

Drama

Storytelling: Criterion A

Storytelling is an interactive form of art that uses words and actions to bring out the elements of a story. There are certain aspects of certain stories which are more effective when read aloud, storytelling provides a means of expressing a tale to its furthest extent and reciting it in the way you would typically prefer it to be read. It gives people the opportunity to express how they would want the story to be read, using sound effects, voices for the different characters and generally painting the exact picture that they would want of the story and the content of the story. Aesthetics can be defined as the different things that make something seem beautiful, and in storytelling these are the aspects that the storyteller uses to bring out the pure effect of the characters and events that are taking place in the story.

Storytellers usually establish the protagonist in the story first, building on the qualities of this protagonist and slowly introduce other characters as the story continues (e.g. the antagonist), and then follow the format of introduction, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion. There are many different reasons that different people tell stories for raising awareness, bringing out the implications of social, political and cultural issues, bringing out different beliefs and values. And over the years there have been many successful storytellers that have managed to bring storytelling to a new level.

Jan Blake is one of the most sought after storyteller in Europe, and has been performing in stadiums and receiving awards/recognition for this for over 25 years. She was born in Manchester of Jamaican descent, and thus most of her stories have a cultural connection to where she is from and she frequently bases most then on Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. Jan Blake is well known for her distinctive speaking and performing style, which is witty, audience involved, and humorous and helps bring out the impact of the stories.

She uses gestures and sound affects as imagery to achieve the picture-painted image for the audience to be able to imagine, and also through managing to connect with large audiences and grab everyone's attention with the stories she has to recite. The main reason Jan began to tell stories to spread influence to other creative souls, to spread the messages/traditions/cultures that the different cultures she identify with enforce as well as a means of expression. One of the main reasons she is a well sought out and looked up to storyteller is because of how she manages to incorporate sound and personification to the different parts of her story, she has the ability to make the audience feel as if they are in the story and they are taking the journey with the main characters.

In connection to the statement of inquiry, Jan Blake's stories focus on the aspect of cultural expression. She brings in languages and traditions from other cultures (including her own), and uses them to bring out aspects of her story and make the audience connect with the characters on a different level. She also uses the cultural aspects to bring out the setting of the story in a more vivid and descriptive way, as when she discusses a certain region she makes emphasis on the clothing, religion, language, food, and brings in aspects that help the audience have an understanding of the basis of the story.

Kevin Kling is also a very sought out storyteller, as well as being an astounding playwright and poet. When asked about the period of time that he began storytelling, Kevin has a very interesting philosophy that "if you are a storyteller you were one your whole life - it just takes someone to bring it to your attention" (Kling, 2015). He was born and raised in Minnesota with a hereditary birth defect in which his left arm failed to develop certain aspects and was unusable; he then endured a motorcycle accident in 2001, which paralysed his right arm. Most of Kevin Kling's stories are wise and humorous insights on tragic events or moments in either his life or general human experience. Kevin would always tell stories in parties to friends and acquaintances until during a certain party when a theatre producer approached him whilst he was telling a story in a kitchen, and asked him if he would be interested in performing these stories for others to hear and enjoy.

In connection to the statement of inquiry, Kevin Kling relates on the personal expression aspect of it. His storytelling relates to events that have occurred to him, the most emphasised being his paralysis and the loss of his arm. He relates to audiences through connection of emotion, he builds his stories simple and slow with the events of his life that occurred before the accident and then he brings it in with all of the aspects related to losing his arm. He includes inspiration as part of his expression, which helps once again, to connect the audience and take them on a journey through his life and the struggles he has faced, and how they have made him the person that he is today.

The main similarity between Jan Blake and Kevin Kling is how the two storytellers perform. They both enjoy putting humorous and meaningful stories, which aim to have the audience eager to hear what more they have to offer. Both of the storytellers are very good with their tonal variation, knowing exactly where to be loud or quiet for emphasis, as well as the two having the outstanding ability to relate to the characters in the story and make the audience feel the same connection to the characters. They both have the ability to pull the audience in and make them have a strong emotional connection to the characters in the story, bringing in aspects of their lifetime and the stories and experiences they've learnt along the years. The main difference between Jan Blake and Kevin Kling is less in the performance aspect of storytelling, and more in the types of stories they usually perform. Whilst Jan performs more cultural and fictional tales with moral lessons at the end which involve singing, interactive audience participation, and talking animals – Kevin's performances are more along the lines of life lessons and events that connect to audience members on a personal level. Another aspect that is very different between the two storytellers is the level of enthusiasm that they use, while Ms Blake uses a highly energetic level of enthusiasm to portray her messages, Mr Kling uses a softer less energetic one to portray his messages.

After looking into the different aspects of storytelling from the two different perspectives, I believe that artists can change the world through storytelling. A simple story with a powerful message could go a long way, the creation of films and plays which all have messages to leave the audience thinking and reflecting on. Storytelling gives artists the

opportunity to share their experiences through life lessons and morals, which give people different outlooks on the world and how they view things in general. Culture, for example, is a major effect on how different people perceive different things. Women's rights for example, is considered not relevant in many religions and cultures, so a story reflecting the struggle of a woman in today's society would help someone with closed minded opinions on women – see things from a different perspective. Although some people from these cultures could take a story on women's rights the wrong way, and assume that it was made to mock or to go against tradition. But none the less, storytelling is a great way for people to spread their opinions and beliefs and values about different world issues or experiences and to find an even ground with the audience.

References

About Jan Blake. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2016, from
<http://www.janblakestories.co.uk/>

Jan Blake. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2016, from
<https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/jan-blake>

Kevin Kling: The rebirth of a storyteller. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2016, from
<http://www.startribune.com/kevin-kling-the-rebirth-of-a-storyteller/13880766/>

Q&A with All Things Considerer's Kevin Kling. (n.d.). Retrieved January 16, 2016, from
<http://www.nuvo.net/indianapolis/qanda-with-all-things-considereds-kevin-kling/Content?oid=3490055>