

Candidate 2 evidence

Drama Advanced Higher Resource Sheet		
Candidate Name		Scottish Candidate Number
Question Selected	1 - Analyse the extent to which the principal author achieved their theatrical aims in one performance.	
<p>From Website: Lovesong was performed at the Lyric Hammersmith, 1st and 2nd of Feb 2012, available on Digital Theatre, https://www.digitaltheatre.com/watch/37630693</p> <p>Other Award Winning Frantic plays include - Burn, ClofDitN, Beautiful Burnout, Blackwatch, Othello</p> <p>“As they entered a crucial week in their lives their house became filled with ever vivid memories of each other.” S. Graham,</p> <p>https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/productions/lovesong</p> <p>Themes - Love, death, fear, lies, deception, relationships, trust</p> <p>Characters and Actors: Young Bill - Ed Bennett, Old Bill - Sam Cox, Young Maggie - Leanne Rowe, Old Maggie - Sian Phillips</p> <p>From Resource Pack: “Billy now delivers a blisteringly frustrated monologue full of infantile disobedience and everything that needed to be said” S. Graham, Lovesong Comprehensive Guide, 2011</p> <p>“Abi refers to Newtonian Time and how if we do not consider time to be linear then all time exists simultaneously” S. Graham, Lovesong Comprehensive Guide, 2011</p> <p>In reference to the Frantic technique of picking oose “It is the casual rearrangement of a collar on a partner’s shirt, the dusting of a flake of skin from their shoulders and the removal of a rogue eyelash from their cheek.” S. Graham, Lovesong Comprehensive Guide, 2011</p> <p>Reviews: “An elderly man dances with the memory of his young wife; a young man makes love to the woman his new wife will eventually become. The physicality and the time slips are beautifully handled by the actors.” L. Gardner, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/oct/04/lovesong-review</p>		
Word count:	245	

Question 1

In January of 2023, myself and my Advanced Higher drama class watched Frantic Assembly's production of 'Lovesong' on Digital Theatre, written by Abi Morgan and performed at the Lyric Hammersmith on the 1st and 2nd of February 2012. The play follows the life of a couple over the span of 4 decades and a "crucial week in their lives as their house became filled with ever vivid memories of each other." In this essay, I will be discussing the extent to which the principle author shapes the dramatic meaning or impact of play by observing various Frantic techniques and decisions made by the director and choreographer, Scott Graham and Steven Hoggett and by dissecting various writing choices made by Abi Morgan to come to a conclusion on who gives the play its meaning overall.

The first way in which Abi Morgan shapes the dramatic meaning or impact of the play is when Bill has his outburst towards the end of the play, as he is finally coming to the realisation that he is going to lose Maggie forever and that he will have to navigate life on his own without his wife. It's described as a 'blisteringly frustrated monologue full of infantile disobedience and everything that needed to be said.' Bills anger and fear is shown clearly through his acting choices as he speaks with a loud volume, fast pace and frustrated tone. He also has slouched posture and furrowed brow with an upset facial expression during this scene to emphasise how emotional he is at the thought of losing his wife. At the end of the monologue, Maggie simply responds with "Will you remember to brush your teeth?" which is both an emotional and witty comeback which emphasises Maggie's love and empathy towards her husband in this moment. This monologue was clearly written by Abi Morgan to show the audience the effect which his wives illness and inevitable death is having on him and is a clear indication of his spiral which comes to head at the end of the play when he assists Maggie in her death. This made me feel sympathy towards Bill for one of the first times in the whole play as we can really see his love and admiration for everything Maggie has done for him come through in this monologue and the way Sam Cox acts it.

Another way in which Abi Morgan creates dramatic impact or meaning in the play is through the plays running theme of time and how Abi refers to "Newtonian Time and how if we do not consider time to be linear then all time exists simultaneously." It is mentioned a lot towards the end of the play when young Bill, played by Ed Bennett, discusses how memories can live on regardless of time and that we should consider these memories to be happening in parallel to our current lives. This is shown specifically towards the end when Bill is sitting on the edge of the bed and Maggie is standing at the back of the stage behind the headboard. Ed Bennett uses a slow pace, thoughtful tone and low volume when speaking to show Maggie that he wants her to listen and take his theory in, in the hopes that it will help them live their lives in a more fulfilling way and will enrich Maggie's perception of their seemingly mundane and boring life. This continual mention of time throughout the play was written by Abi Morgan to help the audience understand the relationship between the old and young versions of the couple and to make the idea of young Maggie interacting with old Bill less abstract for the audience. This scene made me question a lot of the ways in which I think about time and allowed me to reflect on memories and 're-live' them as Maggie and Bill did.

