2023 VCE Drama solo external assessment report

General comments

In 2023, the Drama solo performance examination comprised 10 prescribed structures, with three of the structures having two characters to choose from (Structure 1 – Mungojerrie and/or Rumpleteazer, Structure 4 – Liang Shanbo and/or Zhu Yingtai (the Butterfly Lovers), and Structure 9 – Moana and/or Maui).

Students have seven minutes to perform their examination. Performances should be timed, refined and edited if needed, to ensure that they do not go over time. If a performance does go over time, students will not receive full marks in Criteria 2, 4 and 9.

Similarly, students should pay close attention to the stimulus and make sure they are covering all aspects of the prescribed structure to ensure that they are compliant (Criterion 1). The stimulus should be evidenced throughout the performance and there should be indications of research (Criterion 3).

This year, there was some very creative, clever and thoughtful work, with the nominated convention and dramatic element extremely appropriate. On the other hand, there were also several students who gave incorrect conventions or dramatic elements; that is choosing one that was not listed in the examination paper, affecting Criteria 6 and 7. Clever use of costumes and considered choice of properties assisted students to create the world of the character. Using a classroom chair is often a poor choice, preventing imaginative transformation opportunities and effective use of space. Any object or set piece should be used fully within the performance. Props and costumes should not get in the way of the performance. Some students brought in problematic props or costumes that they found hard to manipulate and got in the way (Criterion 10). Likewise, wearing street clothes with little or no props does not assist in creating sophisticated work.

There was some excellent use of comedy in several of the structures, especially the Back Stage Crew Member and Dennis (Criterion 5).

Students should pay particular attention to making sure their characters are clearly differentiated using expressive and performance skills (Criteria 8 and 9). Again, many students narrated instead of showed; i.e., used too much talking.

Several students were under the impression that they had to read out an oral explanation of their solo, bring everything into the room at once and list three or more styles. None of this is required for the drama solo examination. The requirements of the exam are clearly listed under ‘Guidelines for students and teachers’ at the front of the exam paper.

Some students had created a striking and effective performance, but instead of basing it clearly on the stimulus, made up sections that were incongruous with the main stimulus. Often these changes were political or social in concept and it seemed that the students were wanting to make a statement rather than complete the task as set. Unfortunately, there were a few students just referencing key dot point requirements rather than being creative with choices.

Specific information

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding, resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Criterion 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 14 | 80 | 9.7 |

Criterion 2

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.9 | 3 | 7 | 15 | 21 | 18 | 16 | 11 | 9 | 6.8 |

Criterion 3

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.7 | 3.5 | 6.7 | 15 | 19 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 6.8 |

Criterion 4

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.2 | 3 | 8 | 15 | 22 | 18 | 15 | 11 | 8 | 6.7 |

Criterion 5

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.2 | 3 | 9 | 16 | 21 | 18 | 14 | 11 | 9 | 6.7 |

Criterion 6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 3 | 9 | 16 | 20 | 16 | 15 | 11 | 9 | 6.7 |

Criterion 7

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.4 | 3.6 | 10 | 17 | 20 | 18 | 14 | 10 | 7 | 6.5 |

Criterion 8

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.3 | 1 | 6 | 14 | 22 | 21 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 6.9 |

Criterion 9

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0 | 0.4 | 2 | 7 | 15 | 23 | 19 | 14 | 12 | 8 | 6.8 |

Criterion 10

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 2 | 7 | 15 | 19 | 18 | 16 | 12 | 11 | 6.9 |

The Characters

Mungojerrie and/or Rumpleteazer

High-scoring performances demonstrated creative production areas and had a sophisticated use of theatrical skills, including dance, acrobatics and exaggerated movement. Physical theatre was woven throughout the piece, used for visually expressive storytelling and characterisations. There were strong references to other cats (dot point 3).

Low-scoring performances showed a lack of contrast in expressive skills (specifically facial expression), often relying on makeup. These performances also used songs superficially, without changing lyrics, or simply ‘popped’ them in without meaningful integration.

Dennis Denuto

High-scoring work balanced the comedy of the stimulus material with the seriousness of dot point 3. This work developed contrast through the mood of scenes and juxtaposition of characters for humorous/dramatic effect. It utilised exaggerated and sophisticated caricature for character portrayal.

Low-scoring performances didn’t have an issue or a place for Dennis to defend and had underdeveloped costumes and production areas. At times there was an over-reliance on re-telling the story of the film without adding depth or interpretation or with very few references to the stimulus. This work relied heavily on improvisation.

