

DRAMA

<p>Paper 9482/11 Open-Book Written Examination</p>
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Key messages

As this syllabus becomes more established and teachers and students are becoming more familiar with the type and scope of questions set, so examiners are noting an improvement in candidates' achievement.

In this series, answers were seen on each of the set texts, although some optional questions attracted too few responses to draw general inferences from.

The best responses came from candidates who had learned to discipline themselves to read their chosen questions very carefully so as to understand the precise question focus and then to ensure that they wrote an answer that directly addressed that focus.

Too often, it appeared that candidates wrote an answer to a question that they would have liked to have answered or indeed to a question that they had answered successfully, as a homework task, or in a mock examination, but which did not appear on this paper.

Where students miss the question focus, they miss the opportunity to access the higher levels of achievement.

Workable and inventive answers were seen where candidates recognised that most questions have both a 'task' – for example, 'How would you perform the role of Happy?' and a 'purpose' – to convey his feelings for Biff, Willy and Linda, at this point in the play'.

Where candidates only wrote about how they would play the role of Happy, (without discussing how he would convey his feelings) however detailed their performance ideas were, or however well supported from the text of the extract, they were unlikely to achieve more than a middle level mark, because they had not fulfilled the purpose behind the task.

Examiners reported seeing numerous examples of answers where candidates did fulfil the purpose of the question, but they are not yet in the majority of answers seen.

Examiners also noted an improvement in the way some students incorporated their knowledge and understanding of social and cultural context (SGC) as well as of the style and genre of the plays that they had studied.

There were, however, still many instances where candidates displayed an insecure grasp of SGC and did not devote enough attention to illustrating their explicit knowledge and understanding, particularly for genre and style.

At the other extreme, as noted in previous reports, some students' answers were somewhat outweighed with SGC material at the expense of communicating a practical theatrical approach to the chosen question.

Some candidates wrote more of a literary analysis of their chosen text or extract rather than exploring its theatrical and dramatic possibilities.

In Section A, weaker answers strayed from the prescribed extract and, in several instances, completely ignored it, roaming through the play as a whole and acquiring limited credit in the process.

In Section B, weaker answers tended to ignore the precise question focus and sometimes offered pre-prepared material that was not shaped to the question's demand.

Some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play instead choosing sections that were from the same Act, and in some instances, from the same scene. This does not convey a breadth of knowledge and understanding to the examiner.

Some candidates appeared not to understand that when the questions ask, 'As a performer', 'As a designer' or 'As a director' that is a direct appeal to candidates to adopt the relevant perspective and to write their answers from the appropriate perspective, using the first-person voice.

Generally, students wrote better when they were answering from the point of view as a director, than when writing as a performer. This was possibly because the directorial focus allowed them greater freedom to interpret their chosen sections from the extract and play in a more holistic way.

There were several examples where the 'director' devoted rather too much attention to production elements such as lighting, costume and set, and too little attention on directing the actors.

Examiners also reported seeing a number of very short responses that were self-penalising, or candidates who offered one very long response and one very short one. It was rare for this to be a successful strategy for attracting marks.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed with many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to facial expressions such as scrunching their forehead or mouths, frowning their brows or squinting their eyes. When these ideas were applied to characters within a naturalistic performance, they were rarely seen to match the subtleties required by the style of play.

Design questions attracted responses at either extreme of achievement. There were some impressive answers on design seen this series. Some candidates wrote enthusiastically, and often inventively, about costumes for Ariel and Caliban, and there were some very interesting and workable set designs seen for the opening of *The Lion and the Jewel* and for the creation of the transition between memory and the present in *Enron*.

Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels. It is these levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element attracts more reward when the interpretation is clearly justified.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The Tempest

(a) This was a popular play in this series.

Many candidates displayed an enthusiasm for *The Tempest* and appeared to enjoy answering this question about Caliban.

As mentioned in the general comments about candidate responses above, many candidates addressed the task in the question and gave performance ideas for the role of Caliban but did not always focus on the purpose of the question. Stronger candidates targeted the requirement to offer performance ideas calculated precisely to convey Caliban's attitudes toward Prospero and Miranda.

Where Caliban's 'attitudes' were discussed, they were principally focused on his attitudes towards Prospero. These often explored Caliban's resentment, tinged with varying degrees of loathing. Better answers revealed a secure understanding of the background to Caliban's bitterness towards Prospero, explaining that Prospero had effectively usurped Caliban's place as 'king' of the island and therefore given Caliban a cause for his hostility towards him.

Other sensitive readings focused on Caliban's expression of nostalgia for the past, when Prospero 'stroked me and made much of me' and they explored some complexity in his attitude towards someone who once treated him humanely.

Others concentrated on Caliban's fear of Prospero's magical powers and of his ability to torment Caliban with physical pain.

Relatively few candidates discussed how they might convey Caliban's attitude towards Miranda, although there were some inventive responses that considered expressions of lust towards her, some of which were more appropriate to the stage than others. Some candidates considered Caliban to be ungrateful to Miranda who had shown him kindness in the 'early days'. Others allowed him to show remorse for his previous actions although this suggestion runs counter to his expressed wish to have 'peopled else/This isle with Calibans'.

- (b) Candidates tended to write well about practical suggestions for costume design and demonstrated a grasp of the issue of 'contrast' with the weaker responses failing to ground those suggestions with evidence from the extract.

Candidates should be encouraged to include sketches in response to questions about visual elements of stagecraft and when writing about costume they should always give some indications of period, style, condition and fit, as well as naming individual garments and considering fabrics, shapes and colours.

There were some successful responses from candidates who clearly knew the play and characters well and were aware of what sort of activities they needed to be dressed for. The most practical designers considered the need for Ariel to be agile and to give the impression of both flying and being invisible.

Some answers were vague about Caliban's costume and they concentrated more on prosthetic facial or bodily deformities or lesions. One or two suggested a ripped shirt that flapped open to reveal welts on Caliban's back to indicate the cruelty he has suffered at the hands of Prospero.

Most were competent or above and showed understanding of the characters. Some candidates created costumes in general rather than creating them with close reference to the specific details from the extract.

Some innovative ideas were seen and when candidates focused on contrast – the requirement of the question- they obviously achieved more than those who had them dressed alike, both wearing the attire of Jeeves out of the *Jeeves and Wooster* stories, in one instance.

Some candidates incorporated chains in their designs for each character but suggested quite definite distinctions between them, with Caliban in iron manacles and Ariel decorated in fine gold or silver necklace-like chains.

One or two candidates worked on the idea of Ariel representing the elements of air or water – even fire 'I flamed amazement' while Caliban was seen as firmly of the earth.

SCG

Those who integrated SCG material into their answer by considering 17th century notions of 'power', 'hierarchy', usurpation, colonialism and Jacobean attitudes to 'magic', were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely outlined Shakespeare's interest in these themes at the start of the response.

Some candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre but did not succeed in making their points relevant.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and forfeited the bulk of the 10 marks available.

Question 2

The Country Wife

- (a) There were very few responses to this question and the question was occasionally attempted by candidates who were ‘having a go’ at every single question on the paper, either out of a misunderstanding of the requirements of the rubric or as ‘something to do’ before they were permitted to leave the exam hall.

It is therefore difficult to draw meaningful conclusion about the achievements of those who had actually studied the play.

Overall, Candidates didn’t tend to consider the historical context of the costumes. Those that chose to answer this often wrote about contemporary wedding attire or failed to offer any flavour or ‘sense of occasion’.

- (b) There were even fewer responses to this question. Of the handful seen, some appeared to understand the relationship between Lucy and Alithea although some confused the mistress for the maid.

Of the few that did answer the question, several ignored the entrance of the men and didn’t consider the comedy within the extract.

A few discussed Lucy’s role from a director’s point of view rather than a performer’s but overall there were very few answers seen that offered a clear interpretation of Lucy’s character.

Others attempted an interpretation but by glossing over her loyalty to Alithea and her understanding of Sparkish’s failings in favour of playing up the ‘cheeky’ employee stereotype, opportunities were missed.

This is not to say that acknowledging Lucy’s cheekiness was not credit-worthy but if this was the only trait of Lucy’s identified, the answers were often quite restricted.

SCG

Better candidates generally understood the social and historical context of the play and what a Restoration comedy/comedy of manners represented within the movement of the time. Some candidates wrote about conventions surrounding marriage in answers to 2 (a) and although rarely achieved, some mentioned the comic style.

Question 3

The Death of a Salesman

- (a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good and some excellent responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question’s precise demands and showed real understanding of the dysfunctional family as represented by the Loman clan. Some candidates declared the relationships to be complicated but then wrote about a conventional ‘nuclear’ family with respected parents and ‘much-loved’ sons.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text and quoted from it, to create a structure for their answers.

In strong answers, candidates noted how the tense atmosphere prior to the start of the extract as Biff and Willy argue is replaced by moments of family unity when Happy announces his ‘feasible idea’.

Some noted Happy’s yearning for a return to the ‘comradeship’ with Biff that he had enjoyed in his youth. Others focused on the way that Willy seemed to transform in the extract from being Biff’s harshest critic to his ‘mentor’ as of old, assuming his old paternal relationship and rekindling

something of the 'worship' that he had once harboured for his elder son that had been destroyed in Boston.

Most candidates dealt quite sensitively with Willy's exasperation with Linda's contributions to the conversation and his constant angry retorts to her well-meaning interventions and how this affected Biff and Happy.

They noted the complexity of the family dynamic as despite Willy's constant deprecation of her ideas, Linda makes sustained attempts to keep Willy 'upbeat', disregarding his nastiness towards her in a way that her sons cannot do.

Some focused on the dynamic between Happy and Biff as well as on Happy's pathetic attempt to gain attention from his parents who routinely ignored him.

Linda's vague instruction to 'go to sleep, dear' in answer to his announcement that he is getting married, summed up, for some perceptive candidates the complicated family relations that Miller explores.

(b) This was the more popular question.

Although the question did not require an 'interpretation' of Happy's character as such, it did require an understanding of his character, and this was sadly missing in very many answers.

Happy was presented as a 'peacemaker', or the 'glue' that keeps the family together. He was presented as a thoroughly 'nice' young man by the vast majority of candidates.

Although the questions in Section A relate closely to the events in the prescribed extract, it is to be expected that – as evident in the marking criteria – candidates offer ideas that are consistent with the play as a whole.

Happy, even in this extract, reveals the misogyny that is presented in the audience's introduction to the character early in Act One where his attitude to women, as disposable commodities, is first aired. In this extract he promises Biff 'any babe you want' and guarantees to deliver.

Some candidates did not attempt the question focus to perform Happy; either adopting a director's perspective or simply writing in a descriptive way about what Happy says in the extract.

Others ignored the purpose of the question, 'to convey his feelings for Biff, Willy and Linda at this point in the play'.

In better answers, candidates 'performed' writing in the first person and they addressed Happy's feelings for each family member in turn.

Most acknowledged that Happy's feelings for Biff include love, a desire to rescue him and a possibly unconscious desire to compete with him, especially for his father's love.

Candidates acknowledged Happy's feelings for Willy including both his strong love for him and his desire to be loved in return; to be validated by him.

Better answers revealed the odd mix of his feelings for Linda include a reverence towards her, his 'idealised' woman, and an unfulfilled need to be noticed by her.

Far too many candidates took 'Happy's' name to reflect his character, while in reality it is a 'nickname' most unfitting for a man who pretends to hold a position that he has not attained and who is unable to form a meaningful relationship with a woman.

SCG

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SGC into their responses. Reference to 'The American Dream' featured frequently, as did the economic circumstances of the era. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production' and this was generally a fruitful avenue for analysis.

Question 4

The Lion and the Jewel

One of the least discussed extracts and relatively few answers were seen.

(a) Only a handful of answers were seen on this option.

In better answers, it was evident that candidates were well prepared to answer a design question and they had clearly practiced their sketches.

Examiners were disappointed to note that for some candidates it appeared that they had never considered supporting their answers with sketches and they offered quite garbled descriptions of what the audience would see on stage often completely lacking in vital references to design fundamentals such as scale, actor/audience positioning, materials, fabrics, colours, styles, shapes.

Those offering set design often omitted the dominating Odan Tree and focused instead on the schoolroom which they described as an interior space.

