

DRAMA (US)

Paper 0428/11
Written Examination

Key messages

- Candidates are required to answer all questions in **Section A**, one question in **Section B** and one in **Section C**.
- Candidates should read all the questions very carefully to ensure that they fully understand what is being asked, particularly where there is more than one element to the question.
- Candidates need to consider carefully which question to answer in **Sections B** and **C** and should not attempt a question if they do not have the technical knowledge required to answer it.
- Use the number of marks available as a guide to how much detail is needed in the answer. Many candidates continue to waste valuable time by providing extended answers to questions that are worth only 2 or 3 marks. Candidates may use bullet points where appropriate to respond to questions in **Section A**.
- Centres should engage practically with the stimuli provided in the pre-release material to enable candidates to show greater understanding of the challenges presented to them.
- An improvement in responses to questions in **Section A** was again evident this year but answers to the questions in **Sections B** and **C**, which require more understanding, development, detail and/or discussion, continue to cause some difficulties.
- Literary or narrative approaches to answering questions must be avoided. For example, where questions ask the candidate to provide advice on how a dramatic role should be performed, it is not enough to recount the story or to provide detail of the character's personality, attitudes and relationships without making clear how the character should be heard and seen on stage in order to convey those traits.

General comments

There was some evidence that the Glossary of dramatic and theatrical terms provided in the syllabus is being used by many Centres and as a result a number of responses showed better understanding of many subject-specific terms. Some candidates also showed improvement in understanding and communicating how drama is created. Many had evidently engaged practically with the play extract and they showed a greater understanding of the text than those who had not explored it in practical terms. Candidates are, however, less confident in the use of performance terms and whilst there was a handful of successful responses, many candidates who attempted such questions were unable to show their practical understanding.

An improvement was clearly evident in responses to the questions in **Section A**. A number of candidates answered with bullet point comments; these not only save valuable time but also allow for succinct and focused responses. Some candidates wrote far too much, particularly in answer to questions worth 2 or 3 marks. Equally, some responses on the devised work included a detailed synopsis of the piece before attempting to answer the question. Whilst brief, explicit references to the content of the piece are helpful to Examiners, candidates should avoid long and detailed narratives.

A number of candidates missed out one or more of **Questions 6–8** and in doing so could not access a significant number of marks. A few candidates attempted all questions in **Section B** and **Section C** instead of one question from each.

With so many marks available in **Sections B** and **C**, it is important that candidates choose a question which allows them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Each year a number of candidates appear to choose the 'wrong' question – earlier responses in the paper suggest that they would have been better served by choosing a question which focused on a different area.

The approach to the devised pieces continues to vary considerably and not all candidates had engaged practically with the stimuli in the pre-release material. Mundane and unimaginative approaches to devising

tend to lead to weak responses to questions based on the stimuli, whereas innovative and gives candidates the chance to access the higher levels of the mark scheme.

Evaluative comment, generally required in responses relating to the devised pieces, tended to be simplistic and superficial. Candidates need to consider carefully the reactions of their audience and possible feedback that was given either during the rehearsal or performance process. Where performances had the intended impact on their audience, candidates should be able to communicate clearly the difference between what was expected and the actual outcome. Furthermore they should be able to discuss what dramatic techniques were used to bring about the intended reaction and indeed the relative success of this, providing a full, detailed description rather than a simplistic comment to the effect that 'it was successful' or 'it was not successful'.

Handwriting was generally legible and the work of many of the better candidates was carefully thought-out, well-organised and clearly communicated.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1–5 *The Naked King*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to offer an appropriate costume supported by a reason. Since the stage directions simply stated that the PRIME MINISTER is 'a fussy old man with a long white beard' there was a degree of freedom open to them. Examiners were looking for answers that implied status and position linked to the Court. In some cases candidates could not access both marks either because the choice of costume was not specific or because they only responded to half of the question, i.e. offering a suggestion but not a reason, or a reason without a specific suggestion or not offering a suggestion at all. Answers which stated that the character has a long white beard were not credited as a beard is not part of a costume.

