainty. My character shows no recollection of the past or any direct cause for his situation, only recurring unease and anxiety. ②

Repetition and the cyclical way life and failed attempts occur is a feature of absurdism that I show through my four lapses into sleep. Even though I am getting nowhere, I am tired.

It is only when my character concedes defeat, and accepts that whatever attempts they make to talk will result in failure, that they are able to speak. Following the restoration of my ability to speak, my character's motivation is to try to contact, not necessarily God, but someone "up there". Instead of speaking to Vladimir as Estragon does in the play, my character instead directs his dialogue to a "higher power", from which he gets no response. My character gets distressed, eventually culminating in the line "this is becoming really insignificant". This line is an indicator that once again my motivation fails to come to fruition. All my attempts to find meaning or gain recognition from a higher power have been thwarted, which compounds the existentialist philosophy behind absurdism, that human attempts to place their faith in something other than themselves inevitably are pointless, as we all reach the same fate regardless of our beliefs or ideologies. ③

I have chosen to portray Estragon as an ordinary man to apply to the widest section of humanity. The message of the play and absurdism is universal. My voice, when I manage to speak, is a surprise to me though, as if I had never heard it before.. It comes when I am not trying, randomly. ④

I use the symbol of the crucifix, identified with human salvation, but I become stuck in that position and can't find my own feet again. ⑤