



2008 Drama GA 2: Solo performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2008 Drama solo performance examination contained ten prescribed structures that provided a range of challenging characters for students to develop for their performance.

Students who were successful:

- paid close attention to every word in the prescribed structure, particularly in structures that were densely worded
- ensured that the prescribed character was clearly present and occupied the majority of the performance time
- demonstrated an understanding of the stimulus material and made substantial reference to it
- made clear where, when and to whom the prescribed character was speaking
- ensured dramatic action far outweighed talking
- ably demonstrated the required performance style, conventions and elements.

Weaker work was characterised by:

- too much talking and a lack of dramatic action
- no transformation of object
- little or no reference to the stem in the performance focus
- omission of details from the dot points
- a lack of research and little or no reference to the stimulus material
- a naturalistic performance style.

It is critical for teachers and students to note that if **any** part of the prescribed structure is omitted, students **cannot** score full marks for criterion 1. If students do not score full marks for criterion 1, they cannot score full marks for any other criterion. Analysis of the structure should be part of initial planning for the performance and, as the performance is developed, edited and refined, care should be taken that requirements of each dot point are being met in obvious and dramatically appropriate ways.

Students need to be reminded that, in addition to the two prescribed theatrical conventions listed with each prescribed structure, the following four theatrical conventions **must** be demonstrated throughout their performance:

- disjointed time sequences
- transformation of character
- transformation of place
- transformation of object.

As in past years, the issue of telling or narrating the story was a problem for some students. Teachers should encourage students to find dramatic, **non-verbal** solutions to providing information.

Presenting work as a 'talking head' indicated a lack of understanding of non-naturalism and had a direct impact on the assessment of criterion 4, 'Use of performance style(s) prescribed in the structure', and criterion 10, 'Use of expressive skills'.

Better work was characterised by a richness of detail obtained through obvious research. Students need to generate a sufficient amount of raw material as they prepare for their solo performance so that they can judiciously edit and shape it into a maximum of seven minutes of effective dramatic action. Careful editing helps to avoid repetition. It also helps with pacing the performance and creating dramatic tension, which is assessed in criterion 8.

Although there was better use of costume and stagecraft this year (criterion 9), some students still struggled with costume choice. The choice of costume requires careful consideration as the wrong choice has the potential to undermine belief in the character(s) being performed.

Students should **not**:

- wear street clothes, school uniforms or T-shirts turned inside out
- wear jewellery that is inappropriate for the character
- expose flesh unnecessarily.



SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The characters

Mrs Coulter or Lord Asriel

The best work:

- created a strong sense of tension and menace
- clearly highlighted the split personality and manipulative power
- demonstrated an understanding of the religious and scientific implications being explored
- made excellent use of sound, especially to assist with transformation of time and place
- cleverly recreated their involvement in the discovery of Dust.

Weaker work:

- contained too many undefined characters
- made poor choices with sound
- failed to demonstrate the stimulus
- was characterised by a naturalistic, 'talking head' approach.

The Cat in the Hat

The best work:

- made great use of stagecraft and satire
- clearly established that the Cat was on the campaign trail
- skilfully recreated the poetic style and imagery from the stimulus
- spectacularly demonstrated the Cat's irreverent disregard for the accepted way of doing things
- made sophisticated links between 'Voom' and US foreign policy.

Weaker work:

- relied too heavily on reproducing material from the stimulus
- got lost in attempting to use rhyme
- contained little research into Dr Seuss or US foreign policy
- relied on uncontrolled physical activity to express the Cat's personality.

Fortuna

The best work:

- clearly demonstrated who Fortuna was, and her relationship with Jupiter
- skilfully linked the identity and purposes of the characters on the wheel
- used the lyrical and exaggerated movement conventions well
- was particularly inventive with the 'important woman'
- used costumes and props well, particularly to assist with transformation.

Weaker work:

- did not make reference to the 'rise' of the 'unseen' person
- failed to establish a connection between Fortuna and Jupiter
- contained poor use of stagecraft
- struggled to explore the impact of fate on 'the course of human history'.

