

Tekst 7

It's shocking, but I'm still scared of stage fright

1 WHAT'S REALLY
terrifying in the theatre
these days? I know that a
line of small print
5 reading: "This production
runs for four hours and
20 minutes, including an
interval of 10 minutes,"
can chill my blood pretty
10 effectively, but that's not
the kind of dread the
question is really
addressing.



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2 I'm thinking, rather, about the kind of jolt of
15 fright that announces itself with an adrenal all-
points bulletin, and the question is prompted by
the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father in
John Caird's new production of *Hamlet* at the
National Theatre. This is a traditional ghost,
20 clammy with early decomposition. He appears,
quite strikingly, through a narrow slit in the
backdrop – but I doubt if his entrance made a
single follicle stir on the back of a single neck.
"Oh, here comes the ghost," you think, as blithely
25 unperturbed as the American family in the
Thurber story, who react to grisly spectral
manifestations with infuriating matter-of-
factness.

3 This is partly a problem of familiarity, it's
30 true. Pretty much everyone knows when the
ghost comes on and what he's going to do. But it
also marks the degree to which the territory of the
uncanny has now been colonised by the cinema.

4 Movies have largely taken over the task of
35 scaring us witless – that is, into some instinctive
region where the body starts worrying on its own
behalf. It was a trick that theatre used to have – if
we are to believe the stories of women
miscarrying at the entrance of the Furies in Greek
40 tragedy – but that it has largely lost to a medium
better equipped to bypass reason and get at the
body's unconscious levers of anxiety.

5 That doesn't mean that fright is impossible in
the theatre; but it has to be arrived at by
45 indirection if it is to work. Richard Eyre and
Jonathan Pryce once pulled off the trick of

making the ghost genuinely eerie by having its
speeches emanate from the actor's own mouth, as
if he was intermittently possessed by the spirit of
50 his dead father. But what made that work was the
audience's keen apprehension of the danger of
the performance. Our fear that risibility – only
one subversive giggle away – might actually
break through offered a powerful substitute for an
55 older dread, one that could be enlisted in the task
of shifting us to the edge of our seats.

6 A recent Royal Shakespeare Company
production of *Macbeth* made a commendable
stab at good old-fashioned frights with some
60 special effects – including sudden apparitions
through an apparently solid brick wall – but it
couldn't exploit cinema's great trump card when
it comes to making an audience feel threatened,
the director's absolute command over what we
65 can and cannot see. Tellingly, its most charged
moment was an unnervingly extended period of
absolute blackness at the opening of the play, a
theatrical shot at cinema's ability selectively to
blind us.

7 If theatre has lost some ground to cinema in
70 respect of fright, it has won some back
elsewhere. If you need to think of a
Shakespearean scene that can still exact a
visceral, rather than intellectual tribute, one
75 immediate candidate would be the blinding of
Gloucester, a scene that has lost none of its
power to appal and may actually have gained
some.

8 Cinema can do human cruelty, too, of course,
80 but it cannot quite match the theatre for the sense
of bodily presence, the way in which an actor's
squirring beneath the point transmits itself to all
those bodies in the stalls. It isn't entirely
surprising, then, that contemporary theatre should
85 have become increasingly fascinated by hand-
made atrocity, as opposed to supernatural forms.

9 If you want to be frightened in the theatre
these days – it is living, breathing human beings
90 that are going to do it to you, not visitors from
the underworld.

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- 1p **26** Beschrijf op grond van alinea 2 wat de schrijver duidelijk wil maken met het voorbeeld van de geest van Hamlets vader.
- 1p **27** ■ What is the point made in paragraphs 3 and 4?
A Cinema appeals to our fascination with horror, whereas theatre appeals to our intellectual side.
B Cinema can scare us more effectively than theatre, triggering reactions beyond our control.
C Cinema has succeeded in attracting the traditional theatre-goer as well.
D Cinema has taken over the place of theatre when it comes to presenting a grand spectacle.
E Cinema makes a character's motives much more understandable to the audience than theatre.
- “But what ... the performance.” (lines 50-52)
- 1p **28** ■ What danger does the writer mean?
The danger that
A Shakespeare-lovers would object to the staging of the scene.
B the actor would not be able to keep himself from laughing.
C the audience would find the scene too absurd.
D the relations between the characters in the play would be misunderstood.
- “an older dread ... our seats” (regels 54-56).
- 2p **29** Geef van elk van de onderstaande citaten aan of zij wel of niet op dezelfde soort angst als die in het citaat slaan.
1 “can chill my blood” (regel 9)
2 “the kind ... all-points bulletin” (regels 14-16)
3 “the body ... own behalf” (regels 36-37)
Noteer het nummer van elk citaat, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.
- 1p **30** Citeer uit alinea 6 het zinsgedeelte dat inhoudelijk overeenkomt met “cinema's ability selectively to blind us” (regels 68-69).
- 1p **31** ■ With which of the following could paragraph 7 also begin?
A Besides, if...
B But if...
C So if...
- 1p **32** ■ What is made clear about contemporary theatre in paragraph 8?
A In its attempt to compete with cinema it tends towards a vulgar display of violence.
B It can have a strong impact on the audience when straight physical brutality is enacted.
C It favours plays in which the characters are realistic figures of flesh and blood.
- 1p **33** Welke woordgroep in een van de laatste drie alinea's komt overeen met het woord “publiek”?
- “stage fright” in de titel “It's shocking, but I'm still scared of stage fright” betekent volgens het woordenboek “plankenkoorts”.
- 1p **34** Hoe moet “stage fright” opgevat worden in het licht van deze tekst?