Many candidates offered a long and detailed response with a variety of suggestions for the costume and a range of comments to support their answers. The question was worth two marks and therefore one valid suggestion and one valid reason was all that was required to score both marks.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to show a thorough understanding of facial expressions and/or physical gestures and were able to give three suggestions. The question asked candidates to 'identify' and therefore explanations were not needed. In many cases, candidates offered more than three suggestions and/or provided comprehensive descriptions of the reasoning behind their choices which was not required.

Some offered vocal suggestions as to how particular lines might have been spoken: no marks were available for this. Examiners were looking for comments that would bring the drama to life through the use of gesture and/or facial expression. This might have been through general suggestions such as a 'happy face' or giving a little more detail such as an 'incredulous look and a wagging finger'. Both were acceptable. The most common suggestion for the use of physical gesture was 'pointing' at something specific or a general comment on posture.

The best responses were those that were succinct in the form of three bullet points which clearly identified the candidates' intentions.

Question 3

Some candidates found this a challenging question and responses were varied. There was a tendency to focus on performance over role and discuss how the actor playing the SAVANT might contribute to the drama by means of his skills. Hence a number of responses discussed the use of pace, energy, physicality etc. at the expense of how the role itself was designed to have an impact on the action.

The best responses highlighted how the SAVANT was there to impart information concerning the Princess's lineage, to dominate and control the pacing of the scene and to appear to belittle or undermine the King without being blatantly insubordinate.

Less successful responses communicated the action without indicating its importance or consistent meaning behind the drama.

Question 4

Central to this particular passage is the 'presence' of the King's new clothes. Their invisibility provides CHRISTIAN with numerous excellent opportunities which, taken in tandem with his delight in the multiple angles of deception that are open to him (depending on whom he is addressing), provide the focus for answering this question. Avoidance of the 'cloth' on the floor, handling actions such as folding or cutting, mock horror when someone steps on the 'material' and feigned obscurity when supposedly hidden behind the material were all opportunities for physicality. Most responses identified one or two of these and made suggestions as to how the actor could maximise opportunities for physicality. Few candidates developed the answer fully and with detailed reference to the text.

Question 5

Many candidates were able to analyse the specific passage and comment on what was happening within it but whilst a majority were able to suggest a range of dramatic techniques linked to the action, they did not use these as a means to explore the PRINCESS's character.

The more astute responses identified discernible character traits such as impulsiveness, insecurity and determination and were able to demonstrate how these were evidenced in the text by citing specific moments and making suggestions how the actress playing the role could represent or suggest these.

Questions 6–8 *Devised work*

Question 6

Only a minority of candidates provided enough detail to meet the 3- or 4-mark bands in this question.

Technical language was a barrier with some interpreting the request for a discussion of the 'atmosphere', as an opportunity to provide a narrative of their piece during which there was minimal reference to atmosphere such as 'tense', 'scary' or 'happy'. Examiners were looking for how dramatic technique was used in creating interest in the drama; these might have been aspects that introduced change, challenge or instability into the action which later led to a resolution.

Typically candidates achieved two marks by referring to a moment in their piece which was an example of atmosphere and offering a simple or general comment on its effectiveness. Where candidates did comment on its effectiveness, it tended to be quite simplistic or general, often by making a vague reference to the reaction of the audience. Some references to the effectiveness were superficial in that a comment was provided but not substantiated.

Question 7

Many candidates continue to confuse the term 'prop' with 'set' or 'costume'. When asked about props, candidates are best advised to concentrate on hand props: smaller items that actors might use to contribute to the action of the drama. Consequently, examiners could not credit, for example, chairs arranged on stage in such a way as to establish a bus interior (i.e. setting), but where items of set/costume were used physically by the actor to add to the drama (e.g. a character offering another a chair to convey courtesy), marks were awarded.

Props may not have been used in the original piece but most candidates acknowledged the use of the word 'potential' in the question and therefore offered suggestions as to what they might use if they were to perform the piece again.

Few candidates accessed the full 4 marks since, having identified the prop, and its purpose, they were unable to suggest how the prop might have been used to add to the drama.

