



Theatre Studies 2007–2011

Monologue performance examination

Examination specifications

Overall conditions

Examination time – up to seven minutes

Contribution to study score – 25%

Content

Students will present a monologue performance from the monologue list set annually by a panel appointed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in the supplement to the April *VCAA Bulletin*. The performance will draw on knowledge and skills from Unit 4 Outcome 1.

Students must use a prescribed monologue or their performance will be marked zero on each assessment criterion.

- The monologue is the only aspect of the interpretation of a scene that is to be performed for the examination.
- The monologue performance should draw on the knowledge and skills developed in the interpretation.
- The interpretation should inform and contextualise the monologue within the scene and within the play.
- Some of the directional choices of the interpretation of the scene may not be apparent in the performance of the monologue. Rather, they may play an important role in the processes used in developing the interpretation of the monologue.
- Some of the directional choices and interpretative decisions may be relevant for mention in the Statement of Intention.

Format

Information about the characteristics and requirements of prescribed monologues is revised and published annually as part of the VCE Theatre Studies monologue performance examination paper. Previous examination papers may be downloaded from <www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/studies/theatre/exams.html>.

The monologue will be presented as a single uninterrupted performance and last **not more than seven minutes**.

A total of ten minutes per student will be allocated for preparation, performance and clearing the space. No additional time can be allowed. Students should be mindful of these time restrictions when preparing stagecraft for the monologue.

Students will present the assessors with a written Statement of Intention of 80–100 words. The statement should highlight aspects of the student's interpretation that they would like to bring to the assessors' attention. The Statement of Intention should contain an elaboration of directional choices made by the student which affect the interpretation of their chosen monologue. A standard pro forma will be published annually in the *VCAA Bulletin* with the prescribed monologues.

Monologues

In the revised (2007–2011) VCE Theatre Studies Study Design, the intention, scope, content, key knowledge and key skills of Unit 4, Areas of Studies 1 and 2, Monologue and Scene Interpretation, have changed little from the previous study design. The structure and general direction of the performance (monologue) examination has also been retained from the previous study.

Criteria for the selection of monologues for inclusion on the performance examination are provided below.

1. The monologue performance list will be accessible and suitable for the student cohort. The list will possess dramatic merit sustaining intensive study, raising interesting issues and providing challenging ideas.
2. As far as possible, monologues selected for an examination will reflect a range of the major/significant eras in the history of theatre, including such examples as Liturgical drama, the Restoration, Naturalism, Expressionism, Theatre of the Absurd and Epic Theatre. Ancient playscripts related to the origins of theatre, such as the Greeks and the Romans, will be given particular consideration, as will the plays of Shakespeare.
3. In choosing post-1880s examples of monologues, there will be an attempt to feature some of the more important and influential playwrights and practitioners.
4. Preference will be given to playscripts that include both a suitable male and female monologue.
5. As two thirds of the Theatre Studies student body is female, particular consideration will be given to the range of female characters being offered.
6. Preference will be given to making at least two of the monologues gender neutral.
7. Consideration will be given to repeating choices from previous years which were deemed to be sufficiently challenging and beneficial for a range of students.
8. Consideration will be given to sourcing monologues from Australian playwrights and monologues from female playwrights. In general, monologues from female playwrights are less numerous and it is therefore more difficult to identify appropriate scenes/monologues for study.
9. Some monologues will be created by deleting lines of linking dialogue. Where this is done, there will always be sensitivity to the original intention of the playwright, the play, the scene and the passage.

Performance examination conditions

Performance conditions are revised and published annually as part of the VCE Theatre Studies monologue performance examination paper. VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*.

Examination criteria

The examination will address all of the criteria. All students will be examined against each criterion. Although students will be assessed through individual criteria, the assessment will be based on how each criterion is achieved within the presentation as a whole. That is, for the purposes of performance and assessment, the criteria should be considered holistically as well as individually.

Students will be assessed on the extent to which the performance demonstrates the following criteria.

1. Fulfilment of the requirements of the monologue task

The monologue task requires that a student has

- selected a monologue from the current prescribed list
- memorised the written text. Any form of reading is considered to be outside the prescription of the task. Students may be prompted if this is required. The act of prompting will not, of itself, disadvantage a student. However, the need for prompting may affect some or all of the criteria
- created an appropriate context
- used the stagecraft of acting in the performance
- used stagecraft other than acting in the performance
- made directorial choices for the performance
- selected a theatrical style(s) for the performance.

This first criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative. That is, it asks the question whether, and to what extent, the student performed the monologue, rather than considering how well the monologue was performed.

2. **Context, which includes implied time, place and persons**

Context is the presentation of the **world(s) of the play**. Some considerations involved in communicating a context include **dramaturgical research** and choices relating to setting, background and the historical period of the play and the playwright.

