

# 2019 VCE Drama solo performance examination report

## General comments

In 2019, the Drama Solo performance examination comprised 10 prescribed structures. Students could choose from female (three), male (two) or neutral (three) characters. For two structures students could select from either a male or female or both. Students created and developed a solo performance in response to one of these prescribed structures.

This examination is an acting task where students must create a performance that is eclectic in nature. The best work 'showed' assessors the content instead of 'telling' them. This work was richly researched and devised, incorporating the stimulus in creative and interesting ways. Students who scored well used their expressive skills masterfully and were seamless in transition.

Contrastingly, low-scoring work felt very rushed as the students struggled to fit their performance into the seven minutes allocated. There was little evidence of the stimulus in performance and or of research or reference material for the prescribed structure outside of it.

Students responded well to the flexibility in dot points and choosing their own convention and dramatic element allowed for real ownership of their talents and choices. Heightened use of language was a very popular convention and contrast was a popular element. Tension and climax, when selected, were often used poorly with no real development of tension leading to a climax or anticlimax (Criterion 7). Application of symbol was often misinterpreted on the Statement of Intention and in performance, with the use being literal, not symbolic.

Some students chose to wear theatre blacks or street clothes that had no connection to the character or the prescribed structure, offering little opportunity for marks to be awarded for the application of production areas (Criterion 10). This did not enhance the performances.

Many students used audio devices to enhance their performance through the use of very appropriate atmospheric sound effects and/or music. At times, timing or equipment malfunction interfered with some presentations. On occasion excessive volume interfered with the students' delivery. It is advised that students always do a sound check in their set-up time. A number of students using sound placed their mobile phones and speakers in the middle of the performance space, which was distracting, and at times got in the way of the performance.

The new format of the Statement of Intention was mainly used well. Students who scored well stated their dramatic metaphor or symbolic choices in their Statement of Intention.

## Specific information

### The characters

#### Tina Sparkle and/or Ken Railings

High-scoring performances captured the feel and motivation of the characters in the film (stimulus). They utilised seamless integration of music, sound and elements of musical theatre. Caricature was often chosen and was portrayed very well. This work made the ongoing grudge central to their current personality and created a parallel with the person chosen for dot point 3 (DP3), allowing for a more cohesive overall story (Criterion 4).

Low-scoring performances defined musical theatre as choosing a song from a musical and changing the lyrics. This work did not give a sense that a number of years had passed since the Championships with little character development or growth of wisdom over time. It over-emphasised the characters' lack of sophistication as an image of 'boganism' and did not further develop the character's motivation.

#### The Queen of the Red Hat Society

High-scoring performances beautifully wove the poem into the work, and really featured the Queen (rather than too much of the Mayor). DP2 was well researched and this work delved deeper into the poem's message about conformity. There was clever use of satire in DP3 in relation to political and/or government campaigns.

Low-scoring performances did not play the age of the character appropriately, did not reflect the purple and red in costumes (demonstrating a lack of engagement with the stimulus) and did not appear to understand the red hat members. This work showed somewhat superficial interpretations of the poem – going no further than to say that older women should just be able to do what they want, when they like.

#### The Gangster

This was the second most popular structure.

High-scoring performances created a strong sense of style, character and setting. They were able to delve into the more serious and darker side of the Capone story. There was an effective use of voice and use of accent was also strong. A range of performance techniques was used to create an overall eclectic style.

Low-scoring performances assumed that all gangsters speak with the same Bronx accent. This work did not distinguish between characters through voice or movement, relying on clichéd versions (Criterion 2). It drew too heavily on the film as historical evidence, such as using baseball bats to show the St Valentine's Day Massacre. There was too much talking in these performances.

#### The Toy

High-scoring performances skilfully used multiple conventions of physical theatre coupled with a solid use of the chosen prop to support this. Additional application of symbol was used thoughtfully and thematically (Criterion 6). This work created a sense of human frailty, especially in the Woody and Buzz characters.

