



2003

Drama GA 2: Solo performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The broad range of work seen in the 2003 Drama Solo performance examination reflected both the continuing confidence in the structure of the paper, now in its third year in this format, and the on-going need to reinforce some of the requirements of the task.

The examination requires students to address a performance focus, including details of place and time, while directing their performance to a specified audience. As the three bullet points for each prescribed structure required substantial research, students needed to carefully edit their script in order to demonstrate the level of detail being asked for, while completing the solo performance within the maximum seven minutes allowed in the examination. Where students tried to include too much detail in their script, or mis-timed their performance, work was often rushed or ran overtime. Teachers and students need to be mindful of the maximum performance time allowed for this examination.

Instructions 5 and 6 under 'Performance examination conditions' in 'Instructions To Students' on page 2 of the Drama Solo performance examination paper clearly stated that the performance must last '*not more than seven minutes*' and that '*if a performance goes over the prescribed time limit the student will be asked to stop*'. This was clearly an issue for a number of students.

A characteristic of more successful performances was the richness of the detail found within the maximum performance time (7 minutes). Students who paid close attention to fulfilling the requirements of the task (Criterion 1), including ensuring that all plurals in the stem and each bullet point were covered gained full marks for Criterion 1 which requires students to include every aspect of the prescribed structure in their performance. A vital aspect of successfully completing the Drama Solo performance examination is to read and re-read the prescribed structure very thoroughly, to fully understand all the requirements of the task. Sophisticated and judicious editing characterises the more successful work.

An area of continuing concern identified within less successful performances was the lack of understanding of the **non-naturalistic** performance style. A definition of this style is included in the terminology section of the examination paper. Frequently students chose to perform as a 'talking head' with little or no demonstration of dramatic action. Each prescribed structure required the students to **recreate** or **act out** or **show** and the terminology section on page 14 of the examination paper includes the following statement in relation to 'recreate': *the emphasis in the recreation must be on action rather than narration; doing rather than telling*. This lack of understanding of non-naturalism had a direct impact on the assessment of the use of expressive skills (Criterion 8), the development of the dramatic potential of the subject matter (Criterion 2) and the use of the prescribed performance style (Criterion 4).

Some students chose to present their performance in 'street clothes', not realising that this choice automatically gave their work a contemporary look and feel and that it may not have been appropriate for their chosen character. This also included a lack of attention to detail about inappropriate jewellery. Some also chose to incorporate colloquial, contemporary speech into their performance further eroding belief in the 'world' of the character. The 'world' of the character relates to the period in time, and place, in which the character lives, and is identified by specific references to that timeframe, both literal and symbolic, as well as a particular language and physicality. It also relies heavily on atmosphere, mood, tone and energy. To go beyond those parameters is possible but risky. Each of the prescribed structures required the performance focus to be on that 'world'.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The Stereotype

This structure was popular with both male and female students. A successful student performance was characterised by a demonstration of a detailed understanding of Victorian Melodrama and an effective development of the 'social commentary' of the day. It also included diversity and humour in the depiction of the stereotypes. The less successful student performances included little or no reference to the film stimulus and poor character development. Also, many less successful performances used clumsy character transformation devices, and failed to develop a relationship with members of the Theatrical Entities Inc. subcommittee, the specified audience.

The Public Servant

This structure appealed more to students who enjoyed working with the convention of exaggerated movement and the element of sound. Some highly effective physical work was seen here. Less successful students showed little evidence of research into the novel/s of Gillian Rubinstein and found bullet point 3, *'the change in his/her understanding and behaviour'* hard to recreate. More successful students found interesting and creative ways of recreating the digital world of the internal workings of the computer, and were able to work in references to the other novels in the *Skymaze* series.

The Double Agent

More successful students demonstrated the ability to construct intricate plot lines and use humour, particularly through black comedy and satire, and to portray a strong sense of the Australian political landscape of the 1950s in this structure. The most successful work was also characterised by fine comic timing and highly imaginative use of a dramatic metaphor. Less successful students' work was characterised by a lack of research into the period and little reference to *'the wider implications of the Petrov Affair'*. Less successful students also tended to develop the character of a spy rather than the double agent.

Marvellous Melbourne

This structure attracted a greater number of female students. Less successful performers were tempted into the re-telling of facts rather than the recreation of events, people and ideals. More successful performers showed evidence of considerably detailed research, skilfully weaving information into their performance, often through inventive movement and sound. The most successful work was typified by a sophisticated response to bullet point 3, *'an ideal that Melbourne is striving for in 1888'*.

Tenterfield Saddler

While some found the requirement to recreate three characters a little demanding, most students were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the dramatic elements of rhythm and mood in this structure. The most successful work contained careful editing of the script and the ability to cleverly link the three generations. Also, the judicious use of song was particularly effective in the creation of pathos in the most successful students. Less successful work was characterised by too much use of the song 'Tenterfield Saddler' and incorrect use of Peter Allen's music generally. Also, less successful students were tempted to use far too many props, which detracted from their performance.

Meyer Wolfshiem

This structure proved popular with female students. Within the more successful performances there was a clever use of symbol, and a sophisticated feel for the era, creating the 'world' of the key characters from the novel. Top students demonstrated the ability to effortlessly transform character, working seamless transitions from one person to the next, consistently performing the changes in accent and posture as well as context and attitude. Less successful performances showed little connection to or understanding of the novel, no sense of the 'world' of the characters, and tended to present a stereotype of a Jewish person.

Mitsy Sennosuke

This structure attracted some highly imaginative non-naturalistic performances, with the most successful work demonstrating an extremely sophisticated choice and use of symbol and pathos. Various aspects of Noh theatre were cleverly interwoven into the performance with a real understanding of the racial tensions in Broome at that time being evident. Bullet point 3 provided some powerful moments with students developing a connection between the text and the emotional event surrounding the death of Mitsy's father. Less successful students' work tended to lack detail from the novel, such as the internment of the Japanese or an understanding of Hartley. These performances also presented us with inappropriate stereotypes and showed little evidence of an understanding of Noh theatre.

Gertrude Bell

This structure challenged the students to demonstrate an understanding of the clash of cultures experienced by Gertrude Bell. The more successful students made excellent use of heightened language, some effectively incorporating Arabic, and conveyed a strong sense of the time, and being a woman in this place. They were able to create the landscape of the desert and some made highly imaginative use of fabric in their performance. The top work contained deftly handled comedy and drama. Less successful work made no reference to the class system which was a part of Gertrude's 'world', lacked research in the development of the script, and made little or no use of heightened language throughout the performance.

Isabella of Castille

This was a demanding structure in terms of the research required and students needed to be aware of this as they developed their script. The most successful work was characterised by the sophisticated editing of substantial research, effective and judicious references to the painting, and a strong demonstration of Epic theatre running throughout the performance. The most successful students managed to build political comment on current issues into their work, which added a richness of meaning. Less successful students struggled to give textual coherence to their historical research and made little if any reference to the stimulus.

Maria Von Trapp

Less successful students chose to spend a considerable amount of their performance time using songs from the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*. This was a poor choice. While most students identified the differences between the screen Maria and the real person, less successful work did not establish the implied audience or move beyond a linear working through of the bullet points. More successful work was characterised by good use of disjointed time sequences and symbol, and the clear endowing of the audience as different characters in the recreation of Maria's life. Successful work also demonstrated a sophisticated use of props in a multi-transformational way, heightening the effectiveness of the non-naturalistic performance style.

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Published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
41 St Andrews Place, East Melbourne 3002

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