Students may

- perform a selected monologue within the context(s) in which the play was first written or performed, or
- recontextualise a monologue to better illuminate the themes or content of the passage.

Either of these approaches allows students to address this criterion at the highest level. The context created by the student will be considered in terms of the depth of understanding it communicates about ideas in the monologue and the ability it provides for students to communicate their understanding of the intended meaning of the monologue.

Intended meaning and context are not always absolute values and should be considered as a guide, subject to interpretation and reference to the current world in which we live. Assessors consider intended meaning and context not so much a comparison between right or wrong, as a comparison between complex, multi-layered, deep and broad in contrast to superficial, single-layered, shallow and limited.

Contexts may be measured for accuracy, but also for their depth and their ability to cast light on the intended meaning of the passage.

3. **Skill in applying direction**

The process of direction includes the controlling and developing of theatrical choices to create a **unified artistic vision**. Direction may be provided in the form of self-direction or provided by others.

All choices related to the transference of the written playscript into performance are regarded as directional or interpretive decisions. The playwright has an intention for the monologue, the scene and the play. These intentions are not always known, measurable or absolute. A student may interpret a monologue exactly as he/she perceives the playwright intended. Alternately students may make interpretive decisions that are beyond the original intentions of the playwright. Either of these approaches allows students to address this criterion at the highest level. Directional choices evident in the performance will be considered in terms of their appropriateness to the context selected for the performance and the student's interpretation of the monologue with regard to the scene and the play. All interpretive decisions, especially when moving beyond the playwright's original intentions, must have artistic and/or theatrical justification.

4. **Use and application of theatrical styles**

A theatrical style is the application of a particular **manner of presentation** to the character and the passage. Theatrical conventions are the associated norms that relate to particular styles.

Theatrical style relates to how a monologue is performed. It is assumed that, as a first choice, students will consider and research the style they perceive was originally intended by the playwright. For artistic or theatrical reasons, a student may wish to change the originally intended theatrical style. As with content, intended meaning and interpretation, any change is acceptable as long as it is not simply randomly applied, but applied in response to an aspect of the original text.

A performance may draw on more than one style, as well as variations on a classic style. Style is regarded as fluid and not necessarily absolute. As with context, the conventions of a particular theatrical style may differ from the original but stay true to the original intention of the theatrical style. Style is not assessed as right and wrong, rather, it is assessed as superficial and poorly researched as compared to well grounded in specific stylistic conventions.

5. **Acting skills**

Acting skills include all **performance and expressive skills**, both verbal and nonverbal.

The expressive skills of acting include facial expression, voice, gesture, movement and silence and stillness. Students are also asked to develop an understanding of the use of verbal and nonverbal language to convey intended meaning and the establishment and maintenance of the actor–audience relationship.

Although each separate area is identifiable and individually assessable, it will be viewed and assessed as an integral aspect of the performance as a whole rather than solely as an isolated skill or attribute.

6. **Application of stagecraft other than acting, dramaturgy and direction**

For the purposes of this criterion, the following stagecraft will be given primary consideration for assessment: costume, make-up, multimedia, properties, set and sound.

It should be noted that for the purposes of assessment in this examination, lighting, stage management and promotion have been deliberately omitted from the list of stagecraft.

All students will perform in a 'clearly lit space' and will not have the ability to control lighting within the performance. Should a student wish to incorporate some use of multimedia within the limitations of the examination time and space, this would be considered under the auspices of stagecraft. However, students should take heed that the entire monologue, including all set-up and performance, must be accomplished within a time limit of ten minutes.

7. **Use of focus and space**

Focus relates to the ability of a performer to **portray and maintain a characterisation**, plus the ability to **focus an audience** on aspects of a performance. Poor focus will affect the actor's ability to effectively portray a character and also affect the audience response to that portrayal.

The use of space relates to the ability of a performer to **define a playing area** and to effectively block movements within it. The effective use of focus and space is at the heart of the actor-audience relationship. Belief, the suspension of disbelief and the effective portrayal of character are closely related to the effective use of focus and space.

8. **Tension and timing**

Dramatic tension is the result of the application of dramatic timing. Pace, rhythm, pauses, silences, language idioms and inflections, voice projection and breathing techniques and the use of gesture all contribute to both tension and timing.

Although all eight individual criteria are assessed individually, they also make a cumulative contribution to the overall level of performance. All criteria, as well as being specific, also relate to the integrated, holistic nature of the performance as a whole. Interpretation through direction to achieve an intended meaning and the application of theatrical style(s), acting, other stagecraft, focus, space, tension and timing must all combine to create a successful theatrical performance.