Costume designers appeared unfamiliar with the details of Yoruba attire, although they were able to suggest colours for Sidi's outfit and occasionally referred to a bare midriff.

Lakunle's Westernised costume was recognised but not itemised.

Few attempted technical design ideas and those who did offered quite generalised suggestions revealing limited knowledge of the sort of instruments likely to be played in Ilujinle.

(b) This question also attracted relatively few answers, but they were of better quality than those of 4(a).

Candidates seemed to appreciate the comic nature of the relationship between Sidi and Lakunle as well as the more serious comment that Soyinka is making about the tension between traditional values and the encroaching influence of the West as represented respectively by Sidi and Lakunle.

Most answers focused on the conflict between the couple over the paying of the Bride price and Lakunle's more 'progressive' views.

There were some useful directions for the pair that highlighted Lakunle's self-importance, as well as Sidi's vanity. Some noted how Lakunle's attempt to impress Sidi with his loquaciousness often had the opposite effect as she simply did not understand either the words or the deeds of his courtship.

Most directed Sidi's distracted attention to her beads, rather than listening to Lakunle a comical high spot of their interaction.

SCG

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play - 'modernity' v 'tradition.' Very few gained marks on the genre or style of the piece due to lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status.

Question 5

Enron

- (a) This play was not tackled by many candidates. Those who had studied it mainly chose the director's option.

There were some designs offered but they did not always take account of the action of either Scene 6 or 7. Instead they offered ideas for creating a composite setting. A few candidates ignored the scenes altogether and their ideas could have been applied to any section of the play.

In better answers, candidates considered the strange relationship between Skilling and his disembodied daughter as presented in design terms. They included attention to the physical sequence to be enacted at the end of Scene 6 and the transition to the office scene in Scene 7.

However, very few of these better answers were reported by examiners.

- (b) This question attracted more answers and there were some very good ideas for presenting the 'love/hate' relationship between Skilling and Roe with most acknowledging that there was more hate in the mix and that there was more lust than love.

Some candidates noted that despite the fact that Claudia and Skilling are verbally skirmishing, there is still a sexual tension between them.

They noted that Claudia's attempts at a jocular/friendly approach, belie her attempt to return to working with Skilling.

Skilling's attempts to resist Claudia were sometimes well captured and directors found some humour in the moment when Skilling seems to be about to kiss her when he is distracted by the Enron graphic flashing on the screen behind her.

Astute candidates made sure to direct the pair to show how much they actually share the thrill of realising the 'worth' of Enron.

SCG

Surprisingly given the amount of contextual information that there is available on the rise and fall of Enron, few candidates offered really secure work on SCG.

Some candidates were able to discuss the social and historical context of the play in relation to the downfall of Enron.

There was also a general awareness of this being a 'non-naturalistic' play but where 'naturalistic' acting was used to create the emotion, especially in the interaction between Roe and Skilling.

The only additional context offered, as in previous series, was centred on Claudia's position as a woman, but negligible attention was given to the time-period or to the style and genre of the piece.

SECTION B

Question 6

Medea

- (a) This was a minority choice.

Examiners were surprised to see how few candidates selected this option, as the Chorus is such an integral part of the play and the genre.

Those candidates who did attempt it did not always consider ways to convey their concern and/or fears for Medea but often wrote more generally.

Those who kept their focus on the precise demand of the question frequently referred to the first appearance of the Chorus and they commented on the composition of the Chorus as representatives of Medea's 'support' as she navigates her intolerable position.

Better answers discussed the 'look' of the Chorus as well as their unified 'voice'. They considered the number of Chorus members that they wished to use and whether they would have a similar look or, as most opted for, whether they would each represent a different woman – old and young with stark differences in appearance.

Most candidates registered the Chorus' initial concern for Medea, understanding her grief at Jason's betrayal, but urging her to leave punishment of Jason to Zeus.

Some noted their protective attitude towards her as she laments her plight, and they accept the need to keep silent. There were various interpretations of how 'sympathetic' the Chorus is to Medea's destructive nature.

The Chorus urge Medea not to murder her children, fearing the consequences for all parties and some candidates wrote well about their futile attempts to dissuade her from her deadly scheme.

At the end of the play, they are stunned by the outcome for Medea as she escapes in her chariot; ascribing Medea's 'flight' to the gods. Some mentioned the Chorus acting almost as a mouthpiece or outlet for the audience's shock at the stunning finale.

- (b) Examiners reported seeing the full range of answers to this question.

Most candidates appeared to have understood that Medea's complexities are compounded by a kind of mania that grips her as a consequence of Jason's betrayal.

It was a striking feature of answers to 6b that many candidates appeared to be answering a question from a previous series about Medea's powers of manipulation. Candidates who regurgitated answers that they may have presented before to a question about Medea's manipulative qualities, missed the question focus. It was possible to credit some of the practical ideas in such answers, but candidates rarely rose to the middle levels with work that failed to get to grips with 'mental instability'.

In better answers, Medea's mental instability remained at the forefront of candidates' responses.

Focused candidates worked through key moments from the play when Medea's sanity is in question.

They explored Medea's initial appearance and her expression of violent hatred towards Jason, bordering on insanity.

Some cited Medea's desperation when pleading with the Chorus to keep silent, while she exacts her revenge on her 'enemies' as an example of her psychotic tendencies.

There were some candidates who explored her manic exultation at being granted a day's grace to stay in Corinth to execute her revenge and they cited Medea's paranoia, based on a fear of being ridiculed.

There was some sympathy for Medea's crazed decision to murder Glauce and Creon and rob Jason of his new love and life but her determination to spite Jason by slaughtering their children was considered by some to be only ascribable to a kind of madness.

In the very best answers, candidates offered detailed performance suggestions taking in aspects such as almost convulsive glee as she listens to the Messenger's description of the agonising deaths of Glauce and Creon where she 'quivers with unhinged delight' as one candidate described it.

Weaker answers were literary in their approach to the question and did not succeed in physicalising Medea's mental instability, although they seemed to recognise it.

Some very good performance ideas were offered for the end of the play and for her crazed or dazed interaction with the dead bodies (often in body bags or sleeping bags) of her murdered boys.

As always, the most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's fragile mental state.

Candidates should be reminded not to refer to the text using page numbers or line numbers (editions vary) but to integrate short, pithy quotations into their own descriptions or explanations of the performance detail.

SCG

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. This is not to say that a potted history of the development of Greek theatre was a purposeful way to approach the inclusion of SCG.

Often, marks for understanding of style were derived from sensitive direction or performance detail that captured the essence of the tragic form.

In 6a candidates who displayed knowledge and understanding of the function of the Chorus fared better than those who treated the Chorus as an alien concept. Top level candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers.

Question 7

Tartuffe

This was not a popular choice for this series.

- (a) No answers to this question were reported as having been seen.
- (b) A few answers were seen to this question, but it was generally poorly handled.

Some candidates failed to notice that the purpose of the question was to highlight different aspects of Tartuffe's character rather than to create comedy, a question from a previous series.

It was evident that a few candidates who attempted this question had only a passing knowledge of the play, its characters or its plot.

Where candidates did focus on the question, they identified Tartuffe's character as being something like a chameleon, always adapting to his environment and being bullying, contemptuous and dismissive in the company of Dorine while adopting a more fawning attitude towards Elmire. One candidate described him as having a 'split personality'.

Unfortunately, even where candidates were able to identify Tartuffe's character traits, they rarely succeeded in finding suitable ways to express these traits in scenes of interaction with Dorine or Elmire.

There were a couple of reasonable suggestions for Tartuffe's interaction with Dorine when he is insisting on her covering her 'bosom' and then contrastingly positively leering down Elmire's

cleavage when he finally gets to grapple with her, physically, in the scene where Orgon is concealed under the table.

Tartuffe's obsequiousness with Elmire was more confidently created than his more domineering characteristic with Dorine.

Tartuffe is a comedy that is often extremely funny in production but answers to this question rarely tapped into Moliere's comic style.

SCG

There was some evidence of knowledge of cultural or social context in candidate's answers in reference to the conventions of marriage in 18th century French society.

Some candidates included reference to the religious context of the play. Others alluded to its comic style without necessarily achieving that style in their answers.

Question 8

The Seagull

(a) There were too few responses to this option to make very many meaningful comments.

The directorial focus was not well-handled and most of the answers seen adopted a descriptive approach to the question.

Some candidates barely progressed from a description of the first meeting of Trigorin and Nina at Konstantin's play. Of these, some answers focused more on Arkadina's jealousy of the young Nina than they did on the beginnings of a relationship between the couple who formed the focus of the question.

In better answers there was more of an overview of the developing relationship including some attention to the encounter between Nina and Trigorin at the croquet lawn as Trigorin returns from fishing.

In better answers there was some practical exploration of Nina's delivery of her 'parting' gift – the inscribed medallion – and how this seems to ignite Trigorin's interest in Nina.

The brief meeting before Trigorin leaves and his arrangement to meet Nina in Moscow was also well handled by one or two candidates.

More than one candidate seemed to think that Nina encounters Trigorin again in Act Four, which merely evidenced a lack of basic knowledge of the plot.

(b) This was the more popular question on *The Seagull*, but examiners reported seeing very few responses where candidates had actually grasped the main thrust of the question, 'How would you perform the role of ARKADINA ... to achieve your intended audience response to her character?'

Examiners reported seeing scores of answers where no response to Arkadina's character was ever identified.

It was disappointing to read so many answers from candidates who often revealed a good understanding, and sometimes a sensitive understanding, of Arkadina's qualities – her vanity, her selfishness, her stinginess, her shortcomings as a mother and a sister, her jealousy of her rival, her possessiveness of her lover. However, without a single mention of how they wanted the audience to respond to Arkadina, these candidates' answers which missed the question's purpose, could only be described as 'competent', at best, and not able to reach the higher levels of award.

A handful of candidates did read the question and did attempt to focus on the audience response that they wanted to achieve.

Of these, most were unanimous in wanting to elicit responses of dislike of Arkadina's selfish treatment of others and her stinginess; shock at her treatment of her own son; amusement at her

vanity about her appearance and 'youthfulness'; pity when she is betrayed by Trigorin and sympathy at the end of the play where her maternal concerns are shown for the first time.

Most candidates spent rather too long on Arkadina's first appearance and her 'boorish' behaviour at the 'play' preventing them from developing the character and the audience responses further.

SCG

Some understanding of style and genre could be inferred from the apparently naturalistic performances that were described, although negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen. Limited explicit reference to period was seen.

Mention of a Stanislavskian approach to acting was credit-worthy, but some candidates devoted too much time and space to discussing Stanislavskian rehearsal methods, which diverted their attention from the thrust of the questions.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

(a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas that would help to convey 'different aspects of Christopher's character.'

A majority of candidates took this as a cue to write about Christopher's 'neurodiversity', rather than about his character traits such as his intelligence, inquisitiveness, determination, ambition, loyalty, obsessiveness, literal-mindedness, wariness of others, phobias and rigid set of likes and dislikes other traits that could be convincingly conveyed at various points through the play by an actor.

Some candidates seemed to select sections at random, not all of which were helpful to them in conveying character. For example, a lot of candidates described in some detail, the physical theatre sequence where Christopher assumes the weightlessness of an astronaut but often this was really an appreciation of the work of the Ensemble rather than being focused, as an actor, on Christopher's performance.

Other candidates tended to focus on different times when Christopher becomes distressed rather than different aspects of his character.

There were some very good answers seen to this question, however, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of Christopher and of the style of the play coupled with a sensitive approach to performing this complex role.

This is the most popular text in Section B, so examiners reported seeing some of the most impressive as well as some of the weakest answers of the series.

(b) The majority of candidates responded well to this question, and, as has been stated in reports from previous series, many exhibited a clear influence from the original National Theatre production, although this was rarely explicitly stated.

There were some really strong answers to this question from candidates who had fully embraced the concept of the ensemble and had thought in advance about how they might direct them at different points of the play. Confident candidates were able to select their moments judiciously.

In better answers, Christopher's experience as created by the ensemble, was referred to in reference to for example: Christopher's struggle with new technologies, his encounters with a range of diverse fellow passengers, his brushes with figures of authority, his amazement at the crowds and his panic when he loses Toby.

