

DRAMA

Paper 0411/11
Written Examination

Key messages

- Literary approaches to answering questions must be avoided. Where questions ask the candidate to provide advice on how a dramatic role should be performed, it is not enough to recount the story or to provide detail of the character's personality, attitudes and relationships without making clear how the character should be *heard* and *seen* on stage in order to convey those traits.
- Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure that they provide all that is required of a particular question. Equally, they should not waste time providing information that is not asked for in the question.
- In **Section A**, candidates should observe the number of marks available for each question. Lengthy responses for a 2- or 3-mark question are not necessary and will result in less time to respond to the essay questions in **Sections B** and **C** which are worth 25 marks. Using bullet points to answer **Section A** questions is acceptable.
- In **Sections B** and **C** candidates should support their knowledge and understanding of dramatic concepts with *practical* examples together with, where required, detailed evaluation of the success and effectiveness of the piece in performance. Purely narrative responses attract very few marks.
- Candidates who have engaged practically with their devised pieces tend to show greater engagement with the questions in **Section C**.
- Candidates should be familiar with the dramatic and technical terms in current use. An extensive (but not exhaustive) glossary is provided in the syllabus to assist in the identification of key terms.

General comments

A number of Centres had clearly investigated the context of *A Fine Balance* and many candidates displayed a perceptive understanding, especially in relation to plot, characters and their interactions within the political and social circumstances of the piece. There seems to be a growing awareness of how the elements of drama can be applied effectively to enhance performance, and the understanding and use of appropriate technical language continues to improve although there are still some key terms which appear to be causing confusion.

The approach to the devised pieces varied considerably, but this year there appeared to be fewer candidates who had not had the opportunity to perform their pieces. However, it is still the case that mundane and unimaginative approaches to devising tend to lead to weak responses to the questions based on the stimuli. Pieces which confined themselves to 'soap opera' or daytime television/celebrity-related material were limited by that medium and produced unrewarding responses whereas innovative and creative work gave candidates the chance to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. Where time, money and technical facilities are limited, Centres should encourage candidates to speculate in some detail how their devised pieces could be improved if the necessary resources were available.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *A Fine Balance*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to score full marks here with both a valid piece of advice and a statement as to how it would be effective. However, a significant number scored only one mark because they did not provide adequate justification of effectiveness.

Question 2

Though this question was approached with confidence in the majority of cases, there were a number of instances where candidates clearly did not understand the definition of a prop. A significant number of answers suggested aspects of the set, such as chairs or doors. There were even occasions where jewellery and hair styles were cited. When candidates suggested objects which might normally be considered elements of the set, answers were given the benefit of the doubt if they were justified in terms of how they were used by the actors. A number of candidates suggested the use of puppets for use in the scenes featuring MONKEYMAN. This is a grey area and technically, since the animals are given names, and even personalities, they are in fact characters. Credit was not awarded for the use of puppets as props. The candidates who fulfilled the 'effective' aspect of the question were often those who chose props that were not mentioned in the text, but that they had thought of because they would add something to the performance.

Question 3

Though there were some excellent answers, some far beyond what was required for the question, a number of responses demonstrated widespread lack of knowledge concerning the concept of pace within a dramatic context.

Typically, candidates skirted around this key term (often with clear advice about tone, facial expressions, gesture etc.) without actually identifying it. Some seemed to have a sense that it somehow related to 'speed', but very few appreciated how pace can be varied within a scene thereby affecting atmosphere and communication, although a few were able to link it to the creation of dramatic tension. On balance, this question produced fairly poor responses but this was by no means a universal outcome.

Question 4

Candidates were much more confident discussing their suggestions for MONKEYMAN's sacrifice of the dog TIKKA. Many focused on the immediate relationship between man and animal with sensitive and often perceptive explorations into character analysis. Other responses approached the question from a practical staging perspective. A few decided to make the animal a puppet and where this was the case responses became less defined because of the need for either MONKEYMAN himself or a third party to manipulate the creature. The use of a puppet is not in itself problematic, but candidates needed to be aware of the added dimension puppetry introduces to the scene, especially where it deals with rapidly changing emotional levels and reflect this in their answers. It would have been far more appropriate to stick with advice to MONKEYMAN only, without introducing the added dimension of interaction with puppetry.

Question 5

Again there was a good range of effective responses with many candidates perceiving how the character of MANEK changed and developed as the play progresses, from a naïve youth, lacking experience of life to fierce protector of DINA's rights. The most insightful responses were able to cite his shrewd handling of the tailors as well as his ability to act as DINA's conscience. In this question as with other similar character-based approaches such as in **Question 9**, a number of candidates did not stick to the text and its requirements, and in some cases almost invented a character of their own.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work*

Question 6

Discussions on dialogue rarely included anything on the type of language used. Many candidates had not used much dialogue and had focused on mime or physical theatre where dialogue was secondary. Where such candidates had acknowledged this and then sought to communicate how gesture, facial expression etc. had created their own kind of non-verbal dialogue, credit was given as if they had been discussing verbal dialogue. Many candidates reflected on their use of monologue where this method of communication dominated. In such cases, perceptive candidates were able to develop their discussion effectively by exploring the nature of monologue as a style and thereby meeting the requirement of the question. Those who simply described the nature or content of their monologues could not access the full range of marks available.

Question 7

This posed something of a challenge to candidates. Many candidates took 'physicality' simply to mean movement on stage. Where the performance was not in the style of actual physical theatre, depending upon the nature of the piece, responses were concerned with either nominally physical pieces or pieces that did not seem to contain any physicality at all. Candidates recognised that facial expression and gesture are indeed valid aspects of physicality but were less inclined to acknowledge elements such as posture and stance, delivery of lines, breathing, and projected mental attitude.

Question 8

Those who attempted to define moments where contrast had been achieved tended to cite isolated examples of movement, sound or lighting without presenting a clearly defined appreciation of contrast. Many candidates simply outlined the plot for each scene. Some attempted to extract a sense of contrast between one example of movement and one of lighting which did not fulfil the requirement of the mark scheme. Candidates simply needed to be clear about what elements can add interest to a performance and to isolate in pairs one aspect where the element is present and one where it is absent such as loud noise and the absence of noise, bright light and shade or darkness etc. Even such simple contrasts achieved marks whereas comparisons or 'contrasts' between dissimilar aspects did not.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *A Fine Balance*

Question 9

This was a generally well-answered question. Most candidates were able to make a range of valid comments about the character of DINA, with some strong insights into character and consistent reference to the text. Some candidates did not develop their answers, however, and, having written about a range of valid characteristics did not develop this into a discussion about their application, thereby limiting themselves to the 'understanding' mark bands.