Question 8

Most candidates were able to access at least one mark in this question simply by stating one instance where impact was made or a general comment on how effective the piece was. References to costumes, lights and sound were given credit where appropriate. As in **Question 6**, sometimes references to effectiveness were superficial in that a comment was provided but not substantiated.

Generally this question had a good response with many candidates able to offer suggestions as to how the intended (or unintended) impact worked out in performance.

Section B

Questions 9–11 *The Naked King*

Question 9

There were many opportunities for imagination in this question and the possibilities were endless. Many candidates did not seem to realise that they could suggest any design concept they liked, provided that they could explore, explain and justify it in relation to the extract. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates think beyond their own performance facilities and demonstrate originality and flair in the context of a more ambitious stage.

The word ‘challenges’ contained in the question was seen by some as synonymous with the word ‘problems’ and a number of candidates elected to discuss the limitations of their own performance rather than considering how solutions could be found to satisfy the theatrical applications inherent in the extract. This in turn led on to discussion that dealt with setting issues in the most simplistic terms. There is nothing wrong with opting for simplicity but in terms of the demands of the question this approach meant that the answers themselves were also basic.

Those answers which did go beyond the basic and simplistic varied, from those which were full of fantasy and striking visual imagery but were totally impractical in theatrical terms, to those which systematically swept through the extract providing well-conceived, original and above all practical solutions to facilitate the action, all within a clearly defined overall design concept.

Question 10

This was a question primarily about directorial concept and the role of the director and allowed candidates who have an interest in this area to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise.

A relatively small number of candidates chose to answer it and in some cases they appeared to be unprepared for this type of question. Most did not recognise the need to outline the directorial concept and therefore found it difficult to access the mark scheme. Others focused on the quotation rather than the question itself. In one or two cases candidates focused on the political history behind the text and ended up discussing political dogma which, though impressive, did not address the question.

Some essays explored lighting, sound and costume which showed a lack of understanding of production roles – although some credit was given as the director is responsible for the overall vision of the production.

To access the higher bands of the mark scheme, candidates needed to demonstrate a practical understanding of the play and offer detailed suggestions as to what the director’s intentions might be and how these could be realised showing creative solutions.

Question 11

This was a very popular question, which was generally tackled well.

The question was aimed at those who have a particular interest in acting, and asked candidates to not only demonstrate their knowledge of the KING’s character, but also to show their understanding of how the part might be played in performance.

Most candidates were able to make a range of basic but valid comments about the character of the KING. Many responses went further by offering suggestions relating to application of dramatic technique.

Sometimes this was restricted to rather general advice, often vague and non-specific and therefore did not allow candidates to access the full range of marks available. However, there were many who gave specific suggestions which were firmly based on both text and character and demonstrated a detailed and practical understanding of how to play the role.

Some candidates chose to focus on character without much suggestion of how this could be communicated in terms of practical application. Some responses were overly concerned with the political undertones of the play which, as candidates sought to bring these into focus, relapsed into mere recounting of events within the extract as a means to illustrate the KING's character. Some credit was awarded for this, but it does illustrate a basic misunderstanding about the role of the actor as opposed to that of the director and therefore candidates who concentrated heavily in this area to the detriment of characterisation and dramatic technique would not have been able to access the higher mark bands.

Section C

Questions 12–14 *Devised work*

Question 12

This was a very popular question. Responses typically included a lengthy introductory paragraph explaining the plot before addressing the specifics of the question. This used up valuable time and no credit was awarded for anything unrelated to a specific discussion of costume and make-up.

Candidates were required to discuss the 'potential' for costume and make-up although the majority of responses referred only to what was actually done rather than what might have been done. This meant that answers tended to be restricted to the methods used in the performances: either little costume or make-up was used, or everyday clothes and street make-up was employed. Such responses neglected the potential for their use and therefore engaged with the question at only a basic level.

There were some good responses which, even when they were confined to jeans and tee shirts, managed to go beyond the basic. An example of this was where costume and the bodies and faces of the actors showed signs of distress following some trauma, effected by the addition of 'dirt' or rips to clothes with hollowed eyes or simulated wounds through the use of make-up.