In the better answers, candidates' directorial suggestions for the direction of the Ensemble, included details about their staging decisions and use of space by the actors, their direction of the actors in terms of their body language, facial expressions, physical theatre skills, synchronicity, lifts,

and clearly described physical routines. In the best answers there was clear characterisation of a variety of diverse roles that interact with Christopher.

Some answers did not give enough precise detail about what the ensemble was doing on stage, and it was not possible to visualise what an audience might see/experience as a result of the 'direction'.

SCG

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play – many suggested it was a murder mystery or a 'Brechtian' play but very few alluded to 'physical theatre'. Much misunderstanding of Brecht's work was in evidence. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to neurodiversity and there was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SGC for this play.

Question 10

Snow in Midsummer

(a) This play was a minority choice with Q10a being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the first appearance of Tianyun and Fei Fei in Act 1, Scene 1, which establishes their relationship as Mother and Daughter.

There were some comments seen about Tianyun's scepticism about Fei Fei's superstitions and her shock at Fei Fei's supernatural encounter with Dou Yi and her reluctant promise to help her honour the ghost of Dou Yi, which she fulfils out of love for Fei Fei.

One popular moment chosen was their visit to the Temple focusing on Tianyun's shock when Fei-Fei claims Dou Yi as a sister and accuses her mother of causing the swarm of locusts.

Better candidates included the ultimate reconciliation between mother and daughter in the final moments of the play.

(b) There were too few responses to the question about Dr Lu to draw meaningful inferences. His cynical exploitation of ordinary people had largely been missed by the candidates who attempted this option.

SCG

Students didn't often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did link it to the original Chinese version of the play. Those that considered the play's episodic, and 'non-naturalistic' genre were the most successful.

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Examiners reported seeing numerous examples of answers where candidates did fulfil the purpose of the question, but they are not yet in the majority of answers seen.

Examiners also noted an improvement in the way some students incorporated their knowledge and understanding of social and cultural context (SGC) as well as of the style and genre of the plays that they had studied.

There were, however, still many instances where candidates displayed an insecure grasp of SGC and did not devote enough attention to illustrating their explicit knowledge and understanding, particularly for genre and style.

At the other extreme, as noted in previous reports, some students' answers were somewhat outweighed with SGC material at the expense of communicating a practical theatrical approach to the chosen question.

Some candidates wrote more of a literary analysis of their chosen text or extract rather than exploring its theatrical and dramatic possibilities.

In Section A, weaker answers strayed from the prescribed extract and, in several instances, completely ignored it, roaming through the play as a whole and acquiring limited credit in the process.

In Section B, weaker answers tended to ignore the precise question focus and sometimes offered pre-prepared material that was not shaped to the question's demand.

Some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play instead choosing sections that were from the same Act, and in some instances, from the same scene. This does not convey a breadth of knowledge and understanding to the examiner.

Some candidates appeared not to understand that when the questions ask, 'As a performer', 'As a designer' or 'As a director' that is a direct appeal to candidates to adopt the relevant perspective and to write their answers from the appropriate perspective, using the first-person voice.

Generally, students wrote better when they were answering from the point of view as a director, than when writing as a performer. This was possibly because the directorial focus allowed them greater freedom to interpret their chosen sections from the extract and play in a more holistic way.

There were several examples where the 'director' devoted rather too much attention to production elements such as lighting, costume and set, and too little attention on directing the actors.

Examiners also reported seeing a number of very short responses that were self-penalising, or candidates who offered one very long response and one very short one. It was rare for this to be a successful strategy for attracting marks.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed with many candidates restricted themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to facial expressions such as scrunching their forehead or mouths, frowning their brows or squinting their eyes. When these ideas were applied to characters within a naturalistic performance, they were rarely seen to match the subtleties required by the style of play.

Design questions attracted responses at either extreme of achievement. There were some impressive answers on design seen this series. Some candidates wrote enthusiastically, and often inventively, about costumes for Ariel and Caliban, and there were some very interesting and workable set designs seen for the opening of *The Lion and the Jewel* and for the creation of the transition between memory and the present in *Enron*.

Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels. It is these levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element attracts more reward when the interpretation is clearly justified.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The Tempest

(a) This was a popular play in this series.

Many candidates displayed an enthusiasm for *The Tempest* and appeared to enjoy answering this question about Caliban.

As mentioned in the general comments about candidate responses above, many candidates addressed the task in the question and gave performance ideas for the role of Caliban but did not always focus on the purpose of the question. Stronger candidates targeted the requirement to offer performance ideas calculated precisely to convey Caliban's attitudes toward Prospero and Miranda.

Where Caliban's 'attitudes' were discussed, they were principally focused on his attitudes towards Prospero. These often explored Caliban's resentment, tinged with varying degrees of loathing. Better answers revealed a secure understanding of the background to Caliban's bitterness towards Prospero, explaining that Prospero had effectively usurped Caliban's place as 'king' of the island and therefore given Caliban a cause for his hostility towards him.

Other sensitive readings focused on Caliban's expression of nostalgia for the past, when Prospero 'stroked me and made much of me' and they explored some complexity in his attitude towards someone who once treated him humanely.

Others concentrated on Caliban's fear of Prospero's magical powers and of his ability to torment Caliban with physical pain.

Relatively few candidates discussed how they might convey Caliban's attitude towards Miranda, although there were some inventive responses that considered expressions of lust towards her, some of which were more appropriate to the stage than others. Some candidates considered Caliban to be ungrateful to Miranda who had shown him kindness in the 'early days'. Others allowed him to show remorse for his previous actions although this suggestion runs counter to his expressed wish to have 'peopled else/This isle with Calibans'.

- (b) Candidates tended to write well about practical suggestions for costume design and demonstrated a grasp of the issue of 'contrast' with the weaker responses failing to ground those suggestions with evidence from the extract.

Candidates should be encouraged to include sketches in response to questions about visual elements of stagecraft and when writing about costume they should always give some indications of period, style, condition and fit, as well as naming individual garments and considering fabrics, shapes and colours.

There were some successful responses from candidates who clearly knew the play and characters well and were aware of what sort of activities they needed to be dressed for. The most practical designers considered the need for Ariel to be agile and to give the impression of both flying and being invisible.

Some answers were vague about Caliban's costume and they concentrated more on prosthetic facial or bodily deformities or lesions. One or two suggested a ripped shirt that flapped open to reveal welts on Caliban's back to indicate the cruelty he has suffered at the hands of Prospero.

Most were competent or above and showed understanding of the characters. Some candidates created costumes in general rather than creating them with close reference to the specific details from the extract.

Some innovative ideas were seen and when candidates focused on contrast – the requirement of the question- they obviously achieved more than those who had them dressed alike, both wearing the attire of Jeeves out of the *Jeeves and Wooster* stories, in one instance.

Some candidates incorporated chains in their designs for each character but suggested quite definite distinctions between them, with Caliban in iron manacles and Ariel decorated in fine gold or silver necklace-like chains.

One or two candidates worked on the idea of Ariel representing the elements of air or water – even fire 'I flamed amazement' while Caliban was seen as firmly of the earth.

SCG

Those who integrated SCG material into their answer by considering 17th century notions of 'power', 'hierarchy', usurpation, colonialism and Jacobean attitudes to 'magic', were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely outlined Shakespeare's interest in these themes at the start of the response.

Some candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre but did not succeed in making their points relevant.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and forfeited the bulk of the 10 marks available.

Question 2

The Country Wife

- (a) There were very few responses to this question and the question was occasionally attempted by candidates who were ‘having a go’ at every single question on the paper, either out of a misunderstanding of the requirements of the rubric or as ‘something to do’ before they were permitted to leave the exam hall.

It is therefore difficult to draw meaningful conclusion about the achievements of those who had actually studied the play.

Overall, Candidates didn’t tend to consider the historical context of the costumes. Those that chose to answer this often wrote about contemporary wedding attire or failed to offer any flavour or ‘sense of occasion’.

- (b) There were even fewer responses to this question. Of the handful seen, some appeared to understand the relationship between Lucy and Alithea although some confused the mistress for the maid.

Of the few that did answer the question, several ignored the entrance of the men and didn’t consider the comedy within the extract.

A few discussed Lucy’s role from a director’s point of view rather than a performer’s but overall there were very few answers seen that offered a clear interpretation of Lucy’s character.

Others attempted an interpretation but by glossing over her loyalty to Alithea and her understanding of Sparkish’s failings in favour of playing up the ‘cheeky’ employee stereotype, opportunities were missed.

This is not to say that acknowledging Lucy’s cheekiness was not credit-worthy but if this was the only trait of Lucy’s identified, the answers were often quite restricted.

SCG

Better candidates generally understood the social and historical context of the play and what a Restoration comedy/comedy of manners represented within the movement of the time. Some candidates wrote about conventions surrounding marriage in answers to 2 (a) and although rarely achieved, some mentioned the comic style.

Question 3

The Death of a Salesman

- (a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good and some excellent responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question’s precise demands and showed real understanding of the dysfunctional family as represented by the Loman clan. Some candidates declared the relationships to be complicated but then wrote about a conventional ‘nuclear’ family with respected parents and ‘much-loved’ sons.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text and quoted from it, to create a structure for their answers.

In strong answers, candidates noted how the tense atmosphere prior to the start of the extract as Biff and Willy argue is replaced by moments of family unity when Happy announces his ‘feasible idea’.

Some noted Happy’s yearning for a return to the ‘comradeship’ with Biff that he had enjoyed in his youth. Others focused on the way that Willy seemed to transform in the extract from being Biff’s harshest critic to his ‘mentor’ as of old, assuming his old paternal relationship and rekindling

something of the 'worship' that he had once harboured for his elder son that had been destroyed in Boston.

Most candidates dealt quite sensitively with Willy's exasperation with Linda's contributions to the conversation and his constant angry retorts to her well-meaning interventions and how this affected Biff and Happy.

They noted the complexity of the family dynamic as despite Willy's constant deprecation of her ideas, Linda makes sustained attempts to keep Willy 'upbeat', disregarding his nastiness towards her in a way that her sons cannot do.

Some focused on the dynamic between Happy and Biff as well as on Happy's pathetic attempt to gain attention from his parents who routinely ignored him.

Linda's vague instruction to 'go to sleep, dear' in answer to his announcement that he is getting married, summed up, for some perceptive candidates the complicated family relations that Miller explores.

(b) This was the more popular question.

Although the question did not require an 'interpretation' of Happy's character as such, it did require an understanding of his character, and this was sadly missing in very many answers.

Happy was presented as a 'peacemaker', or the 'glue' that keeps the family together. He was presented as a thoroughly 'nice' young man by the vast majority of candidates.

Although the questions in Section A relate closely to the events in the prescribed extract, it is to be expected that – as evident in the marking criteria – candidates offer ideas that are consistent with the play as a whole.

Happy, even in this extract, reveals the misogyny that is presented in the audience's introduction to the character early in Act One where his attitude to women, as disposable commodities, is first aired. In this extract he promises Biff 'any babe you want' and guarantees to deliver.

Some candidates did not attempt the question focus to perform Happy; either adopting a director's perspective or simply writing in a descriptive way about what Happy says in the extract.

Others ignored the purpose of the question, 'to convey his feelings for Biff, Willy and Linda at this point in the play'.

In better answers, candidates 'performed' writing in the first person and they addressed Happy's feelings for each family member in turn.

Most acknowledged that Happy's feelings for Biff include love, a desire to rescue him and a possibly unconscious desire to compete with him, especially for his father's love.

Candidates acknowledged Happy's feelings for Willy including both his strong love for him and his desire to be loved in return; to be validated by him.

Better answers revealed the odd mix of his feelings for Linda include a reverence towards her, his 'idealised' woman, and an unfulfilled need to be noticed by her.

Far too many candidates took 'Happy's' name to reflect his character, while in reality it is a 'nickname' most unfitting for a man who pretends to hold a position that he has not attained and who is unable to form a meaningful relationship with a woman.

SCG

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SGC into their responses. Reference to 'The American Dream' featured frequently, as did the economic circumstances of the era. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production' and this was generally a fruitful avenue for analysis.

Question 4

The Lion and the Jewel

One of the least discussed extracts and relatively few answers were seen.

(a) Only a handful of answers were seen on this option.

In better answers, it was evident that candidates were well prepared to answer a design question and they had clearly practiced their sketches.