The Jester

The best work:

- contained highly effective references to contemporary comics
- cleverly used and reinterpreted the stimulus material to show a range of comic effects and emphasise the Jester's quick thinking
- showed a comprehensive understanding of the Court of King Charles I
- made great use of symbol, language and caricature
- clearly established the vulnerability of the Jester.

2008 Assessment Report



Weaker work:

- showed little or no understanding of the nature and role of the Jester
- relied too heavily on retelling the story from the film
- contained confusion between the courts of King Roderick and King Charles I
- made poor choices in the use of song.

Voice

The best work:

- used the stimulus material thoroughly and confidently
- sympathetically related the difficulties indigenous peoples throughout the world have, and continue to, experience
- created a strong sense of the character of Voice, as well as the children
- beautifully used stagecraft, particularly mask, and sound
- understood and conveyed the importance of the Dreamtime.

Weaker work:

- tended towards creating stereotypical characters
- made no connection with the indigenous experience in other countries
- used the stimulus material in simplistic or insensitive ways
- overused the lyrical convention and did not demonstrate stillness and silence together.

Noor Inayat Khan

The best work:

- resonated with suspense, and was highly dynamic with a focus on action
- contained seamless transitions between character, time and place
- created an excellent sense of the era through the use of language, costume and props
- sensitively dealt with the interrogation sequences and the ultimate death of Noor
- effectively integrated the comparisons with other female agents.

Weaker work:

- inappropriately portrayed Noor as a late 20th century member of a SWAT team
- contained no sense of the cultural influences on her life or how she 'surpassed expectations'
- showed little evidence of research into other women such as Szabo or Wake
- struggled to create a sense of the Paris 'cell' or to show meaning in the use of exaggerated movement.

The Prisoner

The best work:

- successfully used Pythonesque comedy to explore the absurdity of the dungeon situation and the exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel
- demonstrated highly effective and imaginative use of object transformation
- understood the extreme danger faced by both the aristocracy and ordinary French citizens especially in the early days of the Revolution
- played intelligently and creatively with the nature of 'superheroes'.

Weaker work:

- contained limited historical research and little sense of France
- struggled with the nature of Pythonesque humour, often resorting to a series of gags
- demonstrated a poor use of space and poor focus
- failed to dramatically explore the formula 'comedy is tragedy plus time'.

Greed

The best work:

- presented an excellent understanding of Midas, Purgatory, and the link between them and Greed
- contained sophisticated exploration of moral issues
- introduced strongly physical characters
- was very inventive with the use of pathos and symbol



- imaginatively and effectively differentiated between the 'individual' and the 'national or global identity'.

Weaker work:

- was characterised by too much talking with little or no dramatic action
- struggled to establish the character of Greed and played a range of other characters
- failed to create any sense of climax
- tended to focus on the acquisition of money with little reference to other manifestations of Greed.

The Broadway Producer

The best work:

- contained a strong understanding of the qualities that are unique to Broadway musicals
- presented excellent character transformations and was very physical
- demonstrated innovative use of song, especially with the changing of lyrics
- played imaginatively with the idea of dogs as beings with particular language structures and tribal behaviours
- was flavoured with an appropriate sense of fun.

Weaker work:

- did not differentiate between pop music and musical theatre
- failed to explore the training of humans
- lacked any sense of a political or social message
- failed to effectively explore the link to *Showboat*.

Phryne Fisher

The best work:

- clearly presented the idea of Phryne as a woman ahead of her time, and as a genuine radical in terms of her political, social and sexual attitudes
- made superb use of vignettes that identified the exciting events and culture of Melbourne in the 1920s
- contained an excellent application of heightened use of language
- found imaginative ways of connecting the events in dot point two
- demonstrated excellent choices in the use of stagecraft.

Weaker work:

- presented a stereotypical approach to characters
- listed features of Melbourne in the 1920s rather than presenting them as dramatic images or vignettes
- showed little evidence of research or understanding of the gold-rush era
- was unable to dramatically resolve the matters relating to the 'family heirloom'.