Low-scoring performances were very limited in use of the performance space with too much happening centre stage and limited creation of physical theatre. It appeared, at times, that the wrong character had been chosen, limiting the student's physicality, such as slinkies who stayed on all fours for the performance. These performances featured poor costume choices that impacted on movements.

## **Okiku**

High-scoring performances revealed highly developed expressive skills and used actions far more than words (Criterion 8). They created interesting character contrast between Okiku and the Samurai and many performances made use of the Japanese language and Japanese writing. Butoh-style elements were clearly understood and effortlessly incorporated into the nightmarish depictions of stylised violence.

Low-scoring performances tended to depict physical violence and revenge in non-stylistic ways. This work did not develop the grotesque physicality expected of this style, or did not use more than one convention of Butoh, relying on sensational screams, etc., without purposeful connection to the story. It did not incorporate the complexities of the given story into DP1 and over-simplified the ways revenge might be depicted in DP3.

## **The Bush Poet: Banjo Paterson and/or Henry Lawson**

This was the least popular structure.

High-scoring performances made a clear connection between the bank, the faces on the new \$10 note and the places these people have in history. The 'slam' was well revealed and had a strong sense of Australian one-upmanship and cutting, funny or laidback humour. There was frequent reference to and incorporation of the characters' respective poems.

Low-scoring performances had little sense of an Australian identity other than modern country stereotypes in DP2. They demonstrated little knowledge of either poet's works other than a superficial use of the more well-known verses. The poetry slam was poorly done and did not portray any competitive edge.

## **Miss Scarlett and/or Colonel Mustard**

This was the most popular structure.

High-scoring performances created a sense of the 'whodunnit' genre and used a range of relevant stylised clues. They demonstrated that they had researched the stimulus material and the background, especially in regard to Richard Green (Criterion 3). They emphasised the foggy/London setting and referred to setting several times.

Low-scoring performances misrepresented DP1, or did not present it clearly and did not cover all aspects of the opening sentences, including reference to other characters. They were exemplified by poor costume and prop choices (theatre blacks and accessories or objects that got in the way).

## **The Flower Thrower**

High-scoring performances beautifully used production areas to evoke Banksy's aesthetic and clearly articulated the protest. The central character was well created and realised, giving personality to the Flower Thrower character. A sense of a crowd in turmoil was created and this work demonstrated why the character was so passionate in suggesting a peaceful approach. This work was exemplified by energetic, physical performances that carefully utilised a range of Epic Theatre conventions.

Low-scoring performances ignored the stimulus to push an issue that was important to them, pontificated radical political views, featured improvisation and did not demonstrate understanding of Banksy's body of work. The protest was unexplained, reducing the clarity of the piece to murkiness. This work could not create conventions of Epic Theatre and was very wordy.

## **Juliet**

High-scoring performances utilised a range of conventions of Elizabethan theatre (Criterion 5), including heightened use of language and demonstrated solid scripting. They created Juliet as a

feisty, impassioned character with a modern message that proved how outdated Shakespeare has become. This work made clever references to more minor characters and how their different choices could have changed Juliet's life.

Low-scoring performances showed poor understanding of the term 'tragic', confusing this term with 'sad', and therefore did not clearly identify the DP3 heroine as being tragic. This work maintained Juliet as an overly romantic character and missed the expectation that Juliet is telling Shakespeare to **rewrite** the ending of the play. There were also some odd accent choices, for example American accents or mispronunciation of the original text.

### **The Gothic Spirit**

High-scoring performances created the meddlesome nature of the gothic spirit and used it to create playful work. This work gave several short examples of what has scared people over time and used more action and fewer words to create the style and atmosphere, supporting the actor–audience relationship (Criterion 9).

Low-scoring performances created a highly naturalistic main character without any stylised gothic attributes. The date and period was undefined and the structure was not fully completed (Criterion 1). Major issues in this work included a focus on the more modern 'goth' character and a limited understanding of DP2 and the stimulus.