Examiners were disappointed to note that for some candidates it appeared that they had never considered supporting their answers with sketches and they offered quite garbled descriptions of what the audience would see on stage often completely lacking in vital references to design fundamentals such as scale, actor/audience positioning, materials, fabrics, colours, styles, shapes.

Those offering set design often omitted the dominating Odan Tree and focused instead on the schoolroom which they described as an interior space.

Costume designers appeared unfamiliar with the details of Yoruba attire, although they were able to suggest colours for Sidi's outfit and occasionally referred to a bare midriff.

Lakunle's Westernised costume was recognised but not itemised.

Few attempted technical design ideas and those who did offered quite generalised suggestions revealing limited knowledge of the sort of instruments likely to be played in Ilujinle.

(b) This question also attracted relatively few answers, but they were of better quality than those of 4(a).

Candidates seemed to appreciate the comic nature of the relationship between Sidi and Lakunle as well as the more serious comment that Soyinka is making about the tension between traditional values and the encroaching influence of the West as represented respectively by Sidi and Lakunle.

Most answers focused on the conflict between the couple over the paying of the Bride price and Lakunle's more 'progressive' views.

There were some useful directions for the pair that highlighted Lakunle's self-importance, as well as Sidi's vanity. Some noted how Lakunle's attempt to impress Sidi with his loquaciousness often had the opposite effect as she simply did not understand either the words or the deeds of his courtship.

Most directed Sidi's distracted attention to her beads, rather than listening to Lakunle a comical high spot of their interaction.

SCG

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play - 'modernity' v 'tradition.' Very few gained marks on the genre or style of the piece due to lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status.

Question 5

Enron

- (a) This play was not tackled by many candidates. Those who had studied it mainly chose the director's option.

There were some designs offered but they did not always take account of the action of either Scene 6 or 7. Instead they offered ideas for creating a composite setting. A few candidates ignored the scenes altogether and their ideas could have been applied to any section of the play.

In better answers, candidates considered the strange relationship between Skilling and his disembodied daughter as presented in design terms. They included attention to the physical sequence to be enacted at the end of Scene 6 and the transition to the office scene in Scene 7.

However, very few of these better answers were reported by examiners.

- (b) This question attracted more answers and there were some very good ideas for presenting the 'love/hate' relationship between Skilling and Roe with most acknowledging that there was more hate in the mix and that there was more lust than love.

Some candidates noted that despite the fact that Claudia and Skilling are verbally skirmishing, there is still a sexual tension between them.

They noted that Claudia's attempts at a jocular/friendly approach, belie her attempt to return to working with Skilling.

Skilling's attempts to resist Claudia were sometimes well captured and directors found some humour in the moment when Skilling seems to be about to kiss her when he is distracted by the Enron graphic flashing on the screen behind her.

Astute candidates made sure to direct the pair to show how much they actually share the thrill of realising the 'worth' of Enron.

SCG

Surprisingly given the amount of contextual information that there is available on the rise and fall of Enron, few candidates offered really secure work on SCG.

Some candidates were able to discuss the social and historical context of the play in relation to the downfall of Enron.

There was also a general awareness of this being a 'non-naturalistic' play but where 'naturalistic' acting was used to create the emotion, especially in the interaction between Roe and Skilling.

The only additional context offered, as in previous series, was centred on Claudia's position as a woman, but negligible attention was given to the time-period or to the style and genre of the piece.

SECTION B

Question 6

Medea

- (a) This was a minority choice.

Examiners were surprised to see how few candidates selected this option, as the Chorus is such an integral part of the play and the genre.

Those candidates who did attempt it did not always consider ways to convey their concern and/or fears for Medea but often wrote more generally.

Those who kept their focus on the precise demand of the question frequently referred to the first appearance of the Chorus and they commented on the composition of the Chorus as representatives of Medea's 'support' as she navigates her intolerable position.

Better answers discussed the 'look' of the Chorus as well as their unified 'voice'. They considered the number of Chorus members that they wished to use and whether they would have a similar look or, as most opted for, whether they would each represent a different woman – old and young with stark differences in appearance.

Most candidates registered the Chorus' initial concern for Medea, understanding her grief at Jason's betrayal, but urging her to leave punishment of Jason to Zeus.

Some noted their protective attitude towards her as she laments her plight, and they accept the need to keep silent. There were various interpretations of how 'sympathetic' the Chorus is to Medea's destructive nature.

The Chorus urge Medea not to murder her children, fearing the consequences for all parties and some candidates wrote well about their futile attempts to dissuade her from her deadly scheme.

At the end of the play, they are stunned by the outcome for Medea as she escapes in her chariot; ascribing Medea's 'flight' to the gods. Some mentioned the Chorus acting almost as a mouthpiece or outlet for the audience's shock at the stunning finale.

- (b) Examiners reported seeing the full range of answers to this question.

Most candidates appeared to have understood that Medea's complexities are compounded by a kind of mania that grips her as a consequence of Jason's betrayal.

It was a striking feature of answers to 6b that many candidates appeared to be answering a question from a previous series about Medea's powers of manipulation. Candidates who regurgitated answers that they may have presented before to a question about Medea's manipulative qualities, missed the question focus. It was possible to credit some of the practical ideas in such answers, but candidates rarely rose to the middle levels with work that failed to get to grips with 'mental instability'.

In better answers, Medea's mental instability remained at the forefront of candidates' responses.

Focused candidates worked through key moments from the play when Medea's sanity is in question.

They explored Medea's initial appearance and her expression of violent hatred towards Jason, bordering on insanity.

Some cited Medea's desperation when pleading with the Chorus to keep silent, while she exacts her revenge on her 'enemies' as an example of her psychotic tendencies.

There were some candidates who explored her manic exultation at being granted a day's grace to stay in Corinth to execute her revenge and they cited Medea's paranoia, based on a fear of being ridiculed.

There was some sympathy for Medea's crazed decision to murder Glauce and Creon and rob Jason of his new love and life but her determination to spite Jason by slaughtering their children was considered by some to be only ascribable to a kind of madness.

In the very best answers, candidates offered detailed performance suggestions taking in aspects such as almost convulsive glee as she listens to the Messenger's description of the agonising deaths of Glauce and Creon where she 'quivers with unhinged delight' as one candidate described it.

Weaker answers were literary in their approach to the question and did not succeed in physicalising Medea's mental instability, although they seemed to recognise it.

Some very good performance ideas were offered for the end of the play and for her crazed or dazed interaction with the dead bodies (often in body bags or sleeping bags) of her murdered boys.

As always, the most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's fragile mental state.

Candidates should be reminded not to refer to the text using page numbers or line numbers (editions vary) but to integrate short, pithy quotations into their own descriptions or explanations of the performance detail.

SCG

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. This is not to say that a potted history of the development of Greek theatre was a purposeful way to approach the inclusion of SCG.

Often, marks for understanding of style were derived from sensitive direction or performance detail that captured the essence of the tragic form.

In 6a candidates who displayed knowledge and understanding of the function of the Chorus fared better than those who treated the Chorus as an alien concept. Top level candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SCG into the body of their answers.

Question 7

Tartuffe

This was not a popular choice for this series.

- (a) No answers to this question were reported as having been seen.
- (b) A few answers were seen to this question, but it was generally poorly handled.

Some candidates failed to notice that the purpose of the question was to highlight different aspects of Tartuffe's character rather than to create comedy, a question from a previous series.

It was evident that a few candidates who attempted this question had only a passing knowledge of the play, its characters or its plot.

Where candidates did focus on the question, they identified Tartuffe's character as being something like a chameleon, always adapting to his environment and being bullying, contemptuous and dismissive in the company of Dorine while adopting a more fawning attitude towards Elmire. One candidate described him as having a 'split personality'.

Unfortunately, even where candidates were able to identify Tartuffe's character traits, they rarely succeeded in finding suitable ways to express these traits in scenes of interaction with Dorine or Elmire.

There were a couple of reasonable suggestions for Tartuffe's interaction with Dorine when he is insisting on her covering her 'bosom' and then contrastingly positively leering down Elmire's

cleavage when he finally gets to grapple with her, physically, in the scene where Orgon is concealed under the table.

Tartuffe's obsequiousness with Elmire was more confidently created than his more domineering characteristic with Dorine.

Tartuffe is a comedy that is often extremely funny in production but answers to this question rarely tapped into Moliere's comic style.

SCG

There was some evidence of knowledge of cultural or social context in candidate's answers in reference to the conventions of marriage in 18th century French society.

Some candidates included reference to the religious context of the play. Others alluded to its comic style without necessarily achieving that style in their answers.

Question 8

The Seagull

(a) There were too few responses to this option to make very many meaningful comments.

The directorial focus was not well-handled and most of the answers seen adopted a descriptive approach to the question.

Some candidates barely progressed from a description of the first meeting of Trigorin and Nina at Konstantin's play. Of these, some answers focused more on Arkadina's jealousy of the young Nina than they did on the beginnings of a relationship between the couple who formed the focus of the question.

In better answers there was more of an overview of the developing relationship including some attention to the encounter between Nina and Trigorin at the croquet lawn as Trigorin returns from fishing.

In better answers there was some practical exploration of Nina's delivery of her 'parting' gift – the inscribed medallion – and how this seems to ignite Trigorin's interest in Nina.

The brief meeting before Trigorin leaves and his arrangement to meet Nina in Moscow was also well handled by one or two candidates.

More than one candidate seemed to think that Nina encounters Trigorin again in Act Four, which merely evidenced a lack of basic knowledge of the plot.

(b) This was the more popular question on *The Seagull*, but examiners reported seeing very few responses where candidates had actually grasped the main thrust of the question, 'How would you perform the role of ARKADINA ... to achieve your intended audience response to her character?'

Examiners reported seeing scores of answers where no response to Arkadina's character was ever identified.

It was disappointing to read so many answers from candidates who often revealed a good understanding, and sometimes a sensitive understanding, of Arkadina's qualities – her vanity, her selfishness, her stinginess, her shortcomings as a mother and a sister, her jealousy of her rival, her possessiveness of her lover. However, without a single mention of how they wanted the audience to respond to Arkadina, these candidates' answers which missed the question's purpose, could only be described as 'competent', at best, and not able to reach the higher levels of award.

A handful of candidates did read the question and did attempt to focus on the audience response that they wanted to achieve.

Of these, most were unanimous in wanting to elicit responses of dislike of Arkadina's selfish treatment of others and her stinginess; shock at her treatment of her own son; amusement at her

vanity about her appearance and 'youthfulness'; pity when she is betrayed by Trigorin and sympathy at the end of the play where her maternal concerns are shown for the first time.

Most candidates spent rather too long on Arkadina's first appearance and her 'boorish' behaviour at the 'play' preventing them from developing the character and the audience responses further.

SCG

Some understanding of style and genre could be inferred from the apparently naturalistic performances that were described, although negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen. Limited explicit reference to period was seen.

Mention of a Stanislavskian approach to acting was credit-worthy, but some candidates devoted too much time and space to discussing Stanislavskian rehearsal methods, which diverted their attention from the thrust of the questions.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

(a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

The most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas that would help to convey 'different aspects of Christopher's character.'

A majority of candidates took this as a cue to write about Christopher's 'neurodiversity', rather than about his character traits such as his intelligence, inquisitiveness, determination, ambition, loyalty, obsessiveness, literal-mindedness, wariness of others, phobias and rigid set of likes and dislikes other traits that could be convincingly conveyed at various points through the play by an actor.

Some candidates seemed to select sections at random, not all of which were helpful to them in conveying character. For example, a lot of candidates described in some detail, the physical theatre sequence where Christopher assumes the weightlessness of an astronaut but often this was really an appreciation of the work of the Ensemble rather than being focused, as an actor, on Christopher's performance.

Other candidates tended to focus on different times when Christopher becomes distressed rather than different aspects of his character.

There were some very good answers seen to this question, however, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of Christopher and of the style of the play coupled with a sensitive approach to performing this complex role.

This is the most popular text in Section B, so examiners reported seeing some of the most impressive as well as some of the weakest answers of the series.

(b) The majority of candidates responded well to this question, and, as has been stated in reports from previous series, many exhibited a clear influence from the original National Theatre production, although this was rarely explicitly stated.

There were some really strong answers to this question from candidates who had fully embraced the concept of the ensemble and had thought in advance about how they might direct them at different points of the play. Confident candidates were able to select their moments judiciously.

