

GCE Performing Arts

Unit G385 Exploring Repertoire

Commentary for Rebecca

Irish Dancer in *Freedom of the City* by Brian Friel

Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* by R.B. Sheridan

Freedom of the City: Essay

The opening paragraph establishes the intention to make the performance relevant to the audience. It also acknowledges that the group started with a dramatic script and thereafter sought opportunities to incorporate the other art forms, an apparent necessity since one candidate was a guitarist and the candidate herself a dancer, first and foremost.

Alternative options are considered briefly and rejected and the reasoning behind the choice of *Freedom of the City* is given. The fact that the script has been edited is acknowledged but no detail is given or the reasoning behind editing decisions. This would have been beneficial.

There follows a brief resume of the socio-historical context of the play and the fact that is based on real events. She is clear that the play reflects political events during the early 70's. The first performance of the play is cited.

The structure of the play is identified and mention is made of how the non-linear plot and use of flashbacks provided opportunities to incorporate both music and dance.

She then progresses onto her chosen specialism and reviews some of the available information concerning the history, nature and stylistic elements of Irish dance. This is then linked to the performance itself and she proceeds to explain how the selection of dance styles sought to reflect the atmosphere the play seeks to create. The reasoning behind the choices for music and dance is clearly stated and logical. Her physical interpretation of the dance style is also considered and the concept of a conversation between music and dance is established with musical selections justified.

Further influences are considered in Christopher Bruce's folk-inspired *Sergeant Early's Dream* and the use of a scarf is discussed both to show the application of technique, and the adoption of a motif that fits the theme of the piece. All the work on show is repertoire or marginally adapted repertoire.

There is a review of the performance in terms of its impact upon the audience with some evaluative comment that is not developed. A more objective tone would have been beneficial.

The bibliography though not extensive or significant in academic terms does nevertheless provide evidence of genuine research. The essay lacks footnotes or the formality of MLA or Harvard referencing which is now a requirement of this unit.

The Rivals: Essay

In this performance the candidate takes on a speaking role but again the focus is on dance. A similar structure is adopted for this essay with a brief review of the options and challenges.

There is some useful and informative historical context given. The structure of the play is discussed in brief and there is clarity about the way the candidate positions the action of the performance,

concentrating as it does on the central love plot to the exclusion of the sub-plot. This is reasoned and justified effectively.

The candidate again turns to the subject of research, which is a central tenet of this unit. There is some use of technical language linked to a consideration of the appropriateness of Baroque dance to reflect the milieu of the period. She cites modern interpretations of Baroque dance in the reference to the company *La Belle Danse* and takes pains to make clear that this company uses notations from the original, thereby establishing historical accuracy and credibility for her own adaptation of the *Chaconne*.

There is further extensive reference to historic forms and their applicability to *The Rivals*. This is developed in discussion relating to the personal technical and adaptational challenges encountered by the candidates in their approach and the positioning of these forms in the performance.

The practical application is discussed in some detail with good use of technical language. The candidate concentrates on the dance related aspects and does not engage with acting skills but given the limitations imposed on essay length this is to be expected and is not cause for penalising the candidate. The evaluative final paragraph is somewhat general in tone and could have been much more specific.

The bibliography is rather thin and lacks academic rigour but is evidence nonetheless of research having taken place. The essay lacks footnotes or the formality of MLA or Harvard referencing which is now a requirement of this unit.

Overall Comment

Both essays confine themselves to the word limit whilst successfully considering the key aspects required of the unit. Research into the overall socio-historical context of the texts themselves and practical **production-related** stylistic influences informs both group and individual performances. There is clear evidence of having shaped and adapted the material to meet the various constraints presented by factors such as number of performers, range of talent and audience expectation. Although there is nothing written about staging the candidate is able to demonstrate integrity in the sense that research is applied consistently to performance outcomes.

Performances

Given the mix of specialist skills within the group the intention of incorporating music and dance into the performance of both *Freedom of the City* and *The Rivals* through the existing structure of the respective texts is a highly laudable one. The practical outcome was not entirely successful (especially in the case of *Freedom of the City*) in that both musician and dancer appeared to be performing their pieces more as a showcase than as an integrated aspect of performance. This is essentially a directorial issue however and should not unduly penalise the performers who have no control over the way the piece is directed. This could have been overcome by avoiding the 'set pieces' created by the slightly awkward set-up adopted for each musical interlude and by endeavouring to integrate the performances into the action itself or into genuine transitions as opposed to 'scene dividers'. Nevertheless, the intention is clear; that throughout the performance candidates demonstrate that they are attempting to apply their research to performance and for the most part this successfully.

In terms of quality of performance itself it must be remembered that the performance assessment objectives for G385 are different from those of G386. In G385 the candidate is seeking to demonstrate successful assimilation and application of appropriate stylistic and performance conventions. In the case of this candidate, despite the fact that the core performance skills may lack

refinement, this process has taken place most clearly. Because the key criteria were addressed successfully this candidate scores highly.