

## **Our Country's Good**

### **Act One Scene Six**

#### **Directing Model**

**Explain and justify how you would direct the section (page 22-23) in order to highlight the characters' emotions.**

#### *Context and aims*

This is a pivotal scene which begins as a discussion on the 'Merits of the Theatre' but becomes a vital debate on the actual viability of staging 'The Recruiting Officer' in the colony, highlighting the escalating tension between the officers. My aim would be to demonstrate the increasing tension and conflict between the officers, at the same time bringing out the humour through the quirks and traits of individual characters.

#### *Opening positions*

I would position the actors at different levels, their physical stance suggesting various states of inebriation. I would position Governor Phillip in the centre of the group seated on the chair with Collins and Tench seated on either side. I would direct Ross to pace downstage left, with Ralph standing opposite him, downstage right, suggesting confrontation. I would place Campbell slouched downstage left close to Ross to indicate their alliance and others would be standing or sitting on the periphery of the group

#### *Work through extract identifying key lines and linking action and voice with emotion*

Tench is convinced the play is a bad idea and as a director I would want the actor to communicate his frustration and aggression to the audience. As he articulates what he would like to teach the convicts I would have the actor striking his palm with his fist, his voice rising in pitch to demonstrate his increasing anger, ending with a sneering tone on the words 'laughing at a comedy.'

#### *Work through extract*

I would ask the actor playing Phillip to respond by standing, to raise his status in the room. His response would be delivered in a measured, calm voice but spoken with authority to demonstrate his knowledge. I would ask the actor to place emphasis on the key words 'attention, judgement, patience' to identify his humanity and compassion.

Tench replies with a slight arrogance but is put down by Collins who I would direct to begin speaking over Tench and raise his palm then point his finger on the line 'corrupt and small spirits' which would suggest to the audience that he is pointing this accusation at Tench. I

would direct the actor playing Tench to rise to his feet and scoff at Collins in response with a tone of disbelief, only to be distracted by Ralph's interjection 'Why not?' which would bring silence to the room increasing the tension for the audience.

#### *Work through extract*

As Ralph begins his speech, I would demonstrate the nervousness he feels by having him grasp the cuffs of his jacket for security. He would pace across the down stage area and occasionally stop and look up as if searching for words. He could stutter over certain words, particularly when he repeats phrases, and I would ask the actor to suggest his growing love for Mary by speaking her name softly and then appearing flustered and embarrassed when the other officers are sarcastic and rib him about his obvious infatuation, perhaps running his hand through his hair and wiping sweat from his forehead on his sleeve. I would ask the actor playing Ross to deliver the line 'So that's the way the wind blows' towards the audience to show I have registered Ralph's interest in Mary which would give extra weight and gravitas to the later scene when Ross humiliates Mary in front of Ralph.

While Ralph is speaking, I would have the actors playing Phillip, Collins and Johnston engaged and enthused by Ralph's commitment, looking at him with wide eyed encouragement, and offering words to complete his speech. I would demonstrate Ralph's increasing confidence through a raised tempo until he begins to falter, turning to Phillip for support and then finding confidence on the final word 'England,' delivered with a strong, positive tone. The 'moment' that follows this would be an opportunity for all the actors on stage to look vacantly into the distance and reflect on their homesickness.

Ross would break the silence with his sarcastic and derogatory line 'Where did the wee Lieutenant learn to speak?' He would screw his face up and glance at Faddy to register their mutual dislike of Ralph.

#### *Final comment links to the focus of the question*

It is important to accentuate Ross' anger at this point as it will play a key role in developing the drama in the second act through the potential hanging of convicts and cancellation of the play. I would direct Ross to slowly but firmly articulate the words 'insubordination, disobedience, revolution' at the same time looking supportive officers directly in the eye and pointing a warning finger at Phillip to demonstrate his disgust and create apprehension and distrust from the other characters.