In better answers, Christopher's experience as created by the ensemble, was referred to in reference to for example: Christopher's struggle with new technologies, his encounters with a range of diverse fellow passengers, his brushes with figures of authority, his amazement at the crowds and his panic when he loses Toby.

In the better answers, candidates' directorial suggestions for the direction of the Ensemble, included details about their staging decisions and use of space by the actors, their direction of the actors in terms of their body language, facial expressions, physical theatre skills, synchronicity, lifts,

and clearly described physical routines. In the best answers there was clear characterisation of a variety of diverse roles that interact with Christopher.

Some answers did not give enough precise detail about what the ensemble was doing on stage, and it was not possible to visualise what an audience might see/experience as a result of the 'direction'.

SCG

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play – many suggested it was a murder mystery or a 'Brechtian' play but very few alluded to 'physical theatre'. Much misunderstanding of Brecht's work was in evidence. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to neurodiversity and there was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SGC for this play.

Question 10

Snow in Midsummer

(a) This play was a minority choice with Q10a being the most frequently attempted.

Most candidates chose to write about the first appearance of Tianyun and Fei Fei in Act 1, Scene 1, which establishes their relationship as Mother and Daughter.

There were some comments seen about Tianyun's scepticism about Fei Fei's superstitions and her shock at Fei Fei's supernatural encounter with Dou Yi and her reluctant promise to help her honour the ghost of Dou Yi, which she fulfils out of love for Fei Fei.

One popular moment chosen was their visit to the Temple focusing on Tianyun's shock when Fei-Fei claims Dou Yi as a sister and accuses her mother of causing the swarm of locusts.

Better candidates included the ultimate reconciliation between mother and daughter in the final moments of the play.

(b) There were too few responses to the question about Dr Lu to draw meaningful inferences. His cynical exploitation of ordinary people had largely been missed by the candidates who attempted this option.

SCG

Students didn't often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did link it to the original Chinese version of the play. Those that considered the play's episodic, and 'non-naturalistic' genre were the most successful.

DRAMA

Paper 9482/13
Open-Book Written Examination 13

Key messages

As this syllabus becomes more established and teachers and candidates are becoming more familiar with the type and scope of questions set, so Examiners are noting an improvement in candidates' achievements.

In this series, answers were seen on most, though not all of the set texts, and some optional questions attracted too few responses to draw general inferences from.

The best responses came from candidates who had learned to discipline themselves to read their chosen questions very carefully so as to understand the precise question focus and then to ensure that they wrote an answer that directly addressed that focus.

Too often, it appeared that candidates wrote an answer to a question that they would have liked to have answered or indeed to a question that they had answered successfully, as a homework task, or in a mock examination, but which did not, unfortunately for them, appear on this paper.

Where candidates miss the question focus, they miss the opportunity to access the higher levels of achievement.

Workable and inventive answers were seen where candidates recognised that most questions have both a 'task' – for example, 'How would you perform the role of Ben?' and a 'purpose' – to convey his 'other-worldly' characteristics to the audience".

Where candidates only wrote about how they would play the role of Ben, (without discussing how he would convey his 'other-worldly characteristics to the audience) however detailed their performance ideas were, or however well supported from the text of the extract, they were unlikely to achieve more than a middle level mark, because they had not fulfilled the purpose behind the task.

Examiners reported seeing numerous examples of answers where candidates did fulfil the purpose of the question, but they are not yet in the majority of answers seen.

Examiners also noted an improvement in the way some candidates incorporated their knowledge and understanding of social and cultural context(SGC) as well as of the style and genre of the plays that they had studied.

There were, however, still many instances where candidates displayed an insecure grasp of SGC and did not devote enough attention to illustrating their explicit knowledge and understanding, particularly for genre and style.

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In **Section A**, weaker answers strayed from the prescribed extract and, in several instances, completely ignored it, roaming through the play as a whole and acquiring limited credit in the process.

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Some candidates did not choose enough of a range from their chosen play instead choosing sections that were from the same Act, and in some instances, from the same scene. This does not convey a breadth of knowledge and understanding to the Examiner.

Some candidates appeared not to understand that when the questions ask, 'As a performer', 'As a designer' or 'As a director' that is a direct appeal to candidates to adopt the relevant perspective and to write their answers from the appropriate perspective, using the first-person voice.

Generally, candidates wrote better when they were answering from the point of view as a director, than when writing as a performer. This was possibly because the directorial focus allowed them greater freedom to interpret their chosen sections from the extract and play in a more holistic way.

There were several examples where the 'director' devoted rather too much attention to production elements such as lighting, costume and set, and too little attention on directing the actors.

Examiners also reported seeing a number of very short responses that were self-penalising, or candidates who offered one very long response and one very short one. It was rare for this to be a successful strategy for attracting marks.

Performance questions remained popular but were not always well executed with many candidates restricting themselves to a narrow range of performance strategies which were frequently limited to facial expressions such as scrunching their forehead or mouths, furrowing their brows or squinting their eyes. When these ideas were applied to characters within a naturalistic performance, they were rarely seen to match the subtleties required by the style of play.

Design questions attracted very few responses. Some candidates wrote enthusiastically about staging/design ideas used to 'horrify' an audience in their answers to 6a on *Medea*, for example. There were also a couple of candidates who chose to write about their 'design vision' for *Snow in Midsummer*, although these were not developed responses.

Candidates need to be reminded that if they choose to answer on set or costume design, they should accompany their written responses with appropriately sized, labelled sketches.

Whatever perspective candidates were writing from, they need to be reminded that only through the use of judiciously selected textual support can they access the higher mark levels. It is these levels where the descriptors refer to the selected detail 'strongly' supporting the practical interpretation, in Level 5, and 'effectively' supporting the practical interpretation for Level 4.

Candidates should also be reminded that their practical interpretations of a character, section, or design element attracts more reward when the interpretation is clearly justified.

Section A

Question 1

The Tempest

(a) This was a popular play in this series.

Many candidates displayed an enthusiasm for *The Tempest* and appeared to enjoy answering this question about Antonio.

As mentioned in the general comments about candidate responses above, many candidates addressed the task in the question and gave performance ideas for the role of Antonio but did not always focus on the purpose of the question by targeting the requirement to offer performance ideas calculated to convey an 'interpretation' of Antonio.

Where candidates did attempt an 'interpretation' of Antonio they were principally focused on his many negative qualities. They recognised his complete self-interest and his indifference to the possible death of Ferdinand. They noted how disparaging he is towards Alonso, Gonzalo and the other courtiers and how dismissive he is of any claim to the throne that might be raised by Claribel after he and Sebastian have murdered her father.

Some candidates focused more on his complete lack of conscience over his usurpation of Prospero.

Some candidates relished the idea of portraying Antonio's 'thoroughly bad' character, and they made some lively suggestions for playing the role and for interacting with Sebastian who he fairly easily manipulates to agree to his 'dastardly plan'.

Some candidates commented on the fact that although Antonio is ruthless and wicked, he is also witty and brings much humour to the scenes where Gonzalo is rambling on in what one candidate described as 'his annoying way'.

Having identified Antonio's character traits, in better answers, candidates considered a range of performance ideas calculated to convey those traits to an audience using vocal, facial and physical expression. The best answers used the text throughout to illustrate their answers.

- (b) This question was less popular, but some good answers were seen. It was obvious to Examiners when candidates had taken the opportunities offered by the opportunity to work practically on the play that they understood the power of non-verbal communication on stage.

Some such candidates often started with laying out their staging decisions; they had considered the positioning of Antonio and Sebastian on stage in relation to the sleeping figures of the king and his retinue, asleep and defenceless.

There were some sensitive ideas for the use of the stage by the actors as Antonio first incites Sebastian to murder and then the pair collude about killing the king, now speaking at a distance from his prone body, now edging ever closer.

It was surprising that some weaker answers contained almost none of Shakespeare's text, a serious omission in approaching a section of text where Antonio's subtle use of language ensnares Sebastian into agreeing to murder.

More sensitive candidates spent some time in discussing Antonio's use of pause and emphasis as he tries to incite Sebastian to murder; they gave equal attention to Sebastian's responses and apparent reluctance to understand Antonio's meaning.

The question focus was the creation of suspense for the audience, although in weaker answers this focus was not adequately addressed.

Candidates who did address it wrote about the sudden appearance of Ariel as the villains withdraw to 'talk apart', causing anticipation and suspense for the audience. Better answers also incorporated the use of sounds or special lighting and/or effects when Ariel enters to add to the suspense. Not all candidates reached the climax of the scene, the sudden awakening of Gonzalo and Alonso to see the villains with dagger drawn, but those who did often made much of a 'freeze-frame' moment, allowing Antonio to think up an excuse and try to save himself from detection.

SCG

Those who integrated SCG material into their answer by considering 17th century notions of 'power', 'hierarchy', usurpation, colonialism and Jacobean attitudes to 'magic', were often more successful when answering on this text than those who merely outlined Shakespeare's interest in these themes at the start of the response.

Some candidates referred to the original performance of the play at the Blackfriars theatre but did not succeed in making their points relevant.

Some candidates offered no explicit reference to SCG and forfeited the bulk of the 10 marks available.

Question 2

The Country Wife

There were no answers to this question reported by Examiners.

Question 3

The Death of a Salesman

- (a) This was one of the most attempted questions, and many good and some excellent responses were seen.

The most successful answers centred on the question's precise demands and showed real understanding of the character of Ben and his 'other-worldly' qualities derived from the fact that he is some sort of emanation from Willy's diseased mind or simply a memory.

Some candidates did not appear to understand the concept of 'other-worldly' as envisaged by the Question and they wrote about how Ben was 'outside' of the social circle that Willy moves in. Examiners were advised to accept the candidates' understanding of the term, and to credit practical ideas that were in alignment with the candidates' interpretation of 'other-worldly'.

The most successful were those who closely followed the text during Ben's appearances and quoted from his lines to create a structure for their answers.

Ben's 'other-worldly character, was discussed by many candidates as consisting of, for example, his appearance, as described by Miller, 'he has an aura of far-places about him'. Some referred to the fact that on each appearance he is introduced by distinctive music.

Other candidates noted how Ben is always associated with time, the watch that he gave to Willy – and which Willy pawned to fund one of Biff's tuition courses – is in many ways a symbol of Ben's life lived 'in a hurry' and always rushing to catch a train or a plane. Ben is always citing lack of time as an excuse to leave Willy, making Willy feel abandoned.

Ben also tends to speak in clichés, and he presents a caricature of the successful businessman, something that Willy aspires to but has never truly attained.

Some candidates mentioned that Ben's lack of family is something to be pitied, and that Willy, who has the love of a good wife and two doting sons (until Biff discovered his affair) is far the richer of the brothers, if only he would realise it.

Many successful answers offered suggestions for Ben's physical appearance and choice of costume. Traditionally, Ben is presented as something of a spectral figure wearing white or ghostly grey colours and dressed in the fashion of a by-gone era and a few candidates elaborated on this idea.

A couple of candidates suggested that Ben's speech might be slightly distorted, electronically. One suggestion was that he disappeared into a fog machine's smoke when he exited. Another idea was that he always left the stage backwards as if being pulled back into another world.

- (b) Only one response to this costume design question was seen and it was limited in scope and detail.

SCG

Often candidates were able to integrate relevant SGC into their responses. Some candidates wrote about the 'hungry thirties' and the great depression. Others wrote about the early part of the twentieth century as an age of acquisition as Europeans and Americans plundered the natural resources of poorer continents in their desire for riches at whatever cost to others. Reference to 'The American Dream' featured frequently. Most candidates discussed or implied the adoption of naturalism and/or expressionism in their 'production' and this was generally a fruitful avenue for analysis.

Question 4

The Lion and the Jewel

One of the least discussed extracts and relatively few answers were seen.

- (a) Only a handful of answers were seen on this option.

Baroka's cunning was recognised by candidates, but not all offered developed ideas for how to convey it. Candidates sometimes referred to Baroka's veiled attempts to gauge Sidi's opinion of him and they referred to his boasting of his fierceness and virility. Most picked up on his flattery of Sidi and his understanding of her vanity in suggesting that Sidi is 'deep and wise beyond her years' he plays his trump card – as one candidate expressed it.

