**Explain how one or more performers used their vocal and/or physical skills to create changing responses in the audience during one live production that you have seen and assess the effectiveness of their performers at particular moments**

On Thursday 14th March 2013 I went to see Patrick Barlow’s fantastic ‘The 39 Steps’ at the Criterion Theatre in London, directed by Maria Aitkin. Adapted from the 1935 Hitchcock film. The West End show tells the plot of Richard Hannay; accused of murder, desperate to discover the secret of the secret organisations ‘The 39 Steps’. The play, performed with a Brechtian influence; and had an ensemble of 4 actors playing 250 roles (Adam Jackson-Smith, Jennifer Bryden, Stephan Critchlow and Andy Williams), breaking the fourth wall (usually by Hannay and metatheatre implying what has just happened is silly), representational props/costume and alienation. The play was very successful and evoked a comical response with the actor’s multi-role playing amazingly to create contrasting stereotypical roles. The actors successfully took the audience on a rollercoaster of emotional and responses.

The actor Stephan Critchlow created changing responses from the audience from his very first appearance. Hannay decided to go see a ‘West End show’ and he watched Mr Memory’s show, where Critchlow plays the Compére. The audience have an initial response of warmth towards the compére as he seems like a friendly character. Critchlow is calmly stood downstage right and he had open body language with legs apart and arms relaxed by his side. He spoke in a melodramatic cockney voice bringing across a stereotypical south Londoner of which the audience responds to well as they feel they can trust him. He excitedly asks ‘Who won the cup in 1926?’ and he points to Mr Memory and after ‘1926’ he remains pointing at Mr Memory with excited wide eyes, a wide grinning open mouth, raised eyebrows and short breaths (due to speaking a long introduction to Mr Memory). On ‘quite right sir’ Critchlow turns and addresses the audience, which breaks the fourth wall by making them aware they are in an audience and winks, before saying the line with a slow pace and nodding to emphasise Mr Memory’s intelligence. The audience like the compére, especially as they feel like he is welcoming them into the show by introducing them to the characters. This builds up the audience’s response, increasing the shock levels with Professor Jordan.

However in a later scene Critchlow multiroles as the deceitful Professor Jordan and the audiences initially like the Professor but for completely different reasons to the compére. The Professor walks on from upstage right to downstage right and says ‘So sorry to have kept you.’ He speaks in a posh voice, elongating every word and this gives the stereotypical role of a 1930s gent. The Professor carefully walks with a hunched back and flamboyantly smokes from his cigar which is a representational prop to further highlight his stereotype. There is a tense atmosphere with the audience on the edge to who the Professor is and whether he can be trusted however Critchlow pauses after ‘So sorry’ and a chair is pushed on from downstage right which undercuts his legs and pushed the Professor elegantly down. This changed the atmosphere to light hearted making the audience laugh and like the Professor. The Professor is then sat with crossed legs, head titles, arms resting gently on his chair. He was smiling with lowered eyebrows and narrowed eyes. The audience like the Professor and this increases the shock later in the scene.

Later in the scene the audience’s response completely changes as the Professor reveals his true character. The Professor plays one of the Hitchcock themes of the ‘Charming Criminal’ which is why we, as a audience like him as a nice, polite man. However the audience is unaware of the change in character we will witness. On the line ‘So it seems there is only one option, Mr Hannay’ the audiences response changes to shock and worry over Hannay’s safety. After ‘So it seems’ the audience response changes as the Professor says the line with his upper class posh elongating accent, standing with a hunched back and a gentle smile by Hannay with a sympathetic titled head. After ‘seems’ the Professors head snaps up and he raises his eyebrows, widens his eyes, clenches his lips and urgently pulls the gun out of his pocket. Critchlow says on the line ‘there is only one option, Mr Hannay’ with a low pitch of voice and a slow pace and he has the gun at a right angle to his body, stretched in front of him and a tense rigid body. The audience are on the edge of their seats in suspense and the atmosphere is dangerous and tense. This highlights the theme that people are not what they seem, and even the upper classes can be deceitful and cannot always be trusted.

In conclusion, Critchlow successfully multi role plays as the Compére and the Professor evoking a range of responses leaving the audience relaxed and happy to shocked and on edge.

Ao2- 13/17 Ao4- 23/33 36/50

Acting is explained very clearly and is related well to the question (by identifying the atmosphere and the emotional responses of the character.) You write well at the end under time pressure and summarise what needs to be said about the performance.

The compare character is reasonably covered; the professor is clearly a character you feel more comfortable with.

The compare gives the impression of being part of a rather amateur show- this is because of his over enthusiastic tone of voice and exaggerated gestures, the exaggeration gives the impression that he is compensating for lack of quality- this then creates comedy when Mr Memory is actually very good at what he does.