However, Frantic Assembly also make meaning in 'Lovesong' through some of their famous techniques which have been used in many of their production's such as 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time', 'Blackwatch' and 'Beautiful Burnout'. Frantic was formed by non-drama students who were passionate about movement and dance in theatre, and through various workshops and brainstorming sessions created techniques which are used in almost every Frantic production today. Some of these include 'Picking Oose', 'Round by Through' and 'Lifts'. The technique of 'Picking Oose' is used throughout the whole play to symbolise the couples deep connection and love as it consists of "The casual rearrangement of a collar on a partners shirt, the dusting of a flake skin from their shoulders and the removal of a rogue eyelash from their cheek." We can see the couple doing these actions towards each other all the time, but it can be seen specifically when young Maggie helps young Bill put his tie on at the start of the play. She has a slow and delicate way of moving when helping Bill which emphasises Maggie's undeniable love for Bill and is an obvious acting choice of Leanne Rowe through the various acting workshops which the cast done in rehearsals to move this way towards Bill. These rehearsal processes and exercises which the cast took part in were designed by Scott Graham to help the actors feel the weight of this relationship fully, which means Frantic gave this scene meaning. As an audience member, I feel hopeful for the rest of the play as I can see that the couple have a very deep connection with each other which shows they will be able to overcome the adversity which they are about to face.

Another way in which Frantic Assembly gives meaning to the play is through 'Lifts' and 'Round by Through' in the middle of the play when old Bill and young Maggie take part in a choreographed sequence of moves. A review from the Guardian describes how the "elderly man dances with the memory of his young wife" as "beautifully handled". They perform this sequence in the middle of the stage and Sam Cox performs various lifts on Leanne Rowe to show the trust which these characters have for each other. They also use 'Round by Through' – which is the action of going physically round your partner, through their arms and standing by their side – to show how physically connected the couple are at this point as this sequence has a subtle sexual nature which is shown through how each touch they place on each other lingers and is charged. These actions which were choreographed by Steven Hoggett shows that Frantic created the meaning in this scene as it wasn't an original part of the script and was created entirely by them to show the audience that their relationship relies heavily on sex to keep it going. As an audience member, I felt moved by this scene as the couple have already had to overcome many challenges but instead of dwelling on this they have been able to find a moment to connect and old Bill has been able to reminisce on a positive moment with his wife.

Abi Morgan creates more dramatic impact and meaning in 'Lovesong' as she uses Maggie's face cream to emphasise the effects which ageing has on a person. Both old and young Maggie use the face cream at various points within the play to maintain their beauty and good complexion. Both actors apply the face cream in the same way, which was thoroughly rehearsed beforehand, to show that even though Maggie as a character has changed throughout the years due to her maturing and getting older, the physicality and the way in which she applies the cream has not changed. Abi Morgan wrote the face cream into the script to emphasise Maggie's fear of getting old and her wish to remain young so she can still have the capacity to look after Bill as she knows he is nothing without her. As an audience member, I felt myself becoming more aware of the fact that I am getting older and helped me to appreciate that we only have one shot at life.

Another way in which Frantic Assembly shaped the dramatic impact of the play is through the use of set, and specifically, Maggie and Bills bed. The bed is used continuously throughout the play, but it is most notably used at the end of the play when all the characters, both young and old versions of the couple, are on the bed at the one time. It starts with young Bill and Maggie on the bed performing a sequence of 'Round by Through' moves on the bed and as the sequence progresses, the old versions of the characters emerge from the bed and the young version disappears. By the end of the scene, all the characters are present on the bed, weaving in and out of each other and lifting each other in various ways, both off and on to the bed. This helps to show the significance of the bed as they have had many high and low points on it (literally) and was clearly adapted into the play by Frantic to emphasise this last point where the young and old versions of the couple will interact as we go into the last 10 minutes of the play where the couples stay with their respective partner (in terms of age). This scene made me feel extremely emotional as it symbolises the end of their lives together.

However, Abi Morgan wrote Starlings into the play to create dramatic impact as they are known for carrying sounds and songs through the air for many years. This is particularly important in the final scene when old Bill assists old Maggie in her suicide as the couple have come to terms with the fact that she will be more at peace if she dies on her own terms. After Maggie takes the over dosage of 'blue and yellow' pills they make their way over to the bed and proceed to put in earphones so they can listen to 'their song' while Maggie passes, while Starlings are projected in the background on the screens and the young version of the couple are sat downstage left – also with earphones in. This was written in by Abi Morgan to show that even though Maggie is dying, the memories of her love and relationship with Bill will live on through the Starlings and the songs and memories which they will carry on for miles. As an audience member, I was brought to tears and my perception of life and how I should live it was shifted massively due to the hard hitting and emotional nature of the final scene.

Frantic Assembly also give the play meaning through the use of the wardrobe and fridge. Characters are often seen entering and exiting the stage through these items (Maggie through the wardrobe as she is connected to her heels, and Bill through the fridge as he has a drinking problem). When in rehearsals for the play, the actor who plays young Bill, Ed Bennett, wrote down a list of fears which Bill has, and one of his main fears was that he would become too dependent on alcohol. The significance of him interacting with the fridge often is a constant reminder to both the character and the audience that he is on the verge of becoming an alcoholic due to being bored in both his professional and personal life, which is another one of his fears. The fridge can be seen Centre Stage right and the Wardrobe can be seen Centre Stage Left (opposite sides of the stage) to show the characters separation, both physically and metaphorically. As an audience member, I felt frustrated by Bill's actions as he kept drinking which only made his relationship with his wife worse.

In conclusion, both Abi Morgan and Frantic Assembly shape the dramatic impact or meaning of the play in different ways. Morgan wrote monologues and stage directions into the script which shaped the entire trajectory of the characters' lives, while Frantic used their tried and tested techniques to give the scenes which Morgan wrote more significance – leaving audiences completely speechless and reduced to tears by the end of the play.