Question 10

This question proved challenging for many. Less astute responses tended to focus not on directorial approaches to the drama but on the themes under discussion and consequently became entangled in areas of socio-political debate.

Some responses tended to concentrate on the visual aspects of the performance interpretation. Though these concerns are obviously valid in terms of the directorial approach, they do need to be considered in terms of the demands of the text and the need to create drama. For example, the use of posters containing electoral messages may indeed be a useful and engaging device to communicate a given subtext but they need to be considered in terms of the action of the play and not form the main thrust of the discussion. There were very few candidates who addressed key aspects of direction such as use of the performance space and proxemics, the delivery of dialogue, the portrayal of relationships and the handling of key moments in the piece.

Question 11

Candidates responded quite well to this question. Answers were typified by a confident review of the key choices likely to be encountered by the lighting designer or costume designer. In terms of the lighting option, as well as specific lighting applications for the various scenes within the drama, the more astute responses were able to identify sophisticated challenges presented by, for example, the nature of the venue, time of day and resources available all within the context of a directorial concept. Most candidates were able to review the specific demands of the text posed by either the individual characters or on a scene by scene basis but lighting solutions were not always appropriate and sometimes lacked understanding. Less perceptive responses tended to rely on just a few obvious lighting features. Costume responses were, on the whole more consistent but there were few outstanding answers, examples of which focused on solutions over ideas and which considered the practicality of certain costumes in terms of their 'wearability' or the need for compromise to achieve a specific 'look' under given constraints. A few candidates answered the question from the perspectives of both lighting and costume. In such cases Examiners identified the stronger of the two submissions and awarded marks accordingly.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

Many responses managed to provide some effective suggestions for set design but these were often limited. It should be borne in mind that the question requires a discussion based on 'opportunities' for set design which indicates that the response does not need to follow any constraints that may have been imposed by the actual production. It is recognised that Centres may be impeded by lack of time or resources but candidates are encouraged to consider the possibilities for a set that is not only practical but also one which engages with all aspects of the drama. Consequently, candidates should not necessarily feel held back by limited resources but enabled to give free rein to their imaginations, provided that the suggestions are both practicable and assist in the realisation of the text. Many candidates supplied detailed diagrams and though these in themselves did not attract marks, where they were able to add clarity to the written description they proved most useful.

Some responses did not elect to discuss set at all but instead focused on the performance space and reviewed how the proxemic relationships, entrances and exits etc. had been created in order to realise the drama. In doing so these candidates were anticipating an approach more suited to **Question 14**.

Question 13

Many candidates found it challenging to define dramatic tension although many were able to give examples from a range of sources that included dialogue, characterisations, staging and dynamics. A few candidates were able to describe their pieces in terms of a structure designed to create dramatic tension, using terminology such as rising action, climax and resolution. Many responses tended towards the narrative where there was a restating of the plot or action of the performance in which a whole range of techniques might be mentioned but seldom linked to the process of creating dramatic tension. Candidates needed to be clearer about how dramatic techniques of all kinds can be manipulated and balanced to create tension in a range of circumstances.

Question 14

A significant number of responses treated this question as if it had been **Question 12**. There were examples of detailed and extensive discussions about the set and its elements, with much use of rostra, levels, windows and doors but, with the exception of a few insightful responses, candidates neglected to engage with the use of performance space itself. It is understood that Centres differ widely in the spaces they have available to them and it is often the space available which dictates how a performance is staged. The question seeks to elicit a response which considers how, for example, a traditional proscenium arch or end stage might influence the entrances and exits or proxemic relationships in the performance. Or, if performed outdoors in a school courtyard setting, how did the positioning of the audience affect the way floor patterns were distributed on stage? Centres are advised to clarify the difference between the performance space and the set and remind candidates that they should be treated as totally separate concepts.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/12
Written Examination

Key messages

- Literary approaches to answering questions must be avoided. Where questions ask the candidate to provide advice on how a dramatic role should be performed, it is not enough to recount the story or to provide detail of the character's personality, attitudes and relationships without making clear how the character should be *heard* and *seen* on stage in order to convey those traits.
- Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure that they provide all that is required of a particular question. Equally, they should not waste time providing information that is not asked for in the question.
- Candidates need to consider carefully their choice of question in **Sections B** and **C**. For example, Centres which have not taught the basic specific understanding of any given technical or design skill should advise their candidates steer clear of questions which may require an understanding of these areas.
- In **Section A**, candidates should observe the number of marks available for each question. Lengthy responses for a 2- or 3-mark question are not necessary and will result in less time to respond to the essay questions in **Sections B** and **C** which are worth 25 marks. Using bullet points to answer **Section A** questions is acceptable.
- In **Sections B** and **C** candidates should support their knowledge and understanding of dramatic concepts with *practical* examples together with, where required, detailed evaluation of the success and effectiveness of the piece in performance. Purely narrative responses attract very few marks.
- Technical and design questions demand an approach which is both informed and able to discuss the application of technical method to the dramatic intention. Centres which have not taught the basic specific understanding of any given technical or design skill should advise their candidates steer clear of questions which may require an understanding of these areas.
- Candidates who have engaged practically with their devised pieces tend to show greater engagement with the questions in **Section C**.
- Candidates should be familiar with the dramatic and technical terms in current use. An extensive (but not exhaustive) glossary is provided in the syllabus to assist in the identification of key terms.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the set text and some offered a very high level of sophistication in their answers. A number of Centres had clearly investigated the context of *Nongogo* and many candidates displayed a perceptive understanding of the piece, especially in relation to plot, characters and their interactions and also to Fugard's frequent use of symbolism. There seems to be a growing awareness of how the elements of drama can be applied effectively to enhance performance, and the understanding and use of appropriate technical language continues to improve although this remains a developmental area for many. Whilst the glossary provided in the syllabus is by no means an exhaustive list, Centres are encouraged to introduce it to candidates and ensure that key terminology is learnt. As an example, many candidates did not understand the term 'pace' in **Question 3**, 'physicality' in **Question 6**, 'dialogue' in **Question 8** or 'dramatic tension' in **Question 14**.