- (b) This question also attracted relatively few answers, although slightly more than **Question 4a**.

Candidates seemed to appreciate the combative nature of the developing relationship between Sidi and Baroka in a scene which takes place, symbolically, against the backdrop of the wrestling bout.

Some remarked on Baroka's defensive strategy initially as he adopts an 'almost' timid approach as a cover for his intention to defeat/conquer Sidi.

Some astute candidates noted how their exchanges about the un-named man that has been recommended to Sidi by a 'go-between' mirror the cut and thrust of combat, with Sidi consistently 'parrying' Baroka's attack.

Not all, but some candidates picked up on Sidi's growing enjoyment of the 'engagement' with her adversary even giggling at her own cleverness before 'retreating', thinking she has gone 'too far'.

There were some useful directions for the pair that highlighted Baroka's innate superiority and Sidi's blindness as she walks brazenly into the trap that Baroka has laid for her.

SCG

The most successful candidates in this area were those who were able to explain how the characters and their actions reflected the themes of the play and in this scene championed traditional ways while warning of the dangers to young women posed by the domestic politics of village life.

Very few candidates gained marks on their awareness of the genre or style of the piece, possibly due to a lack of understanding. There was some reference made to the context of Nigeria's achievement of independent status, but this was not always made relevant.

Question 5

Enron

This play was not tackled by many candidates, and it is not possible to draw meaningful inferences from the few answers seen.

SECTION B

Question 6

Medea

- (a) This was a minority choice.

The notion of horrifying the audience was linked by some candidates with specific speeches or moments of action.

Most frequently cited moments of horror included the Messenger's gruesome narrative of the deaths of Glauce and Creon and the troubling physical presence of the children, on stage, while Medea contemplates their slaughter, followed by their off-stage screams.

Some candidates also referred to Medea's gloating over Jason's misery made more shocking for some by Medea's escape in her chariot; unrepentant and unpunished.

Some candidates referred to lighting effects to create shadows and silhouette; the use of smoke machine was sometimes suggested to obscure the stage as Medea dragged the bodies of the boys (in body bags) back on stage to taunt Jason with.

Some candidates suggested non diegetic sound effects, tense music with occasional screaming other depended upon horrific make-up and blood-stained costumes to unnerve and horrify the audience.

(b) Examiners reported seeing some answers to this question.

The main problem with answers to this question, as set out in the introductory section of this report, was the candidates' failure to adhere to the precise demands of the question.

Candidates mainly wrote about Medea and performance ideas for conveying her character, but very few considered how their ideas would convey to the audience Medea's bitterness or her instinct for self-preservation.

In better answers, Medea's mental instinct for survival and her bitterness towards Jason, and to a certain extent towards all men, remained at the forefront of candidates' responses.

Focused candidates worked through key moments from the chosen sections of interaction between Medea and Aegeus and between Medea and Jason and focused on the twin concerns of the question.

But there were answers seen where candidates discussed Medea's interaction with Creon or with the Nurse and these sections of the answer could attract no credit.

In the very best answers, candidates offered detailed performance suggestions, taking in aspects such as her calculated wheedling of Aegeus, as she persuades him to offer her protection in exchange for a charm to make his wife fertile. This part of the play was quite well handled.

Most candidates appeared to fall on safer ground in discussing Medea's bitterness towards Jason and there were some well realised performance suggestions for her outpouring of revulsion stemmed from her bitterness at his mistreatment of her, after all she had done to help him.

Weaker answers were overly literary in their approach to the question.

As always, the most successful responses were those where candidates used the text to support well-conceived ideas for showing Medea's instinct for self-preservation.

Candidates should be reminded not to refer to the text using page numbers or line numbers (editions vary) but to integrate short, pithy quotations into their own descriptions or explanations of the performance detail.

SCG

The most successful responses here were those who understood the origins and function of Greek Theatre. This is not to say that a potted history of the development of Greek theatre was a purposeful way to approach the inclusion of SCG.

Often, marks for understanding of style were derived from sensitive direction or performance detail that captured the essence of the tragic form.

Top level candidates were confident in their use of the terminology associated with the classical Greek stage and always integrated their knowledge of SGC into the body of their answers.

Question 7

Tartuffe

There were no answers on this play reported by Examiners.

Question 8

The Seagull

- (a) There were too few responses to this option to make very many meaningful comments.

The directorial focus was not well-handled and most of the answers seen adopted a descriptive approach to the question.

Some candidates spent a lot of time on introducing the 'celebrity couple' as members of the audience at Konstantin's play with better answers focusing on the introduction of Nina to the pair where the beginnings of Arkadina's jealousy of the young Nina begins to emerge.

In better answers there was a sense of an overview of the longstanding relationship which neither seems able to give up despite Trigorin's wandering eye and desire to be free from Arkadina's sphere of influence.

There were some inventive interpretations of their relationship where candidates tackled Act 3 and explored Arkadina's manipulation of Trigorin as she flatters him and literally falls at his feet. Her breezy dismissal of him at the end of the scene when she tells him he can leave her if he wants was well directed by one or two astute candidates who seemed fairly contemptuous of Trigorin's weak will.

There was also some competent discussion of how domesticated Trigorin appears in Act Four where Arkadina's power of him seems complete.

- (b) There were no answers to this question reported by Examiners.

SCG

Some understanding of style and genre could be inferred from the apparently naturalistic performances that were described, although negligible explicit awareness of the period or setting or genre of the play was seen. Limited explicit reference to period was seen. Candidates need to be reminded of the 10 marks available for this aspect of their knowledge and understanding which many candidates forego through a lack of preparedness perhaps or inclination to include it.

Mention of a Stanislavskian approach to acting was credit-worthy, but some candidates devoted too much time and space to discussing Stanislavskian rehearsal methods, which diverted their attention from the thrust of the questions.

Question 9

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

- (a) This was a popular question. There was a range of responses seen.

As mentioned throughout this report, the most successful answers were from candidates who read the question, understood its demands and shaped their answers to meet those demands. In this case, the question asked for performance ideas that would show 'contrasting aspects of Ed's character'.

Most candidates were able to identify aspects of Ed's character and they pointed out the contradictory nature of it. Most referred to his fatherly care and concern for Christopher pitted against his duplicitousness as he lies to Christopher about the death of Judy.

Many noted his unexpected bouts of aggression towards Judy and Roger, in particular, and even towards Christopher balanced by his evident guilt over his behaviour.

In capturing Ed's joy at his reconciliation with Christopher at the end of the play, candidates were able to bring out his sentimental side.

Some candidates seemed to select sections at random, not all of which were helpful to them in conveying the contrasting aspects of Ed's character.

For example, a lot of candidates described in some detail, Ed's aggressive side as shown in his attitude to Mrs Gascoigne, to Roger and towards Christopher himself when he discovers that he has broken Ed's rule about dropping the case of the 'dead dog'. But they failed to balance these sequences with ones where Ed was shown as a good and caring man.

There were some very good answers seen to this question, however, where candidates displayed both a thorough knowledge and understanding of the character traits of Ed and of the style of the play.

This is the most popular text in **Section B**, so Examiners reported seeing some of the most impressive as well as some of the weakest answers of the series.

- (b) This was a minority choice and attracted too few responses to make meaningful comments about candidates' achievements. One point worth making, however, is that candidates should be prepared to provide appropriate sketches and or diagrams to support answers on set and/or costume design.

SCG

Very few candidates seem to appreciate the actual genre of this play – many suggested it was a murder mystery or a 'Brechtian' play but very few alluded to 'physical theatre'. Much misunderstanding of Brecht's work was in evidence. Frantic Assembly's style was rarely discussed.

Some candidates overloaded their answers with extended references to Christopher's perceptions of the world and his 'condition' when it was not especially relevant to the focus of the question being attempted. There was quite a lot of superfluous material purporting to be SGC for this play.

Question 10

Snow in Midsummer

- (a) This play was a minority choice with **Question 10a** being the most frequently attempted.

Candidates appeared to quite enjoy writing about Madam Wong.

The question invited a performer's perspective and a focus on showing the complexity of Madam Wong's character.

Better answers reflected this complexity in their choice of sections.

Some wrote about her good humour, in Act 1, Scene 1 and her apparently genuine and welcoming attitude towards Tianyun.

Some astute candidates noted how her apparently jokey relationship with Handsome belied the fierce mother instinct which is only revealed at the end of the play.

Most noted Madam Wong's compassion for Handsome as she attempts to console him for the loss of Rocket. This was balanced by her ruthlessness as shown in Act 2, Scene 6 where Madam Wong orchestrates Handsome's murder of his father and the arrest of Dou Yi for the crime.

Some candidates were keen to exonerate Madam Wong's actions, recognising her fierce maternal instinct and protective attitude towards Handsome, which is only revealed belatedly.

Weaker answers struggled to find ways to show her complexity, despite having recognised it.

- (b) There were too few responses to the design question to draw meaningful inferences.

SCG

Candidates did not often consider the cultural context of the play. Some did make links it to the original Chinese version of the play. And some cited the RSC production although not always purposefully.

Those that considered the play's episodic, and 'non-naturalistic' genre were most successful.

DRAMA

<p>Paper 9482/02 Practical Drama</p>
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Key messages

- It is vital that centres make informed, considered choices of repertoire for the scripted piece. Some pieces were simplistic, others were distant from the candidates' cultural experience, and others were too much of a challenge in terms of staging.
- There is an expectation that the standard of performance skills will be the same for both scripted performance and devised work. Devised work was not always as obviously of the same standard as scripted work in several centres.
- Evaluating their own performance is a challenge for many candidates. Centres are encouraged to work with their candidates to teach them techniques for structuring their spoken evaluations.

Administration

The administration of the examination ran more smoothly this session, and most centres were effective in their use of the Submit for Assessment (SfA) system. There were far fewer inaccuracies and the documentation was completed correctly in most instances. Centres are reminded that they should upload the ICMS forms for **all** candidates and not only the sample.

The ICMS forms varied in the way in which they were completed. The most helpful contained detailed comments about the performance, pointing to specific aspects of the work that justified the mark awarded. This was particularly helpful in the case of devised work, where some of the detail was not obvious from watching only the recording of the final performance. Some centres wrote comments that did not match the mark given, others simply repeated the wording from the assessment criteria itself, neither of which was helpful for Moderators. Moderators were grateful when centres included detailed comments about the piece that supported the mark awarded.

The quality of most recordings was acceptable, and many were extremely good. One of the greatest challenges was the quality of the sound recording. This was often because the microphone was too far away from the performance area, or because the acoustics of the performance space were especially resonant. Performances filmed on handphones tended to pose a challenge with recording sound effectively and, where this has to be the case, centres are requested to use additional amplification so that all candidates may be heard clearly.

Centres are reminded that it is essential the Moderator can identify each of the performers.

Many performances began without the candidates introducing themselves by name and candidate number on the recordings. It is also essential to include a brief description of each candidate on their ICMS form.

Devised Piece (30 marks)

The assessment consisted of the group performance piece (20 marks) assessed under AO2 (Devising). Of these 20 marks, 5 marks are available for the use of the stimulus and a further 15 marks for the ensemble, structure and role. Candidates also submitted a spoken self-evaluation (10 marks), assessed under AO4 (Analysing and Evaluating). Centres are requested to give as much detail as possible about the devised piece as Moderators sometimes found it to be a challenge to work out details without some element of guidance.

There was a variety of stimulus material used and candidates approached it in a variety of ways. There is no credit for the choice of stimulus material. The same type of material in the hands of a creative and well-disciplined group produced very different results to similar material in the hands of a group who went for the

first thing they thought of and pursued the process with a dogged determination, no matter how much help the teacher offered.

Moderators reported that there were some general improvements in the quality of devised work this year, especially regarding the structure of the pieces themselves. One of the key improvements was creating a structure in which each candidate had a broadly equal amount of exposure, meaning there were fewer opportunities for the more confident members of the group to monopolise the piece. This tended to have a positive impact on the roles themselves, which were also more balanced as a result. There was a good deal of physically inspired performance, and this was highly effective in moving the focus away from the creation of naturalistic dialogue, which is often a challenge for candidates. The third aspect of this virtuous triangle was that the combination of good structure and physical variety meant that the use of the performance space was often highly creative. In such instances, the work was a real pleasure to watch.