In answering questions of this kind, candidates need to be much more aware of how costume and make-up can be used. Even where their own production has not used them, they have the option of envisaging the potential for a more complex scenario and one that requires aspects of costume and make-up to fulfil the directorial concept.

Question 13

This was also a popular question. It required candidates not only to identify the key relationships but also to say how effective their dramatisation had been. Candidates could explore the practical dramatic interaction and also the given circumstances and context in which the drama develops. There were also opportunities to relate action to context through, for example, gender, social class, politics etc.

All candidates were able to clearly state the most significant relationships together with basic justification. Many then lost direction and provided a narrative of the devised piece without addressing the rest of question. Some were able to complement their answer with details about a specific relationship but also needed to go on to explain how the relationships were brought to life and what purpose they served in the context of plot development and the intended message or performance objective.

Very few responses were able to offer any insight into the contribution that the relationships had made to the performance or provide any evaluation of their effectiveness and therefore could not access the higher bands of the mark scheme. Where there was some evaluative comment, in this and other similar questions, it was typified by simplistic statements of whether it worked or not. To improve, candidates needed to clearly communicate that the outcome was a result of careful planning and crafting. There should be comment regarding how and why decisions had been made to do things in a particular way, preferably related to feedback received from others. Drama is primarily about the impact a performance has on its audience and consequently any evaluation should make reference to this. Where this was attempted, the statements tended to be quite superficial, e.g. stating how the audience 'felt', and lacked substantiation.

The best responses came from those who had gone through the process of developing and performing their piece to an audience. In those cases, candidates could offer a perceptive evaluation of performance with well selected references to both specific moments of action and the overall performance objective and what impact this had on the audience.

Question 14

This question required candidates to be clear about their use of pacing. Many candidates who attempted it did not appear to have understood fully the meaning or significance of dramatic pacing, with many responses indicating that drama was realised either at a 'fast' pace or a 'slow' one with, just occasionally, variations in between. This was repeated frequently, in scene-by-scene descriptions which started 'fast' and then got slower or vice versa.

Although such answers showed a basic understanding of how performances might undergo a development from a slow pace to higher, quicker levels, candidates also needed to recognise the relationship between pace and performance dynamics. A significant number of candidates seemed uncertain how to differentiate between energy and pace. There was an apparent certainty that in order to catch and hold the attention of the audience a high-energy fast pace is essential and that if the pace is slow then the energy will be too and hence the audience will 'lose interest'.

To improve, candidates need to understand how pacing can be applied through the dynamics of dialogue, physicality, plot structure etc. In order to access the 'Understanding' band of the mark scheme candidates needed to be able to demonstrate that variations in pace can be effected, for example, by the way dialogue is created and delivered, or how the physical dynamics of a piece can change the tempo – and hence the pace – from one dramatic moment to the next. They should also perceive that the way the drama is developed and structured through plot, narrative exposition and the creation of moments of tension, conflict and climax can also affect the pace of the drama.

To access the 'Evaluation' band candidates needed to be prepared to identify and assess in detail the effectiveness of these techniques and moments of variation within the context of the performance intention and the perceived impact on the audience.

DRAMA (US)

Paper 0428/02
Coursework

General comments

There was a rich diversity in the practical work submitted this series and many candidates displayed high levels of enthusiasm and commitment in their performances. There were relatively few instances of disengaged candidates: even where performances revealed only modest levels of skills and technique, candidates were often able to show their passion for drama.

Administration

1 *Timely dispatch of the moderation materials*

Almost all submissions were received on time in Cambridge, which enabled the moderation process to run smoothly.

2 *Documentation*

In a small number of cases the moderation process was delayed owing to incomplete documentation being sent with the recordings. Centres are requested to check that they have included all of the following when they submit their materials to Cambridge:

- the Internal Assessment MS1 mark sheet or a signed printout of the marks file if marks were submitted to Cambridge electronically;
- the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets (ICMSs) for each candidate, including those who are not in the sample;
- the running order of performances on the DVD.