The approach to the devised pieces varied considerably, but this year there appeared to be fewer candidates who had not had the opportunity to perform their pieces. However, it is still the case that mundane and unimaginative approaches to devising tend to lead to weak responses to the questions based on the stimuli, whereas innovative and creative work gave candidates the chance to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. There was a tendency for pieces to slide into the predictable areas of teenage issues such as drugs, unwanted pregnancies, schizophrenia, bullying and marital infidelity. In a few cases, it was considered that the subject matter for devised work was inappropriate for this age group and teachers are reminded that they should guide and advise candidates accordingly. If Centres are unsure as to the suitability of material they can contact Cambridge for advice.

Most candidates gave considerable detail in their answers, sometimes paying too little attention to the allocation of marks; there are still those who write more for a question carrying 3 or 4 marks than for an essay question worth 25 marks. There is also a tendency to supply far more than the number of points specified in the question; this was particularly true of **Question 4**.

Nevertheless, the work of many of the better candidates was carefully thought-out, well-organised and clearly communicated, although some candidates need to be reminded that the Examiner is not familiar with their devised pieces and that their references to them need to be explicit but not too detailed. A number of Centres encouraged candidates to provide a synopsis of their devised pieces. This is not necessary and it wastes the time of both the candidate and the Examiner. Salient details incorporated within a response are all that is required and may well earn the candidate additional marks if they are clearly focused on answering the question.

Handwriting was generally legible. Writing that is particularly small and cramped presents the biggest problem. Some Centres do not encourage candidates to answer the questions in order, which is quite acceptable, but they must stress to them the need to number answers clearly and signal the location of any additions to answers. There are also some candidates who write from edge to edge of the page; margins are essential, on the left for question numbers and on the right for the marker's use. Centres should ensure that loose pages are fastened securely but not too tightly.

Comments on specific questions

NONGOGO and the stimuli FAMILY MATTERS, A LONG-DISTANCE CALL, FIRST PRIZE!

Section A

Question 1

This was well answered by most, although many wrote far too much. Some candidates ignored the part of the extract specified in the question and some found it difficult to make a valid comment about effectiveness. Many candidates made reference to BLACKIE's physicality as mentioned in the stage directions ("an ugly hunchback ... his arms hang loose at his side like those of a large ape").

Question 2

Most answered this quite well, but far too many selected items of set, such as the divan or even windows and doors, or referred to set dressing without any reference to use. This showed a clear misunderstanding of the term 'props'. Although symbolism was allowed, this was only for personal props. The best answers gave some detail about how the actors actually handled the prop in order to create an appropriate dramatic effect. No marks were awarded purely for the identification of a prop.

Question 3

Although many candidates had a very clear notion of the significance of this section of the extract, there were a substantial number who explained it at length (often with clear advice about tone, facial expressions, gesture etc.) but made no reference to 'pace', thus restricting themselves to a single mark. Few managed the clear discussion of the whole of the section specified which was required for full marks. Very few candidates recognised the style of dialogue in that there are a number of short questions and answers that almost overlap culminating in a contrasting short speech by Johnny. The quicker pace that would be created here was identified by very few candidates. This was a question that challenged many candidates, seemingly through a lack of understanding of technical language – in this case, the term 'pace'.

Question 4

Many scored full marks on this question, with examples of excellent targeted advice on the application of vocal and physical elements, including tone, pitch, pace, emphasis, facial expression, gesture, movement and the use of props. However, some provided far more detail than was required, while others confined themselves to vague, general references to the importance of, for example, making gestures without specifying what those gestures should be. Most tried to match advice to appropriate lines from the speech, although a few who did this simply went through the speech describing changes to one aspect, such as facial expressions, which were not always particularly valid or convincing.

Question 5

Generally, candidates showed some understanding of the demands of this question although some focused exclusively on one aspect, such as PATRICK's drunkenness, to the exclusion of any other considerations. The best responses showed an understanding of the complexities of the character and provided clear, specific and well-justified suggestions about performance techniques that would be effective for a series of particular sections of the extract in which PATRICK interacted with other characters.

Question 6

Only a minority of candidates provided enough detail to access the 3- or 4-mark bands in this question. Technical language was again a barrier for many candidates with some confusion about the meaning of the term 'physicality' in drama, with some thinking it means physical appearance, others physical prowess or aggression and a few, who got closer, talking about aspects of physical theatre. Of those who answered the question in terms of the use of the body as part of performance, many restricted themselves to simple example(s), with or without a general comment on effectiveness. Very few managed anything approaching a good discussion of effectiveness.

Question 7

In spite of helpful hints within the question, many candidates were unable to address the matter of contrasts, referring in considerable detail to the use of movement, sound, light etc. in their pieces, often with lengthy explanations and some consideration of how they added interest but without actually answering the question. Where candidates did engage with the creation of contrasts, there were some interesting responses, but few made really clear references to specifics in their devised pieces.

Question 8

Dialogue is a term that some candidates did not seem to understand, so again there were examples of lengthy narratives or answers that focused on a wide range of techniques, but with no mention of speech. Many responses referred to speech but in terms of pace, tone, pitch etc. rather than style. Even when style was identified, there were few attempts to supply examples or to evaluate success. A few explained that they had used physical theatre in their devising and so their dialogue did not include speech; this was credited when it was clearly explained. However, Centres should note that compulsory questions on dialogue may feature in **Section A** and so candidates must be prepared to answer them.

Section B

Question 9

This was quite a popular question, which was generally tackled well. Most candidates were able to make a range of valid comments about the character of SAM, with some demonstrating a detailed and sophisticated understanding, closely linked to the extract. Many were able to support their observations on SAM's character and actions with well-chosen and specific references to the text. Unfortunately, some candidates' responses stopped at that point, and were therefore unable to access marks in the upper bands as these require 'application': candidates needed to give advice on the techniques required to play the role. Those who attempted to do this sometimes restricted themselves to rather general advice. However, there were many who gave specific suggestions, which were firmly based on both text and character and demonstrated a detailed and practical understanding of how to play the role. Some candidates gave detailed responses referring to choice of costume, sound and lighting. Limited credit was available for this, and it does illustrate a basic misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities in performance. Candidates needed to concentrate on characterisation and dramatic technique in order to access the higher mark bands.

Question 10

This was not a particularly popular choice and many of the candidates who tackled it did not do well. A few of the better candidates showed some understanding of the director's role but many adopted a literary approach and interrogated the text looking for examples of hope and hopelessness in either the characters or the plot. Those who considered the piece in terms of performance tended to focus almost exclusively on technical aspects such as set, costumes, props, sound and lighting, thus confusing direction with design. Of course, a director would want to set the overall concept for the piece and so it is relevant to mention approaches to design, but not to the exclusion of ideas about performance. There were very few candidates

who addressed key aspects of direction such as use of the performance space and proxemics, the delivery of dialogue, the portrayal of relationships and the handling of key moments in the piece.