Despite the general improvement in standards of devised work, there were nevertheless many pieces that repeated the mistakes evident in previous sessions. These weaker pieces tended to be formulaic and were neither very physical nor well structured. In fact, in many cases, structure was amorphous, and roles undifferentiated, leading to a series of lacklustre performances that contained few contrasts of pacing or dynamics. The pacing of several pieces was an issue and especially so where candidates had conceived the drama in televisual terms, with significant amounts of dialogue delivered seated around a table, or with long, meaningful silences that did not translate well to the audience, and which gave the unintentional impression that everyone was struggling to remember which line came next.

Self-Evaluation

Most evaluations kept to the three-minute maximum and focused on the statements set out in the syllabus. The artistic intention was articulated clearly and the individual contributions were evaluated in a manner that enabled the candidate to step outside their own thought world and to consider the work from the perspective of an audience. Many candidates, however, spent their time outlining the plot of the piece and then evaluating the final performance, neither of which is required.

Some evaluations lasted well over five minutes and centres are reminded in such instances not to award marks for anything that is said beyond the three minutes allowed.

Scripted piece

The assessment consisted of the group performance piece worth 30 marks, assessed under AO3 (Performing). These 30 marks were subdivided into Interpretation and Performance Skills (15 marks) and Communication (15 marks). Many candidates scored similar marks for both sets of criteria, which was a good indication that they had taken a holistic approach to the preparation of repertoire, considering fully the message they intended to communicate and the necessary technique to achieve it.

There were some imaginative choices of scripts and a good many that appear regularly, as may be seen in the list of indicative performance texts below. It is almost a truism to say that the strongest work developed from the best choice of texts: strong characterisation, a clear sense of development, opportunities for effective staging, the potential for reinterpretation in a new cultural setting. All of these – and more – were present in the strongest work, which often contained a very strong sense of the group working effectively together to communicate the playwright's intentions to the audience. The cutting of the extract was also important, and many groups recognised that it did not matter if the extract was a minute or two short of the maximum if it made more sense to cut at a stronger dramatic moment. The strongest work was also where physicality and gestures matched the characterisation and candidates demonstrated a greater understanding of the nuances of the dramatic text.

There were also some very weak scripted performances. The best of these were simply mundane and went through the motions of revivifying text on a stage to go through all the right motions, deliver the lines and arrive safely at the end, but without really engaging much by way of audience response. At the very bottom end, the performance work was very poor in terms of physical presence, pacing, dynamics and delivery of lines. There were even some candidates who performed with scripts, which restricted their acting in so many ways and demonstrated, not only a limited understanding of the extract itself, but a lack of preparedness to actually learn the part.

Finally, centres are strongly reminded that the school play or musical **cannot be used for this assessment** since a maximum of six candidates are allowed in the performance. **Centres who submit the school show run the risk of having their work rejected by Cambridge for assessment.**

Indicative list of performance texts

Aristophanes	<i>Lysistrata</i>
Richard Bean	<i>One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>Metamorphosis</i> <i>The Trial</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Two</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Martin Crimp	<i>Attempts on her life</i>
Nick Dear	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Ariel Dorfman	<i>Death and the Maiden</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
Brian Friel	<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>
Mary Gallagher	<i>Bedtime</i>
Lauren Gunderson	<i>The Revolutionists</i>
Beth Henley	<i>Crimes of the Heart</i>
Debbie Isitt	<i>The Woman Who Cooked her Husband</i>
Oliver Lansley	<i>Immaculate</i>
Barbara Lindsay	<i>Female Dogs</i>
David Lindsay Abair	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>
Donald Margulies	<i>Dinner with Friends</i>
Marsha Norman	<i>Night Mother</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>Dumb Waiter</i>
Sam Shepard	<i>True West</i>
Neil Simon	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
Sam Steiner	<i>Lemons lemons lemons lemons lemons</i>
Shelagh Stephens	<i>Memory of Water</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>Punk Rock</i> <i>Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>
Jessica Swale	<i>Blue Stockings</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>

DRAMA

<p>Paper 9482/03 Theatre-Making and Performing</p>
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Key messages

- This component contains two performance activities, one group devised with written evaluation worth 66 per cent of marks, and one individual selection of texts linked by theme worth 33 per cent of marks. Candidates are advised to spend proportionate amounts of time on each.
- The most successful performances both of group devised and individual presentations were careful to match their use of dramatic style to the performance needs of their presentations.
- In group devising candidates should seek to demonstrate their ability to identify and *apply the distinctive traits of the chosen practitioner or style*.
- In individual performance candidates should seek to present a programme of texts on a chosen theme, which includes links as part of the assessed performance, i.e. a brief identifying introduction of each text.
- The most effective group devised performances were carefully crafted to include close and thorough application of the distinctive traits of the practitioner, tradition or style, while enabling all group members to demonstrate effective roles well integrated into the piece.
- The strongest individual performances were confident and controlled, using appropriate modes of spoken address in delivering their programme of texts.

General comments

This was the third session of entries for the A2 practical Component Theatre-Making and Performance. Cambridge recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic may still affect learning in centres worldwide. It was good to see that there were some live audiences for group performance especially, and sometimes for individual presentations also. It is desirable that candidates should perform to an audience if possible.

Performances which exceeded the maximum length stated in the syllabus were seen both in Group Devised and Individual presentations. Any performance material that goes beyond 15-20 minutes for Group devised performance and 6-8 minutes for individual performance, should not be included in assessment.

There were group pieces that included non-assessed performers where this was not essential, sometimes exceeding the permitted number of five performers. Centres with a small number entry should seek advice from Cambridge where they wish to include non-assessed performers. In Individual performance there should be no other person or persons engaging in the dramatic action. This includes external voices, live or recorded, speaking to or in dialogue with the performer.

Centres are reminded that the Group Devised Cover sheet for each group is essential for moderation. It must be completed by the centre, either by the teacher or by candidates. It must be submitted to inform the Moderator of the investigation of practitioner, tradition or style and the professional production that was investigated.

It is helpful to moderation for candidates to introduce themselves, clearly stating their name and candidate number at the start of the Group Devised performance. Candidates will be familiar with this procedure from their performance work in Component 2.

ICMS forms should include identifying features of performers for the Group Devised piece rather than just a list of roles. This is helpful in identifying candidates during the moderation process.

It is also helpful to moderation when centres refer to the assessment criteria aligned to the band in which marks had been awarded when justifying marks on the ICMS forms. Some specific comment on individual contribution to devising should also be provided. Copy and paste duplication of comments on group devising and/or individual presentation offers little to distinguish those candidates' individual part in creating the work.

The ICMS form should also list all individual texts for performance, and in order of performance. Where some were omitted, and where the candidate had not included the required links to introduce texts, it was not clear to the Moderator what texts had been selected and how many were being performed when viewing the video recording, except where all the pieces they heard spoken were very well-known.

The majority of centres submitted candidate performance work on USB memory sticks, which is highly recommended. DVD submissions were also seen. There were few issues with these, but USB is preferable as not all of the diverse formats of DVD playback are universally accessible.

Many centres provided good quality recordings set in quiet and appropriate spaces without any background sounds. There were some recordings that were of poor quality and centres are reminded that moderation can be impeded when candidate's features are blurred and dialogue is difficult to hear. There was some recording in a home setting because of social restrictions. This was acceptable where the centre had informed Cambridge and had obtained agreement that this was necessary.

In video recording the candidate(s) should always be in full body view in performance.

Candidates reading from a script in any part of their group or individual performance are limited to Level 2 for role and/or performance skills.

Comments on specific tasks

Devised Performance and Evaluation (40 marks)

Devising

Most centres provided work where the practitioner/style investigated was the same as the style chosen for performance. Weaker submissions used the chosen practitioner, tradition, or style as a stimulus, rather than the style in which they performed. It is not appropriate for a named work of work of one listed practitioner or style to be used as a stimulus for performance in a different tradition or style. There was a tendency towards lenient marking in some submissions where moderation found the tradition or practice to be partial and incompletely applied.

There were some very good examples seen of precisely worked performances in the style of Absurdist Theatre, Frantic Assembly, Brecht and Steven Berkoff especially. Some highly creditable work was seen across the range of styles where groups had taken care to create full roles for all members of the ensemble.

Bertolt Brecht was selected by a number of centres as a practitioner for investigation. Sustained application of the distinctive traits of the practitioner requires a thorough grasp of Brecht's representational acting method towards a dialectical engagement with an audience on Epic issues. For marks in the upper range this must extend beyond simple staging, the use of projections and a campaigning approach to social themes. To engage current audiences, some modern productions may adopt staging devices not utilised by Brecht. These should be considered within the devising process for their appropriateness. Electronic screens can effectively represent surtitles and announcement placards, for example; however, beyond this, candidates should take care to consider whether other modernised approaches are in keeping with the Brechtian tradition, in which staging did not require advanced devices.

To devise in the style of a practitioner or genre requires candidates to identify its essential traits, with close and detailed focus on specific theatrical methods and devices to be applied. While the task requires that they study one professionally performed work in that chosen style, the investigation should be approached with caution where the performance was not directed by the specified practitioner or company. Also, where a tradition or style is chosen, for example Absurd Drama, Commedia, Farce, or Revenge Tragedy, centres should be aware that a modern company presenting a play to a current audience may not necessarily be trying to fully apply the distinctive traits of the genre as this syllabus requires of candidates. Professional companies may seek to be innovative in contemporary productions and may have modernised their production in ways that diverge from the tradition or style. For example, a Revenge Tragedy might be performed in a way that has experimented with adapting the play to include aspects not in keeping with the distinctive traits of the genre. If the candidates take this production as a template and follow the way it has been staged, they may produce work not closely aligned to the genre. It is permitted to consider a modernised version for investigation but it may be advisable to undertake other research alongside this to

establish what are the typical features of the genre. From this research candidates may develop a fuller understanding which allows them to draw appropriately and selectively from what they have viewed.

Moreover, in adopting the key features of the chosen practitioner or style, it is not a requirement that a complete play is produced. Again, considering the example of a traditional Revenge Tragedy: in this tradition, the action would develop over three to five acts before the resolution. A 15 – 20 minute devised segment showing distinctive features of the style and clearly demonstrating it is intended to form a coherent part of a larger structure with an appropriate dramatic trajectory could be appropriate. If the distinctive traits are present, an audience should be able to recognise they are watching part of a play in which events are likely to lead to the essential tragic act of revenge, this could be sufficient for the devised performance.

Centres should be clear that the use of technology and other staging methods in their group performance is creditable only within the 10 marks available in **Part A** for *the application of the distinctive traits of the chosen tradition, practitioner or style*, and credit should only be awarded where the staging elements used are recognisable traits of the practitioner or style.

Written evaluations

Some Group Devised evaluations did not directly identify a work investigated or listed several without clearly focusing on one of them. This inevitably limited the depth of analysis as it related to the study of a practitioner or style. The quality of the written evaluations varied significantly. The syllabus requires candidates to *set out a written analysis of the process of devising the group piece and the success of its artistic intentions*. A deconstruction of the performance outcome is not sufficient. Evaluations which focused on the qualities of the practice or style while tracing their progress in the process of devising tended to be the most relevant and insightful in their analysis. Post-performance audience feedback may be of limited value in this as a self-evaluative task which should be mostly concerned with process. Evaluation of the candidate's own individual contribution must also be included in evaluation, and this was most effective where it was integrated into the account as a whole.

Where candidates acknowledge in their evaluations that they have opted to include aspects in their performance that are not in keeping with the distinctive traits of practitioner, tradition or style, it is clear that their application of distinctive traits is incomplete. This should be reflected in the marking for devising. It may be useful for centres to refer candidates to the assessment criteria for the evaluations as a guideline for what is expected in their writing. Moderators were pleased to report that almost all evaluative writing seen was within the 800-word limit.

Designers

This was the first session in which design entries were submitted. Design skills may be chosen from:

Lighting and/or sound design, costume and/or mask design, set and/or prop design.

All of these were seen. Centres should be clear that where candidates combine more than one of these three specified categories, only the most prominent design element may be credited. Centres should be clear also that for designers, the video recording is not equivalent evidence to that of performers. The recording demonstrates that a performance with staging design has taken place, but the essential assessment evidence to demonstrate the candidate's contribution should be through the design portfolio.