3 *Selecting the sample*

Several Centres sent the work of all candidates, rather than the sample of six that was required. This delayed the moderation process as Moderators had to first select an appropriate sample. In other instances the sample did not provide adequate coverage of the marks awarded: either the highest or lowest marked candidates were not included, or the sample was bunched around certain marks, leaving other mark ranges unrepresented.

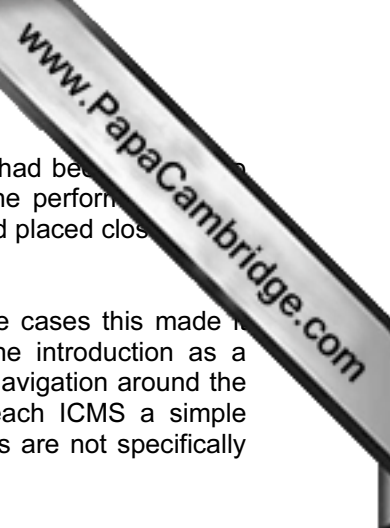
4 *Accuracy of mark sheets*

There were fewer arithmetical errors this series, and there was some improvement in the accuracy of the transcription of marks from the ICMSs to the MS1 mark sheet or to computer if marks were submitted electronically. The most common arithmetical errors were caused by rounding marks up or down for the assessment objectives, rather than leaving them as decimal fractions until calculating the final mark (although this will no longer be a problem when the syllabus changes in 2015 and the marks will simply need to be added up).

5 *Quality of recordings*

Most DVDs played without any problems, although there were a number that would not work either in a computer (Mac or PC) or a DVD player. To ensure compatibility, all recordings submitted on DVD must be in either MPEG (.mpg) or QuickTime movie (.mov) format.

There was an improvement in the quality of the recordings, although the sound quality was not always of a comparable standard to the picture, a disparity especially noticeable in outdoor performances.



Sound quality was sometimes a problem even with indoor pieces as the camera had been placed too far from the stage. If the camera has to be placed at a distance away from the performance, it is recommended that an additional external microphone is attached to the camera and placed close to the performers in order to ensure a good-quality audio recording.

Not all candidates introduced themselves before each performance, and in some cases this made it difficult for Moderators to identify performers. Some Centres provided just one introduction as a separate chapter on the DVD, which was of limited value, as it required intricate navigation around the title menu for each performance. Centres are also reminded to include on each ICMS a simple description of what each candidate is wearing in each performance. Photographs are not specifically required but Moderators were grateful in cases where Centres had provided them.

Assessment criteria

There was evidence of good application of the assessment criteria. However, in some cases there was confusion between the marks awarded for Assessment Objectives A and B, which are largely concerned with the quality of the performance ideas and interpretation, and Assessment Objective C, which is focused on the quality of the candidates' acting skills in the performance itself.

Text-based performances

Most candidates achieved their best results in the text-based work.

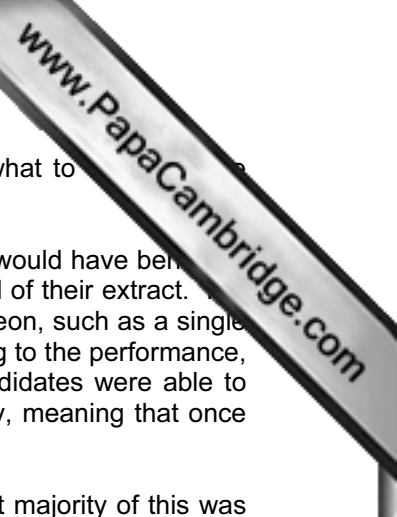
There were a number of emotionally charged performances, which clearly engaged their audiences in live performance, and also communicated well through the recordings. The strongest work was well presented and had a good sense of stagecraft, discipline and performance focus, often demonstrating an excellent understanding of character, thematic content and context. These candidates were highly successful in bringing their role to life, and establishing a sense of context in which multi-dimensional, complex characters interacted with each other.