Eliza Emily Donnithorne

High-scoring performances demonstrated an excellent creation of Gothic Theatre, creating eerie and mysterious moods using lace, mirrors, prop pieces and soundtracks. There was a great application of symbol and excellent breadth of research shown in the characterisation of Eliza – age, trauma, behaviours and mental health. There was clever use of symbolism to enhance storytelling. Conflict was an appropriate dramatic element selected here (Criterion 7), exploring both internal and external levels of conflict.

Low-scoring performances missed opportunities for Gothic Theatre. Dot point 2 was often just a list of aspects, rather than embedding them more deeply within the performance. There were not appropriate choices for dot point 3 and confusion in setting up the world of the characters, with incorrect historical references indicating a lack of research.

Liang Shanbo and/or Zhu Yingtai (the Butterfly Lovers)

This was the least popular structure.

High-scoring performances had a strong consideration of symbol and showed rather than told. There was solid usage of Beijing Opera and soundtracks, adding greatly to the performances. Strong and controlled stylised movements and gestures were used to convey character.

Low-scoring performances focused on simply re-telling the fable for the whole solo rather than creating the dot points of moving beyond, and especially not linking effectively to dot point 3. Language was not suitable to the context. The performance style was addressed only loosely or ignored, and characterisations were naturalistic and not suitable for the era.

The Backstage Crew Member

This was the most popular structure.

High-scoring work had some fun comedic moments, both verbally and physically, especially with the food poisoning. Strong actor–audience relationships were established and there was strong use of production areas, which wove the idea of *The Importance of Being Earnest* into the script appropriately and really showed the crew member trying to do both jobs.

Low-scoring work struggled to connect the idea of the backstage crew member being a crew member of the production of *The Importance of Being Earnest,* so references to the stimulus were not evident. A vast number of students missed aspects of the prescribed structure (Criterion 1) and found comedy as a performance style difficult. There was a lack of contrast in expressive skills to distinguish characters.

Phyllis Latour Doyle

High-scoring work demonstrated excellent research (Criterion 3) and intelligent and thoughtful use of levels and space. There was really creative and symbolic use of props that suited the stimulus and allowed for transformations suitable to both space and character.

Low-scoring performances demonstrated inappropriate consideration of context – time, place and accent. Costumes were from the wrong era and there were no references to the CWA. There appeared to be confusion over what the CWA member would be like, the age of Phyllis and a lack of contrast in mood and tension.

Ebenezer Scrooge

High-scoring performances used highly energetic characters, fun use of space and movement, and strong use of production areas. This work was engaging in line with the children’s theatre style. There were sophisticated choices for dot point 3, linking the moral lesson to both the stimulus and to the chosen celebrity.

Low-scoring performances focused on the celebrity rather than Scrooge with little reference to the stimulus. There was little or no reference to children’s theatre and instead reliance on sock puppets or hands as puppets. There was a lack of coherence, with characters tending to blend.

Professor Trelawney

High-scoring performances demonstrated clear references to the stimulus and excellent use of production areas. There were creative ideas for dot point 2, with references to different cultures and times in presenting a new star sign. Creation of mood through movement and symbolic gestures was embedded in the performance.

Low-scoring performances relied too much on talking rather than showing, and got stuck in the micro world of Harry Potter, focusing on other characters rather than Trelawney and not fulfilling the task of the solo performance. There was some confusion between star signs and stars.

Moana and/or Maui

High-scoring performances showed good use of props and symbolic use of space to demonstrate the location of the volcano and ocean. Work was high in energy and strong use of sound design created beautiful movement. Sophisticated and meaningful interpretation of environmental uses, demonstrating clear research, was also evident.

Research in low-scoring performances didn’t go beyond the stimulus, and the emphasis was on re-telling the film rather than developing an original performance. There were issues in pacing due to the lack of editing, with some performances trying to include too much irrelevant script.

The Court Attendant

This was the second-most popular structure.

High-scoring performances showed clever historical research and understanding of royal history. There was a clear idea of who the court attendant was, demonstrating creativity with strong messages of women’s empowerment. There was effective use of levels to convey power dynamics. A number of students added the style of musical theatre well and there was a sophisticated incorporation of song and modified lyrics to portray the themes, as well as excellent use of production areas.

Low-scoring performances tended to not reference ‘Six’ explicitly. There was an overemphasis on song, neglecting storytelling and creativity. There was also excessive narration – relying on telling rather than showing, as well as some awkward costuming that hindered movement or required frequent readjustment during the performance.