Question 11

Most candidates opted for costume design. There were some excellent responses, with most candidates proposing appropriate costumes for the majority of characters and a considerable proportion supporting their practical solutions with detailed reference to the extract. Even weaker responses were often able to make valid suggestions based on an appreciation of the context of the piece or character or both. A few candidates took the question too literally and only identified design issues, such as lack of resources, without offering any solutions. There were also a few that provided diagrams with little in the way of comment or clarification.

The very few candidates who tackled lighting design tended to offer very general or totally impractical suggestions; there remains a tendency to regard lighting as something that can be altered frequently in order to reflect mood, with a ubiquitous desire to use red for anger and to show sadness or depression by using 'dark light'. A few candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of types of lantern but did not relate their suggestions to the extract.

A few candidates attempted to write about both costume and lighting. In such cases Examiners identified the stronger of the two submissions and awarded marks accordingly.

Section C

Question 12

On the whole, this question was not particularly well answered. Many candidates focused on set rather than the use of performance space, with a range of suggestions being presented, including the creation of different and often complex settings for each scene in their play, without any practical consideration of how the transitions might be managed. However, most did specify a type of staging and acknowledged the presence of an audience. Few candidates were specific about the dimensions and layout of the space and even fewer gave any detail about entrances and exits. Links to the chosen piece were often implicit rather than specific and evaluations were frequently superficial in nature. There continues to be a tendency for some candidates to be almost obsessed with issues of status and to wish to demonstrate these by the use of levels, an approach that may be justified but was often offered without a clear explanation. Once again, there was evidence of a heavy reliance on lighting and sound to create effect, although there was often little indication of actual realisation in performance. The best responses came from candidates who had gone through the process of developing and actually performing their pieces to an audience. In those cases, it was possible for candidates to produce a perceptive evaluation of their performance, though not necessarily their use of space, with reference to its impact on the audience.

Question 13

This question produced a wider range of responses. Although some candidates wrote more about performance space than set design, there were some who were able to show practical application by designing appropriate sets for their piece. Given the title of the stimulus, it was not surprising that splitting the stage in two was a massively popular idea, although there were some imaginative and creative approaches. Nevertheless, some candidates described spaces that could only be described as locations, with the emphasis on furniture, set dressing and props creating suitable settings for the characters. Some of the suggestions were impractical from the point of view of a live performance and, again, there were frequent and sometimes totally unworkable references to the use of lighting and sound in order to create setting and evoke atmosphere. However, a few candidates suggested totally appropriate use of back projection as part of their design. A few candidates' responses relied on diagrams, with little explanation, but most at least thought about the location of the audience. The greatest challenge appeared to be in linking design ideas to the performance requirements of the devised piece.

Question 14

There were some quite impressive responses to this question. A number of candidates were able to describe their pieces in terms of a structure designed to create dramatic tension, using terminology such as rising action, climax and resolution. Although some saw this only in terms of story, there were others who were able to talk about practical approaches to creating suspense in performance, with some developed evaluation of the audience's reaction to the unfolding drama. There were examples of appropriate use of

technology to assist in the creation of dramatic tension and quite astute references to dramatic irony. Unfortunately, there were also candidates who just gave a narrative account of the piece or asserted the creation of tension when none was evident. In this and in several other questions, candidates referred to their 'dramatic intention' but this needed to be given substance by specific references to the techniques adopted in the preparation and performance of their devised work. There are many candidates who adopt a rather scatter-gun approach to answering questions; they use the technical terminology they have been taught to talk about as many aspects as possible in the hope that some will hit the target.

Comments on specific questions

A FINE BALANCE and the stimuli LETTER FROM ABROAD, GOING GREEN, FESTIVAL BANQUET

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *A Fine Balance*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to score full marks here with both a valid piece of advice and a statement as to how it would be effective. However, a significant number scored only one mark because they did not provide adequate justification of effectiveness.

Question 2

Though this question was approached with confidence in the majority of cases, there were a number of instances where candidates clearly did not understand the definition of a prop. A significant number of answers suggested aspects of the set, such as chairs or doors. There were even occasions where jewellery and hair styles were cited. When candidates suggested objects which might normally be considered elements of the set, answers were given the benefit of the doubt if they were justified in terms of how they were used by the actors. A number of candidates suggested the use of puppets for use in the scenes featuring MONKEYMAN. This is a grey area and technically, since the animals are given names, and even personalities, they are in fact characters. Credit was not awarded for the use of puppets as props. The candidates who fulfilled the 'effective' aspect of the question were often those who chose props that were not mentioned in the text, but that they had thought of because they would add something to the performance.

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Candidates were much more confident discussing their suggestions for MONKEYMAN's sacrifice of the dog TIKKA. Many focused on the immediate relationship between man and animal with sensitive and often perceptive explorations into character analysis. Other responses approached the question from a practical staging perspective. A few decided to make the animal a puppet and where this was the case responses became less defined because of the need for either MONKEYMAN himself or a third party to manipulate the creature. The use of a puppet is not in itself problematic, but candidates needed to be aware of the added dimension puppetry introduces to the scene, especially where it deals with rapidly changing emotional levels and reflect this in their answers. It would have been far more appropriate to stick with advice to MONKEYMAN only, without introducing the added dimension of interaction with puppetry.

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Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *A Fine Balance*

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Question 10

This question proved challenging for many. Less astute responses tended to focus not on directorial approaches to the drama but on the themes under discussion and consequently became entangled in areas of socio-political debate.

Some responses tended to concentrate on the visual aspects of the performance interpretation. Though these concerns are obviously valid in terms of the directorial approach, they do need to be considered in

terms of the demands of the text and the need to create drama. For example, the use of posters containing electoral messages may indeed be a useful and engaging device to communicate a given subtext but they need to be considered in terms of the action of the play and not form the main thrust of the discussion. There were very few candidates who addressed key aspects of direction such as use of the performance space and proxemics, the delivery of dialogue, the portrayal of relationships and the handling of key moments in the piece.