However, many candidates demonstrated variable success in inhabiting their chosen character and some were prone to overacting, especially at points of exalted language. The overwhelming majority of candidates had taken considerable trouble to learn their lines, and there were hardly any who broke down in performance. Mid-range performances frequently gave the impression of going through the motions on stage: lines had been learned, consideration had been given to the requirements of the setting and relationships between the characters, but the performance itself lacked self-belief, or a sense they were acting out the role of an authentic character whose words were intended to provoke a strong reaction from other characters. The weakest performances were frequently one-dimensional, with lines being delivered at another character rather than with any meaningful sense of creating dialogue.

As reported in previous series, a number of candidates demonstrated constrained physicality in their performances. The use of furniture was often a hindrance, especially in monologues where candidates were seated for the whole piece. Several weaker performances consisted of what was essentially a 'talk' seated on a chair or behind a table. Whilst this may be a suitable approach for a professional actor, it did not always serve candidates well as static monologues tended to work against the drama of the piece. Furniture was not always the cause of the problem and some of those who were standing were sometimes immobile, whilst others delivered their pieces seated on the floor, seemingly overwhelmed by self-hugging angst with knees clutched tightly to their chest. Some static monologues were filmed from the waist up, which exacerbated their lack of physicality.

The most engaging performances demonstrated a strong awareness of historical, social and cultural awareness. Extracts from plays with an historical theme were often well crafted, with a strong sense of time and place reinforced through a careful consideration of location, setting, costume and use of space. Some candidates chose plays from their own country or region and this often gave them a closer affinity with the subject matter and context. Some of the weakest performances consisted of attempts to perform culturally specific contemporary UK drama, which relied on regional British accents and an understanding of references far removed from the location in which the performances took place.

Although there is no requirement to create elaborate costumes, some candidates often wore clothing that conflicted with the role they were trying to establish. The results were occasionally jarring: Tudor kings wearing brightly coloured tee shirts; French farces with characters dressed in denim; Shakespearean



characters wearing baseball caps. In cases where candidates are uncertain about what to wear, 'blacks' are advisable rather than everyday clothes or school uniforms.

The cutting of the extract proved challenging in group pieces, and a number of groups would have benefited from a more careful consideration of the playwright's intention at the beginning and end of their extract. For example, some candidates had chosen to begin their extract at a moment of high dudgeon, such as a single scream, a stabbing, an argument or a chase. Whilst that guaranteed a powerful opening to the performance, it was sometimes difficult to sustain the intensity of the moment. The most able candidates were able to create contrasting pacing but less skilled performers often mistook volume for intensity, meaning that once the screaming was over, the drama quickly evaporated.

Centres had generally selected an interesting and varied range of repertoire. The vast majority of this was appropriate, although in cases where monologues were taken from more obscure plays, possibly found on the internet, candidates were often unable to demonstrate knowledge of the character they were trying to build. In some instances, the monologue was a freestanding piece of text, perhaps intended for an audition piece, and therefore inappropriate for use in IGCSE Drama. There were fewer examples this series of candidates presenting extracts from screenplays, which are not permitted by the syllabus.

Centres may find it helpful to consider the following representative list of repertoire from which extracts were selected in the 2014 series.

