2023 VCE Theatre Studies monologue external assessment report

General comments

In 2023, students chose one of 10 monologue choices from the prescribed list. Some monologues were reproduced in their entirety (as they appeared in the original script), while others were formed by cutting and pasting passages from one or more parts of the play script to form the monologue, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons, places and character development that this requires.

Students chose to interpret the monologue either through the application of acting and directing or through two design areas (any two of costume, set, properties, sound, lighting or make-up). They were required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills working in these two production roles. The examination paper stated that students should ensure that materials could fit through a standard doorframe (height and width). Most students ensured that their materials were of an appropriate size. Some venues have lifts, and if students wished to use these to transport their materials between floors they needed to do so unaided. Students were given two minutes to set up their materials once they had brought them into the examination room and most students ensured they did not exceed the required time limit. Students who had a soundtrack to play in their interpretation were permitted to conduct a sound and/or video check before commencing their examination. All electrical equipment was required to be tested and tagged, including extension cords. Students were permitted to bring a data projector, laptop, a mobile phone, a tablet, a Bluetooth speaker, or other such portable electronic device into the examination room. A mobile phone or other smart device such as a tablet was permitted in the examination room if it was to be used as a prop or as an audio-video playback device (for previously recorded material). For the reproduction of sound, most students used a Bluetooth speaker or similar device. Recording functions, messaging and internet access on any electronic devices/equipment had to be disabled before the student entered the room. Where a laptop or other device with a screen was used, the student was required to direct the screen of the device towards the assessors.

Students were required to present their monologue interpretation in a 5 m × 5 m space, which was set one metre in front of the assessors. Designers were to design for a solo actor performing the monologue in a 5 m × 5 m space. Students should be aware that the rooms used for the examination are not necessarily dedicated theatre performance spaces and that their dimensions, acoustics, floor coverings, ceiling heights and lighting conditions may vary. Students should plan for their interpretation to be flexible enough for a variety of room sizes, acoustics, lighting conditions, ceiling heights and floor coverings, including carpet. At the completion of their examination, students are to return the room to its original state. This includes any cleaning of the room, including the floor, that may be required. Some design students produced set, properties, lighting or sound designs for an acting space larger than the required size. Only designs that were suitable for a solo actor performing in a 5m x 5m space were deemed assessable.

Students could portray or refer to the gender of their chosen character as per the original, prescribed script or they could change it. Any change to the gender of the character was considered by the assessors to be a contextual choice. Like other choices of this kind, a change of gender needed to be appropriate for the monologue, the scene in which the monologue was embedded, and the full play. In 2023, an example of this was the character ‘Trunchbull’. While most students portrayed or referred to this character as female, some chose for the character to be male, or of a non-specified gender. Any of these choices were deemed to be permissible.

Students should be aware that the assessors are watching their interpretation as an audience. Actor/director students may choose to perform to the assessors as the intended audience for the play.

Students were asked to specify on the Interpretation Statement supplied with the examination paper a particular element of theatre composition (i.e. any one of cohesion, motion, rhythm, emphasis, contrast or variation) they had applied to each production role, i.e. acting or direction, or two design roles. In high-scoring responses the elements of theatre composition were well integrated and highly evident throughout the interpretation. In some of the lower-scoring responses, while the elements of theatre composition were stated, there was little evidence of a particular focus on these in the monologue interpretation. Some students did not specify any elements of theatre composition on the Interpretation Statement and this adversely affected their marks for Criterion 1 and Criterion 8.

In Stage 2 of the examination, students delivered an oral interpretation statement. They were permitted to read off previously prepared notes if necessary. While most students allowed enough time in their total 8-minute examination time to deliver this stage at a reasonable pace of delivery, some students rushed it, which made what they said potentially difficult to follow. Students should note that for Stage 2 of the examination it is what is said that is assessed, not what is written on the Interpretation Statement.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

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

All students were examined against each of the following criteria. The criteria were applied to both stages of the examination.

Criterion 1: Fulfilment of the requirements of the selected production role

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 2 | 0.8 | 2.4 | 5 | 14 | 75 | 9.5 |

This is a compliance criterion assessed in accordance with the examination specifications document.

Most students scored highly on this criterion. The common contributing factor for lower-scoring acting/directing responses was not delivering all the prescribed lines. The common contributing factor for lower-scoring design responses was designing for a stage area larger than 5 metres x 5 metres.

Criterion 2: Skill in undertaking and applying dramaturgy

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 3 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 22 | 15 | 10 | 7 | 6.7 |

As part of this examination, students are required to demonstrate their skills as a dramaturge and show that they have conducted dramaturgical research in preparing their interpretation.

Higher-scoring responses included research both within and outside of the play script, with clear link(s) evident as to how the research had informed the interpretation. Relevant information had been sourced and applied, and was evident through specific artistic decisions made in the production role work.

Lower-scoring responses demonstrated little evidence of dramaturgical research outside of the play script and/or there was a disconnect between the research conducted and the interpretation. Research was not clearly evident in the interpretation / production role work.

Criterion 3: Skill in working in the selected production role

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 2 | 8 | 15 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 9 | 6 | 6.6 |

This criterion assesses the student’s knowledge and skills working as either a director and actor or as a designer in two areas of design.

Higher-scoring responses clearly demonstrated various ways of working in the selected role (acting/director or two design roles) including the utilisation of elements of theatre composition to interpret the monologue. Responses were often characterised by a high level of detail and depth of concept.

Lower-scoring responses demonstrated limited indicators of working in the selected role (acting/director or two design roles). The utilisation of the specified elements of theatre was limited or not in evidence.