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Candidates responded quite well to this question. Answers were typified by a confident review of the key choices likely to be encountered by the lighting designer or costume designer. In terms of the lighting option, as well as specific lighting applications for the various scenes within the drama, the more astute responses were able to identify sophisticated challenges presented by, for example, the nature of the venue, time of day and resources available all within the context of a directorial concept. Most candidates were able to review the specific demands of the text posed by either the individual characters or on a scene by scene basis but lighting solutions were not always appropriate and sometimes lacked understanding. Less perceptive responses tended to rely on just a few obvious lighting features. Costume responses were, on the whole more consistent but there were few outstanding answers, examples of which focused on solutions over ideas and which considered the practicality of certain costumes in terms of their 'wearability' or the need for compromise to achieve a specific 'look' under given constraints. A few candidates answered the question from the perspectives of both lighting and costume. In such cases Examiners identified the stronger of the two submissions and awarded marks accordingly.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

Many responses managed to provide some effective suggestions for set design but these were often limited. It should be borne in mind that the question requires a discussion based on 'opportunities' for set design which indicates that the response does not need to follow any constraints that may have been imposed by the actual production. It is recognised that Centres may be impeded by lack of time or resources but candidates are encouraged to consider the possibilities for a set that is not only practical but also one which engages with all aspects of the drama. Consequently, candidates should not necessarily feel held back by limited resources but enabled to give free rein to their imaginations, provided that the suggestions are both practicable and assist in the realisation of the text. Many candidates supplied detailed diagrams and though these in themselves did not attract marks, where they were able to add clarity to the written description they proved most useful.

Some responses did not elect to discuss set at all but instead focused on the performance space and reviewed how the proxemic relationships, entrances and exits etc. had been created in order to realise the drama. In doing so these candidates were anticipating an approach more suited to **Question 14**.

Question 13

Many candidates found it challenging to define dramatic tension although many were able to give examples from a range of sources that included dialogue, characterisations, staging and dynamics. A few candidates were able to describe their pieces in terms of a structure designed to create dramatic tension, using terminology such as rising action, climax and resolution. Many responses tended towards the narrative where there was a restating of the plot or action of the performance in which a whole range of techniques might be mentioned but seldom linked to the process of creating dramatic tension. Candidates needed to be clearer about how dramatic techniques of all kinds can be manipulated and balanced to create tension in a range of circumstances.

Question 14

A significant number of responses treated this question as if it had been **Question 12**. There were examples of detailed and extensive discussions about the set and its elements, with much use of rostra, levels, windows and doors but, with the exception of a few insightful responses, candidates neglected to engage with the use of performance space itself. It is understood that Centres differ widely in the spaces they have available to them and it is often the space available which dictates how a performance is staged. The question seeks to elicit a response which considers how, for example, a traditional proscenium arch or end

stage might influence the entrances and exits or proxemic relationships in the performance. Or, if performed outdoors in a school courtyard setting, how did the positioning of the audience affect the way floor patterns were distributed on stage? Centres are advised to clarify the difference between the performance space and the set and remind candidates that they should be treated as totally separate concepts.

DRAMA

Paper 0411/13
Written Examination

Key messages

- Literary approaches to answering questions must be avoided. Where questions ask the candidate to provide advice on how a dramatic role should be performed, it is not enough to recount the story or to provide detail of the character's personality, attitudes and relationships without making clear how the character should be *heard* and *seen* on stage in order to convey those traits.
- Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure that they provide all that is required of a particular question. Equally, they should not waste time providing information that is not asked for in the question.
- Candidates need to consider carefully their choice of question in **Sections B** and **C**. For example, Centres which have not taught the basic specific understanding of any given technical or design skill should advise their candidates steer clear of questions which may require an understanding of these areas.
- In **Section A**, candidates should observe the number of marks available for each question. Lengthy responses for a 2- or 3-mark question are not necessary and will result in less time to respond to the essay questions in **Sections B** and **C** which are worth 25 marks. Using bullet points to answer **Section A** questions is acceptable.
- In **Sections B** and **C** candidates should support their knowledge and understanding of dramatic concepts with *practical* examples together with, where required, detailed evaluation of the success and effectiveness of the piece in performance. Purely narrative responses attract very few marks.
- Candidates who have engaged practically with their devised pieces tend to show greater engagement with the questions in **Section C**.
- Candidates should be familiar with the dramatic and technical terms in current use. An extensive (but not exhaustive) glossary is provided in the syllabus to assist in the identification of key terms.

General comments

Centres, by and large, are demonstrating a greater understanding of the syllabus requirements, and candidates are showing greater knowledge of the technical aspects of performance with a noticeable improvement in the appropriate use of performing arts vocabulary. Some candidates were hampered by a lack of subject-specific knowledge. The appropriate and knowledgeable use of performing arts vocabulary is essential if candidates are to score highly. As mentioned above, it is the application of key dramatic ideas and concepts in performance that enable the highest marks to be achieved.

The responses to the questions about the play extract displayed a wide range of ability although there were fewer candidates achieving marks in the lower mark bands than in previous years. It was clear in many instances that the recommendation that the text be performed, at least informally, had been heeded and it was possible to visualise from candidates' responses the nature of those performances, whether in terms of the staging configuration that was used e.g. traverse, or the extent of the directorial concept in realising an effective political drama through the use of casting, set, costume, lighting, sound etc. As all the questions on the play extract were concerned to a greater or lesser degree with eliciting responses that demonstrated an understanding of how to transfer 'from page to stage', candidates who had practical experience, whether as performer, technical support or audience, of a performance of *Changi* were likely to be at a distinct advantage.

With the questions relating to devised work, while many candidates demonstrated the ability to link theory to practice, there were still too many who were reliant on narrative or anecdotal content. As always, candidates who planned their time and strategy carefully produced confident responses. Those who did not had a tendency to ramble or repeat the same, often undeveloped, points about performance. There was a sense that, in some cases, practical work was insufficiently realised or inadequately developed. A few candidates appeared not to have completed all of the practical aspects of the syllabus and, in some cases, there was

evidence that they simply lacked an understanding of key dramatic ideas. There is no doubt that, particularly in the case of questions relating to the devised work, the strongest responses came from those candidates who had explored ideas fully in performance so that they had the opportunity to reflect critically on their own actual experience of creating drama.

There was a marked improvement in the way candidates approached the discussion of technical issues and less evidence of inadequate understanding of costume, lighting and set design in the theatre, all playing their part in the communication of dramatic meaning through sign and symbol.

In some cases the quality of candidates' handwriting gave cause for concern and Centres are requested to encourage their candidates to write legibly. Candidates whose work is illegible are self-penalising, since credit cannot be awarded to ideas that cannot be deciphered.