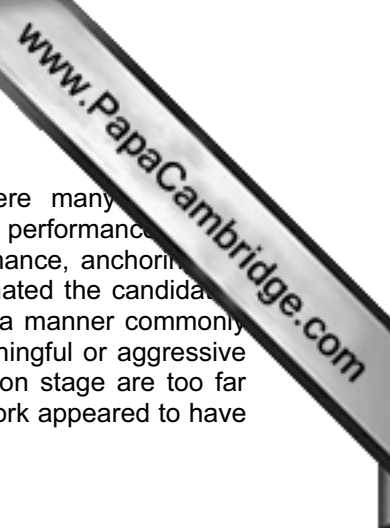
Alan Ayckbourn	<i>A Small Family Business</i> <i>Confusions</i> <i>Invisible Friends</i>
Samuel Beckett	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Bertolt Brecht	<i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>
David Campton	<i>The Cagebirds</i>
Anton Chekhov	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> <i>Three Sisters</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Top Girls</i>
Noël Coward	<i>Private Lives</i>
Gabriel Davis	<i>Goodbye Charles</i>
Floyd Dell	<i>Enigma</i>
Christopher Durang	<i>Laughing Wild</i>
Euripides	<i>The Trojan Women</i>
Dario Fo	<i>Accidental Death of an Anarchist</i>
Athol Fugard	<i>No Good Friday</i>
John Galsworthy	<i>Strife</i>
Lucy Gannon	<i>Keeping Tom Nice</i>
Nikolai Gogol	<i>The Government Inspector</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i> <i>Shakers</i> <i>Teechers</i>
Katori Hall	<i>The Mountaintop</i>
Lorraine Hansberry	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>
Gerhart Hauptmann	<i>Before Dawn</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
Moisés Kaufman	<i>The Laramie Project</i>
Charlotte Keatley	<i>My Mother Said I Never Should</i>
Dennis Kelly	<i>DNA</i>
Lyle Kessler	<i>Orphans</i>
Federico Garcia Lorca	<i>Blood Wedding</i>
Emmett Loverde	<i>Beauty, Brains and Personality</i>
Sharman Macdonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
David Mamet	<i>Glengarry Glen Ross</i>

Christopher Marlowe	<i>Doctor Faustus</i>
Jason D Martin	<i>Endangered Species</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>All My Sons</i> <i>The Crucible</i> <i>Death of a Salesman</i> <i>A View from the Bridge</i>
Molière	<i>Tartuffe</i>
John Osborne	<i>Luther</i>
Joe Penhall	<i>Some Voices</i>
J B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Terence Rattigan	<i>The Winslow Boy</i>
Yasmina Reza	<i>Art</i>
Romain Rolland	<i>The Fourteenth of July</i>
Willy Russell	<i>Blood Brothers</i> <i>Educating Rita</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Julius Caesar</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> <i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
Neil Simon	<i>The Prisoner of Second Avenue</i>
Sophocles	<i>Antigone</i>
August Strindberg	<i>Easter</i> <i>The Ghost Sonata</i>
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead</i>
John Webster	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>An Ideal Husband</i> <i>A Woman of No Importance</i> <i>Salome</i> <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Keith Waterhouse	<i>Billy Liar</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>

Devised performances

Although the overall standard of devised work improved a little this series, it was generally of a lower standard than the text-based work. It was very clear where candidates had been genuinely excited about their performance work and researched it in detail as it generally resulted in compelling drama. Some of the scripting was of a very high standard, demonstrating mature writing with some excellent characterisation. However, much of the drama seen was contrived or shallow, exploring obvious issues such as teenage pregnancy or drugs without any sense of shape or communication of a clear message. Dialogue was seldom well constructed and music was often introduced to create mood to inject life into otherwise mundane performance work. As in previous series, candidates focusing on Naturalism often ended up trapped in weaker soap-opera-style performances.

This notwithstanding, there were a number of powerful pieces where intensity was created through an abstract approach, often using the ensemble to good effect through fluid and variable physicality. In such pieces, functional dialogue was often given less priority than dramatic repetition, choral speaking, proxemics and physical interactions, often resulting in a skilfully crafted piece that dealt with complex issues in a sensitive manner rather than relying on tried-and-tested approaches. There were several examples of non-narrative elements being successfully incorporated into devised work, such as through music, the use of a narrator or the incorporation of mime.



Many candidates struggled with how to stage their dramatic ideas. There were many performances where the dramatic concept was far stronger than its execution. Some performances relied heavily on chairs and tables or a sofa, which restricted the physicality of the performance, anchoring performers to a fixed point on stage. In many pieces, the content of the piece dominated the candidates' understanding of the drama they were trying to create. This was often expressed in a manner commonly used in television and film acting, but which is seldom successful on the stage. Meaningful or aggressive stares, muttered threats or hushed undertones can create impact on the screen but on stage are too far distant from the audience to be meaningful or even noticeable. Some of the devised work appeared to have been created for performance to camera rather than to be performed on stage.