Criterion 4: Skill in conveying the interrelationships between the prescribed monologue, the specified scene and the world of the play

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.2 | 0.4 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 16 | 23 | 21 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 6.4 |

This criterion assesses the ability of the student to convey the interrelationships between the prescribed monologue, the specified scene in which it is embedded, and the wider play script.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a highly evident demonstration and/or explanation of how the monologue was interconnected with and informed by the prescribed scene and the play script overall. This might have included interpretative decisions that reflected previous scene(s) or the impact of where the monologue sits within the play (for instance, exposition or denouement).

In lower-scoring responses there was little evidence of the student’s knowledge of the play script beyond the monologue, or there were tenuous links between the monologue, scene and the wider play script.

Criterion 5: Skill in the development of a creative and an imaginative concept for interpreting the prescribed monologue

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.1 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 23 | 18 | 15 | 9 | 7 | 6.6 |

This criterion assesses the ability of the student to develop a creative and an imaginative concept for their interpretation.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a well-informed creative and imaginative concept that was evident and consistent throughout the interpretation. The artistic decisions presented were cohesive.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by an inconsistent or indiscernible overarching concept for the interpretation. There was little evidence of how the interpretation was informed by research into the play and/or an understanding of the play’s characters, plot and themes.

Criterion 6: Skill in conveying the contexts of the prescribed monologue

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 3 | 10 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 6 |

This criterion assesses the ability of the student to convey the contexts of the prescribed monologue through their work in the selected production role. Students may interpret the monologue within its original context(s) or another considered and informed context(s).

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a clearly conveyed context(s) that was consistent with that of the original playscript or that, while different from the original, was highly applicable for the interpretation.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by a lack of awareness of the original context(s) of the play and/or the application of a context(s) that was inappropriate for the interpretation, or that could not be sustained beyond the monologue.

Criterion 7: Skill in applying theatre style(s)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 16 | 21 | 19 | 12 | 9 | 5.4 | 6.3 |

This criterion assesses the student’s knowledge of the theatre style(s) of the prescribed monologue and the student’s ability to apply the theatre style(s) to their interpretation. An interpretation may draw on more than one theatre style, as well as variations of a particular style.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a clearly conveyed theatre style(s) that was consistent with that of the original playscript or that, while different from the original, was highly applicable for the interpretation. Conventions of the theatre style(s) were effectively/skilfully applied; the theatre style(s) was cohesive with the production work decisions / interpretive decisions; the application of the theatre style(s) was consistent with other production work decisions / interpretive decisions; and this was apparent throughout the interpretation.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by a lack of awareness of the theatre style(s) of the play and/or the application of a theatre style(s) that was inappropriate for the interpretation.

Criterion 8: Skill in the use of elements of theatre composition

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.7 | 0.8 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 17 | 22 | 21 | 11 | 9 | 6 | 6.3 |

The elements of theatre composition are cohesion, motion, rhythm, emphasis, contrast and variation. The elements can be applied individually or in combination and in any theatre style. The choice and application of one or more elements of theatre composition for each production role were to be informed by the concept for the interpretation.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a highly evident understanding of the element applied to each of the two production roles. The element was used in a highly effective manner to convey the concept the student created for the interpretation.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by lack of understanding of the element applied to each of the two production roles and/or under-utilisation of the element in the interpretation.

Criterion 9: Skill in demonstrating the interrelationship between the interpretation and the audience

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 3 | 9 | 16 | 22 | 19 | 14 | 9 | 6 | 6.5 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to demonstrate how their work in interpreting the prescribed monologue is informed by an understanding of audience culture.

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by aspects of the interpretation that could enhance the experience of the intended audience through, for example, sympathy, dramatic tension, catharsis or humour.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by little or no evidence of aspects in the interpretation that would enhance the experience for the intended audience and/or there was little to no understanding of the audience culture.

Criterion 10: Ability to demonstrate, orally justify and explain interpretative decisions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mark | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0.5 | 0.4 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 22 | 20 | 16 | 10 | 7 | 6.6 |

This criterion assesses the student’s ability to effectively demonstrate, orally justify and explain their interpretation of the prescribed monologue. This applied to both stages of the examination (Stage 1 – Interpretation and Stage 2 – Interpretation Statement).

Higher-scoring responses were characterised by a well-integrated demonstration, explanation and justification of the interpretative decisions conveyed implicitly or explicitly across both stages of the examination. There was a clear justification and explanation of the interpretative ideas.

Lower-scoring responses were characterised by little or no oral justification of the interpretative decisions made. There was a lack of consistent information imparted or demonstrated across the two stages of the examination.

The 2023 monologues

The popularity of each monologue is indicated in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Popularity ranking | Monologue chosen | Total % of students |
| 1 | Jean, *Dead Man’s Cell Phone* | 18 |
| 2 | Madame Arcati, *Blithe Spirit – An Improbable Farce in Three Acts* | 17 |
| 3 | Alquist, *R.U.R (Rossum’s Universal Robots)* | 15 |
| 4 | Philoctetes, *Paradise* | 12 |
| 5 | Trunchbull, *Matilda* | 11 |
| 6 | Jailer’s Daughter, *Two Noble Kinsmen* | 11 |
| 7 | Chorus, *Antigone* | 9 |
| 8 | Tetsuro, *Empire of the Son* | 4 |
| 10 | Peggy, *Today We’re Alive* | 3 |
| Jayson**,** *Today We’re Alive* | 1 |

In 2023, 84% of students selected the acting and directing option and 16% selected the designing option.