There were many candidates who did not read the questions properly. A small number achieved no marks in **Section B** because they gave acting advice for the wrong character, and even though these responses were intelligently written and detailed, there was no flexibility within the mark scheme to be able to award marks. Candidates must attempt to answer the question set rather than one they wish to answer. A few candidates attempted to answer all the questions in **Sections B** and **C** and in such cases marks were awarded to the answers which addressed the greatest number of assessment criteria. Naturally, because of the time required to produce a strong answer for a 25-mark question, such candidates were unlikely to score above single figures for each section. Centres are encouraged to advise candidates in this respect before they sit the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1 – 5 *Changi*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark for their response, addressing the question successfully and giving good advice. Marks were usually lost through an unspecific answer that did not suggest how the advice would make the performance effective. The best answers identified the fact that RICHARD's character was of pivotal importance in the change of atmosphere at the end of the scene and the greater the display of contrast in RICHARD's manner and demeanour, the greater the dramatic effect.

Question 2

This question was not well answered. The props most frequently cited were books, notebooks and pens and dining implements. It was not enough to identify these alone, or suggest that a prop would be effectively used if it was actual rather than mimed. No credit could be given for the frequent suggestions of chairs and tables as these are part of the setting, unless there was an indication of how the objects were used by the characters for dramatic effect. Candidates could sometimes be awarded marks for suggesting the symbolic or representative quality of a prop as an effective use.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to achieve some marks for this question with the best answers covering the duration of the extract with frequent direct references to the text. There were no right or wrong answers to the question and suggestions of variation and contrast in pace were acceptable when justified in the light of the dramatic purpose of this opening scene to create an oppressive and threatening atmosphere. Some candidates misunderstood the term 'pace' as relating to movement on the stage and could not be awarded marks unless the answers also included references to vocal delivery.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to score well on this question correctly identifying that there would be a display of a range of expression in REGINALD's delivery given the varied content and the circumstances in which the speech was performed, and that these would be given visual impact through body language and movement. Some candidates were awarded for creative and detailed approaches but in instances where candidates

suggested variations in tone, tempo, volume and pitch as four pieces of advice, marks could not be awarded unless each referred to a different point in the text.

Question 5

On the whole, the character of ANG SIEW HUA appealed to the candidates. Many felt they fully understood her and how she should be portrayed with the best answers concisely detailing her different roles – mother, wife, close friend, former lover and working woman and the conflicts that these roles engendered. This question saw a lot of the higher-end candidates writing a well-structured and focused character study that often neglected to explore creative approaches to playing the character.

Questions 6 – 8 *Devised work*

Question 6

For the majority of answers to this question it was evident that the hints within the question itself formed the basis for the structure of the responses. The best responses discussed the way in which contrasts were created and how these helped to generate interest in the piece. Those ignoring the guidelines within the question often descended into a narrative description of the piece they created.

Question 7

This question was not answered well by many candidates who struggled with the notion of ‘style’ and did not understand that the term was synonymous with ‘type’ in this context rather than necessarily relating to a particular genre of performance. Again, the best answers evaluated how effectively the style helped to convey the subject matter and characterisation. The term ‘dialogue’ seemed to restrict a lot of the responses to this question. There appeared to be a widespread belief amongst candidates that dialogue is always the spoken word and therefore those who had created solely physical pieces with no spoken word felt unable to fully answer the question. Dialogue is an intent to communicate and does not necessarily mean purely oral communication. There were many missed opportunities in the responses to this question as a result of this confusion.

Question 8

The best answers to this question appreciated that an actor uses physicality in order to create a role or character and commented upon how effectively meaning was communicated through those physical aspects. Some candidates commented on how an understanding of physicality was employed to affect the spoken word with reference to breathing and vocal control. As with **Question 7**, there seemed to be a number of candidates who misunderstood the terms within the question. Many candidates took physicality to mean movement on stage. Those candidates creating pieces consisting of static monologues, or sequences set around a table felt unable to answer the question. There was a limited understanding of physicality in terms of body language, facial expression, posture, proxemics etc.

Section B

Questions 9 – 11 *Changi*

Question 9

The most successful responses identified the complexities involved in an effective portrayal of the character of CHYE. Most saw him as a multi-faceted character upon whom circumstances were impacting heavily despite his apparent uniformity as the consummate politician whose true motives lay hidden behind a façade. Others saw him as more two-dimensional, almost a villain from a melodrama, an antagonist to the heroic protagonist, FERNANDEZ. Either interpretation was valid, as long as evidence for the desired portrayal was identified in the text and practical advice put forward. As with **Question 5**, many higher-end candidates focused solely on character study and neglected to offer insight into how the character should be played. There were some candidates, however, who fully invested in the action and wrote in role as if they were an actor discussing the character with their understudy – these answers tended to score the most marks as they clearly offered sound advice. There were, unfortunately, a small number of candidates who misread the question and answered as if they were playing ANG SIEW HUA rather than ANG SIEW CHYE.

Question 10

This was a challenging question and was attempted across the ability range. The better responses answered the question in two parts – focusing firstly on the idea of the individual and the state and, secondly, on how they would direct this extract to fully highlight the conflict between the two. The best answers identified, given the character of FERNANDEZ, accused in degrees of arrogance and pride, that the argument was not entirely one-sided. Such answers indicated that a production where the dialectic was balanced would be more effective as thought-provoking theatre rather than blunt and partial propaganda. Weaker responses discussed obvious conflict within the extract without thought of individual or state objectives and little in the way of suggestion for direction and realisation of the extract.

Question 11

This was the most popular question in this section with the majority of answers exploring the design concepts behind a production of the extract and explaining these in terms of relevance to the plot or symbolic representation. The best answers were able to demonstrate the matching of creative impulse and design potential with the practicalities of realisation. To achieve the highest marks, it was necessary to move beyond understanding of the role of each designer in isolation and consider the impact of each design element within a wider framework, governed by some notion of a directorial concept. It is important that the functions of design are understood with at least a basic understanding of how these are executed or carried out in practical terms.

Section C

Questions 12 – 14 *Devised work*

Question 12

This was the most popular question within this section with the majority of candidates able to identify how various elements within the devised piece worked together to create and sustain dramatic tension. There was a sound understanding across many of the responses to this question with concepts such as dramatic irony, pause/silence, rhythm, pacing and proxemics. Some candidates made reference to tensions of task (will objectives be achieved?), relationships (who will win?) mystery (why is this happening?) and surprise (when will it happen?/what is to be done now it has happened?). Whilst many candidates were able to give several instances of where the highpoints of dramatic tension were, or where it was being built as 'rising action', they did not take the further necessary step of evaluating how successful the various strategies had been which, as it had been the central focus of the question, prevented access to the higher mark bands. Some responses suggested that candidates had little understanding of what dramatic tension was, or how it might be attained and therefore did not score highly.