There was some inventive work presented in video recordings, but the provenance and significance of that material was unclear where the candidate supporting material was not detailed in explaining how that material had been produced and what its contribution was intended to achieve. It was not always apparent that centres had fully supported candidates in providing guidance on the requirements for an effective portfolio. The syllabus states that *Designers in all disciplines must present a written portfolio of evidence of their work and its contribution to the piece. Conceptualisations, supporting diagrams, layout plans and images must be of a sufficiently high standard to communicate ideas effectively at this level*.

Where a comprehensive written portfolio is not submitted as outlined above, moderation will not be able to support marking above Level 2 for inventiveness (AO2) and skills in shaping design material (AO3). Assessment criteria for Designers are included alongside those for performers in the syllabus. Centres should apply these in their marking.

Individual performance (20 marks)

Texts chosen for performance

A wide range of texts and a diversity of themes was chosen for performance. Almost all presentations seen showed commendable focus on and commitment to the chosen texts and to their chosen theme. Some high level acting was sometimes seen. Centres mostly marked within the appropriate bands for the individual performance, although both lenient and harsh marking was sometimes found when moderating the performances against the assessment criteria. There is no specific requirement that the Individual Performance should present a contrast between pieces or to the Group Devised performance, but where there was very close similarity in style and substance between group and individual presentation the candidate's ability as a performer to show range of performance ability and diversity of knowledge and understanding of what is possible on stage was not entirely clear.

Some individual performances appeared to be candidates' own devised speeches, sometimes with elements of original texts. This is not appropriate. The task is to deliver three or more existing texts on a chosen theme linked by brief introductory material. Moderators will assess what is seen and will adjust the centre's marking accordingly. It is for centres to ensure they have submitted the correct work to be moderated.

The specified time for performance is 6 – 8 minutes. A small number were below the minimum. Some significantly longer presentations were seen. Centres should be aware that material beyond 8 minutes for performance should not be marked. As with any examination, candidates are required to plan, manage their work, and adapt as necessary in preparation to ensure they fulfil the requirements of the syllabus, including the time constraints.

As a Drama syllabus, Dance and Music skills must not be assessed as part of individual presentations.

There are no marks for the quality of staging for the individual performances. Sometimes those supported with strong lighting, projections, backing sound and/or music somewhat drew attention away from the texts performed. In some instances staging almost overwhelmed the individual performance. Often the most effective presentations were those with just the actor and the stage space, occasionally with a key prop or item of costume for a specific text. Where a lectern, book or clipboard are chosen as props, candidates must be very clear in performance that they are not reading from any written material.

Re-working of existing texts or devising around chosen lines is not acceptable.

There should be no other voices or participating performers present in the Individual Performance.

Links between texts performed

Most centres managed links very well; others appeared to be unaware of the requirement. All texts should be introduced as they are about to be performed, not as a list at the start of the presentations. In the progression of their programme of pieces it is for the candidate to create their own distinction between link and performance but it should be entirely clear by altering voice and manner, whether the candidate is presenting a text or making a link.

Most candidates achieved this, usually by stepping out of performance role to comment and introduce the next piece, sometimes connecting the one just performed to the next one. A small number adopted a character for part or all of the periods between texts and made the links as that character. While making the links candidates should not enter into a personal discussion of their opinions or a polemic on the subject of the theme. The syllabus states the links should be brief, and should not outweigh the performance of the texts; also that there is no need for a concluding comment after the final piece.

Where links were not included between texts, moderation for AO3 Communication was limited to a maximum of Level 2, *Uneven communication of the theme*. Performances that blend from one piece into the link and onwards to the next piece without clear differentiation between them should be also marked to Level 2 or below.

Candidates are to be reminded that they must not use extracts of any texts set for Component 1 written examination for Component 3 performance as stated on page 17 of syllabus subject content.

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Theatre Traditions and Styles	
<i>Absurd Drama</i>	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead</i> <i>Waiting for Godot</i> <i>The Birthday Party</i>
<i>Commedia Dell'Arte</i>	<i>A Servant to Two Masters/One Man, Two Guvnors</i>
<i>Revenge Tragedy</i>	<i>Hamlet, The Duchess of Malfi</i>
<i>Farce</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
Practitioners	
<i>Steven Berkoff</i>	<i>East, Metamorphosis, The Trial, Oedipus</i>
<i>Bertolt Brecht</i>	<i>Arturo Ui, Woyzeck, Antigone (1948 production) Mother Courage And Her Children, The Good Person of Setzuan, The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>
<i>Frantic Assembly</i>	<i>Sleep No More, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time, Love Song, Things I Know To Be True</i>
<i>Katie Mitchell</i>	<i>A Woman Killed with Kindness, Women of Troy, Ophelias Zimmer, Fractured, Anatomy of a Suicide</i>
<i>Robert Wilson</i>	<i>Happy Days</i>

DRAMA

Paper 9482/04
Theatre in Context

Key messages

The choice of an appropriate research question or statement is crucial in that it guides the direction of the essay. A well-focused, specific research question or statement is key to accessing the full range of marks available.

The focus of these responses should be on theatre-making which implies practical, applied techniques and methodology with illustrative examples. Responses that focus on extended biographical accounts of practitioners' lives or literary analysis of practitioners' work will struggle to fully access the marks available in the mark scheme.

This also applies to essays with too much emphasis on socio-historical content or where candidates present a personal opinion.

Over dependence on cultural contexts encourages a literary approach and textual analysis which reduces opportunities to access the mark scheme. A common problem may be found in approaches such as 'How is the playwright's intention/philosophy portrayed?' These tend to be philosophical or literary discussions with little opportunity to access marks at AO1 B.

The format specified is that of an academic research essay which should adhere strictly to the word limit, should be thoroughly referenced with citations in accord with a recognised style guide and include a full bibliography (including web sites accessed by date). Failure to follow this guidance makes it difficult for candidates to access the full range of marks available.

General comments

As last year, there was a range of work with some excellent essays that proposed a clear question, with a suitable scope for the parameters of the task, and a clear response that used a carefully selected range of sources appropriately.

The strongest essays consistently engaged with the question set and regularly returned to explicitly answer it. They were well referenced but also founded in a research question that enabled the candidate to consider in depth the practicalities of performance, directing or theatre-making. Additionally, they also took care to analyse the material under discussion and critically evaluate the work of practitioners.

Weaker essays usually struggled from having either no clear research question or one that was too broad to meaningfully explore salient material within the word count given. It is advisable for schools to read carefully the instructions for the task as provided on pages 41 and 42 of the published syllabus.

Weaker responses also often lacked specific exploration of theatre-making when the research question was not focused on specific plays or theatrical styles.

Unsubstantiated statements and general or personal assumptions should be avoided, especially in the research question. An example of this would be the research question/title 'Why is Greek Tragedy so Alive today?' Alternatively, if such a statement is included as a quotation in the body of the text it should be cited against its origin and used as a starting point for analysis and evaluation.

Care should be taken to address the need for critical evaluation at AO4 D for which ten marks are available. Much of the analysis seen was not primary or critical in nature but secondary and often generic, having been garnered 'second hand' from cited sources.

Musicals proved a popular choice and where two cited specific productions were used to compare and contrast directors, writers, performance styles or design topics this enabled candidates to clearly discuss performance and theatre-making with a good deal of depth.

Careful consideration should be given to the selection of illustrative figures or images. Generic, stock images are not helpful and candidates should think carefully about their selection. Wherever possible images should be well-researched and taken from relevant sources or specific productions – to further illustrate a design idea for example.

In summary, the strongest work was characterised by the following:

- a passion for the chosen topic
- a well-chosen question/title
- thorough research and exploration
- highly relevant, well-referenced/cited sources
- clear examples of wider reading/viewing as noted in a comprehensive bibliography
- a clear, concise conclusion
- well-researched and carefully selected illustrative figures.

The importance of teacher/centre guidance in making the right choices with regard to the title or research question or statement cannot be over-emphasised; ensuring that the essay is written under the correct parameters is crucial to achieving the higher mark bands.

As noted above, the most successful essays had a carefully crafted question that allowed sufficient scope to meet the demands of the task. Stronger work repeatedly sought to explicitly address the question whilst demonstrating Knowledge and Understanding of practical aspects of theatre-making with a good level of analysis and evaluation. An example of a very mature and capable essay was one in which the author explored the relationship between Shakespeare's women and the misogynistic portrayal of women in theatre – skilfully linking modern and historical productions. This essay demonstrated a highly accomplished exploration of the concepts and ideas with seamless blending of knowledge, understanding, analysis and evaluation.

Weaker essays often included extensive narration and/or biographical information that did not precisely relate to the focus of the question. Weaker responses often lacked specific exploration of theatre-making when the research question was not focused on specific plays or theatrical styles. This could lead to research essays that were mostly re-explaining a theatre practitioner's theory without examining the way in which it is or has been applied to theatrical performance.

Furthermore, there were issues with candidates not fulfilling the requirements of the task. Examples of this include:

- Not taking full advantage of the word allowance (essays were often shorter which perhaps prevented enough detail and opportunity to analyse/evaluate). The word count is specified as '2,500 – 3,000' on p. 41 of the syllabus and this is repeated on p. 42 along with the admonition to 'not exceed 3,000'. Those candidates who wrote beyond the maximum words of 3,000 were self-penalising because Examiners are unable to take into account any work after the word limit or allocate any marks to it.
- Not referring to guidance provided in the syllabus on p. 41 where it explains what the essay 'must' explore and which 'one or more' aspects should be its focus.
- Several essays did not include a bibliography although some did include in-text references. The task requires a bibliography. Conversely, sometimes a bibliography was included but in-text references were not. On p. 42 of the syllabus it states 'candidates must present their findings in accordance with the conventions of academic writing, including thorough referencing of sources and a full bibliography'.
- Some responses incorporated wild, unsubstantiated sweeping statements along the lines of – 'it is clear practitioner X changed the world of theatre as we know it today'.

Positives to emerge from the work seen by Examiners include:

- Some candidates replicated the work of practitioners with fellow candidates in their own centres; this is a potentially rich area for primary research and often produces fascinating results.
- Some introductions were well written, concise and drew the reader in.
- Some conclusions drew the essay together very effectively and demonstrated the criteria of Analysis and Evaluation very well.

Comments on specific criteria

Criteria A

For a great many candidates, this criteria remained the strongest, with many demonstrating very good knowledge and understanding. As reported last year, schools should insist on candidates providing bibliographies and in-text citations. Some essays were missing both elements. Candidates should be encouraged to carefully cite all sources they have considered, including visuals, which also need to be titled as figures. This is not just necessary for academic convention but is a useful way for them to demonstrate their familiarity with the available literature and of a 'good' or 'wide' range of supporting evidence.

Criteria B

Again, this was the second strongest criteria with many essays showing a good level of understanding of the practicalities of theatre-making. The strongest work had carefully selected illustrative details that very effectively communicated and supported the points made. However, work that strayed from the parameters of the task into other areas (as outlined above) often struggled to score well here. There are still some candidates approaching the task as they would for the IGCSE 0411 course giving a blow-by-blow account of their directorial choices. Candidates need to be reminded that this is primarily a research task and not a director's notebook. Candidates should avoid focussing on their own personal directorial choices at the expense of appropriate research.

Criteria C

There was a range of marks in evidence here with some candidates analysing the artistic intentions and the creative approaches various practitioners have adopted. Sometimes the research question gave a clear focus on artistic methodologies which in turn helped structure the output to achieve the marks. A good percentage of candidates did try, to some degree at least, to offer analysis with perhaps more of them securing marks in the 'competent' band than last year.

Criteria D

There was a mix of achievement levels in this criteria. Stronger candidates produced well sustained and well developed evaluation whilst weaker candidates work tended to be more superficial. Again, it seemed much easier for candidates to be evaluative if they had created questions that clearly prompted an evaluative response (e.g. 'to what extent has Ancient Greek theatre influenced...?') Weaker essays tended to offer occasional evaluative points, and these tended to remain general and superficial. A few times, candidates were clearly fans of a practitioner and passionately repeated their admiration for the work but unfortunately they failed to develop this further to offer a well developed evaluation. As has been noted above, referred or 'second hand' evaluative comment taken from others does not constitute rigorous analysis. Such analysis should be the product of the author, not of others.