Question 13

Those answering this question were able to comment on the performance space and the style of the performance itself. The best responses considered the choice of performance space, how the piece was developed from initial ideas to realisation in the performance space and the reasoning behind choices. In addition, higher-scoring responses focused on how the choice and use of the performance space reflected the content of the piece. The question did give the option of suggesting changes to the use of the performance space for the purpose of eliciting an evaluative response. Candidates who declared that they would not make changes without providing reasoned justification missed an opportunity to attain additional marks. Where candidates focused less on the performance space and its dramatic purpose, there was still some understanding of proxemics and spatial relationships, but often these answers became narrative descriptions of the piece with some identification of where a particular scene took place on the stage.

Question 14

The wording of this question was intended to allow for the development of creative ideas and some responses included imaginative yet workable designs with the best of these indicating how the set worked (or would work) in practice consistently making clear, through detailed reference to the devised piece, the relationship between design and action. There were also a large number of responses that simply described the set and did not evaluate the meaning or success of this setting. Many of the answers to this question were accompanied by labelled diagrams which really aided understanding. There were some diagrams, however, that seemed to be included for the sake of it and bore little relevance to what was actually being discussed. Very little credit could be given to drawings with no, or minimal, supportive detail.

DRAMA

<p>Paper 0411/02 Coursework</p>

General comments

Most candidates' coursework showed an obvious and infectious enthusiasm for live performance and a genuine desire to communicate with an audience. The overall standard of performance work was very good, which was clearly a reflection of the hours of preparation and rehearsal put in by candidates, not to mention the patience and sensitivity of teachers in guiding them through the creative process.

Administration

The series generally ran smoothly, although the overall administration relating to the coursework submission was more problematic than in previous years and there were a greater number of administrative errors. These are set out in detail here in the hope that it will be possible to avoid recurrence of such problems in future series.

1 Timely despatch of the moderation materials

A number of packages arrived late which delayed the moderation process. Centres are reminded that the moderation materials must reach Cambridge by 30 April for each June series. This is dependent on allowing sufficient time in the planning cycle for the constituent parts of the process: selecting the sample of candidates; internal moderation of marks where there is more than one teacher involved in the assessment; collating the required performances onto DVD(s), and accurately estimating how long is needed for the material to be posted to Cambridge.

2 Documentation

Several Centres submitted incomplete documentation resulting in significant delays and disruption to the moderation process. There were two common omissions: the Internal Assessment MS1 mark sheet (or a signed printout of the marks file if marks were submitted to Cambridge electronically), and the Individual Candidate Mark Sheets (ICMS) for **all** candidates, not just those in the sample. Moderation cannot start until all the required documentation has been received.

3 Selecting the sample

Some Centres did not select a sample of six candidates as required by the syllabus, and instead sent the recorded performances of all candidates, leaving the Moderator to select work. In other instances, Centres had selected a sample but it did not include the full range of marks, or the marks were not evenly distributed. The sample must include one candidate with the highest mark awarded, one candidate with the lowest mark awarded and four other candidates with marks spread evenly between these two. If there is more than one candidate on a particular mark, it is not necessary to send all of those candidates, just one which is representative of that mark.

4 Accuracy of mark sheets

The majority of Centres completed the ICMSs thoroughly and accurately. Nevertheless, there were a number of arithmetical errors. Centres are reminded **not** to round up or down any of the marks when calculating the 'final mark' for each of the three assessment objectives; marks should be left as decimal fractions. Only when the candidate's 'total mark' has been calculated should it be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number: fractions of 0.5 or more should be rounded up; fractions of less than 0.5 should be rounded down. Moderators also corrected the marks of many candidates where there were errors in addition. Please check all calculations carefully as even small errors can cause problems.

5 *Quality of recordings*

The overall quality of recordings was fairly good, with many Centres presenting their work in digital format on DVD. Although not specifically required by the syllabus, it was extremely helpful when DVDs were chaptered as this facilitated easy identification of candidates and made the moderation process much more straightforward.

There were also a significant number of submissions that proved problematic for the following reasons:

- DVDs that were broken in transit as a result of inadequate protective packaging.
- Recordings in formats that did not play on a stand-alone DVD player or a computer, where the DVDs showed as 'blank' or 'file unknown' when inserted. The following movie formats are accepted: MPEG (.mpg) and QuickTime movie (.mov). Please check DVDs in a stand-alone DVD player to ensure that they play properly before sending them to Cambridge. Centres are reminded that as this is examination material, the highest standards of presentation are needed to ensure candidates are not disadvantaged.
- Poor levels of sound recording so that performances were extremely difficult to hear or – at the other extreme – were overwhelmed by extraneous noises, particularly when performances took place in outdoor locations.
- Performances where candidates were not identified. Candidates should announce themselves to camera before each performance, clearly stating their candidate name and (if known at the time of the recording) their candidate number plus the role they will be playing in the piece. Some candidates used boards showing their name and candidate number as well as verbally giving this information and this was helpful. Most Centres provided a description of each candidate's appearance on the ICMS and, although not compulsory, Moderators were grateful to those Centres that provided photographs of the candidates.
- Filming that was so distant or grainy that it was very difficult to see the work clearly. Cameras should be static so that the Moderator can take in the total experience and see reactions and movements across the space rather than being limited by what the cameraman chooses to shoot. Some candidates played totally to the camera and there was little or no sense of a staged performance or a context for the work. Some static monologues were filmed from the waist up, which was unhelpful and candidates need to be filmed in long-shot not mid-shot.
- DVDs with no accompanying running order meaning that it was extremely complex and time-consuming to work out which candidates were performing.

Assessment criteria

The majority of Centres showed a clear understanding of how to apply the assessment criteria to candidates' work. Most teachers provided helpful comments to indicate why they had awarded a particular mark, generally pointing to specific features of the performances to justify that mark. Other teachers merely copied out the assessment criteria from the syllabus, which was unhelpful as it offered no additional information to help the Moderator understand why a particular mark had been awarded. It is essential that the comments on the ICMSs give an insight into how candidates have worked through the creative process and do not merely reproduce the assessment criteria.

There were occasional misunderstandings as to how the assessment objectives were differentiated, with some Centres referring to performance skills under Assessment Objective A and Assessment Objective B. In a few cases, teachers penalised the candidates under Assessment Objective A and B but then overcompensated by awarding inflated marks for Assessment Criteria C. To clarify:

- Assessment Objective A is concerned with the journey from page to stage, rewarding independence in making such decisions in the light of the performance standard achieved.
- Assessment Objective B measures a similar journey as candidates devise their own material.
- Assessment Objective C focuses entirely on the quality of each candidate's performance skills.

Text-based performances

Text-based work tended to produce higher marks than the devised work for the majority of candidates and there were some very emotionally charged performances. The strongest of these reflected a very good understanding of the play, its characters, themes and social and historical context. The weakest gave the impression of having been thrown together at the last minute and conveyed little sense of stagecraft, or any sense of context and performance.

The best work was typified by very high standards of preparation, and an obvious engagement with the process of rehearsing and refining dramatic performance. In such cases, there were very few, if any, memory lapses and the action was helped effortlessly along by the drive and commitment of the candidates, especially in the group pieces. This was often the result of excellent articulation and enunciation by all members of the group.

By contrast, weaker performances often lost pace and energy as a result of over-reliance on the use of props and/or furniture. There were several examples of static monologues with the performer seated on a chair. A significant number of pieces were essentially 'table-and-chairs' drama with candidates having imaginary conversations on telephones. This restricted the physicality of the candidate and rarely led to high marks, as there was little opportunity to use the stage space effectively. Repetitive phrasing by candidates was also a weakness, as was an inability to shape sentences or control dynamic levels. This often led to showing anger or frustration through uncontrolled shouting, of which there was far too much. The impressive use of register by strong candidates was frequently matched by monotonous mumbling by less able performers. Such under-projection was a major weakness in performance, but was even more significant when coupled with weak accent work. Accents – often American or English – were seldom well executed and Centres are advised not to choose plays where authenticity is reliant on the use of accurate accents if they do not think candidates will be able to employ them successfully.

Many Centres offered a wide variety of texts using different styles and techniques which provided adequate challenge for candidates whilst simultaneously extending their knowledge and understanding of theatre across different historical periods. In some cases characterisation had been successfully developed leading to excellent performances. Although not a syllabus requirement, some Centres paid careful attention to set and costume when period drama was tackled, and this helped candidates to get into character and develop stylistically.

Centres may find it helpful to consider the following representative list of repertoire from which extracts were selected in the June 2013 series.

Alan Ayckbourn	<i>Absent Friends</i> <i>Comic Potential</i>
Edward Albee	<i>The Zoo Story</i> <i>A Delicate Balance</i> <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Michael Azama	<i>Crossfire</i>
Alan Bennett	<i>The History Boys</i>
Steven Berkoff	<i>The Trial</i>
Bertolt Brecht	<i>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i> <i>The Elephant Calf</i>
Louise Bryant	<i>The Game</i>
David Campton	<i>Reserved</i>
Jim Cartwright	<i>Road</i> <i>Two</i>
Caryl Churchill	<i>Love and Information</i> <i>Top Girls</i>
Martin Crimp	<i>Dealing with Clair</i>
Friedrich Dürrenmatt	<i>The Visit</i>
Athol Fugard	<i>No-Good Friday</i>
John Godber	<i>Bouncers</i> <i>Shakers</i>

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	<i>Teachers</i>
Nikolai Gogol	<i>The Government Inspector</i>
Carlo Goldoni	<i>A Servant to Two Masters</i>
Lorraine Hansberry	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>
Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>
David Ives	<i>Sure Thing</i>
Sarah Kane	<i>4:48 Psychosis</i>
Federico García Lorca	<i>Blood Wedding</i> <i>The House of Bernarda Alba</i>
Arthur Miller	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> <i>The Crucible</i>
Ferenc Molnar	<i>A Matter of Husbands</i>
Harold Pinter	<i>The Caretaker</i> <i>The Dumb Waiter</i>
J B Priestley	<i>An Inspector Calls</i>
Willy Russell	<i>Our Day Out</i> <i>Shirley Valentine</i>
Diane Samuels	<i>Kindertransport</i>
Peter Shaffer	<i>Amadeus</i>
William Shakespeare	<i>Henry V</i> <i>Macbeth</i> <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
Neil Simon	<i>The Prisoner of Second Avenue</i> <i>The Star-Spangled Girl</i> <i>The Odd Couple</i>
George Bernard Shaw	<i>Getting Married</i> <i>Man and Superman</i> <i>Pygmalion</i>
Simon Stephens	<i>Country Music</i> <i>Punk Rock</i>
Shelagh Stephenson	<i>Ancient Lights</i> <i>The Long Road</i>
August Strindberg	<i>Miss Julie</i>
Oscar Wilde	<i>An Ideal Husband</i> <i>A Woman of No Importance</i> <i>La Sainte Courtisane</i> <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
Thornton Wilder	<i>Our Town</i>
Tennessee Williams	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>
Olwen Wymark	<i>Find Me</i>

Devised performances

There were a number of powerful pieces that demonstrated a mature understanding of how to create drama for an audience, were well shaped, and conveyed a clear message to their audiences. These were generally well acted and revealed a level of attention to detail that was highly commendable. Moderators reported, however, that the overall standard of devised performances was lower than that of text-based pieces. As in previous years, there was a tendency for pieces to slide into the predictable areas of teenage issues such as drugs, unwanted pregnancies, schizophrenia, bullying, marital infidelity, cultural expectations and challenges, and madness.

The best pieces were performed to a live audience, which energised the performers and meant that they were responding to other characters in response to the reactions of the audience.

Several pieces were very naïve and simplistic with a tendency to be quite filmic in approach.

Once again, a number of monologues appeared to have been filmed in candidates' living rooms, bedrooms or gardens or any available space, with little thought given to the suitability of the space for performance. This 'talking-heads' approach meant that there was hardly any real sense of dramatic performance with other characters in the stage space. In such cases the camera became the other character, allowing limited scope for acting. There were some good examples of setting, however, that had been clearly thought through as part of the creative process and consideration had been given to the context of the work.

Dialogue was often poorly constructed and diction frequently weak, and this was inevitably accompanied by a 'tables-and-chairs' approach. Many candidates seemed ill at ease in creating physical roles and approached the work almost as if the resulting drama was intended for radio. Some performances used background music throughout, which tended to overwhelm the dialogue and obscure what was being said.

The best work was clearly derived from the dramatic stimuli in the syllabus, which helped candidates to expand their thinking beyond the well-worn themes that typified much of the work. Moderators reported seeing many powerful pieces based on pictures, stories, and exploring stylistic conventions as a means to shaping and refining their work. The enthusiasm of the audiences to whom the work was presented was evident and a fitting tribute to those candidates.