



GENERAL COMMENTS

2005 was the fourth year in which the prescribed structures for the Drama solo performance examination set out the performance focus with introductory sentences and bullet points. This style of presentation was clearly helpful for the students, enabling them to check off each aspect of their chosen structure as they prepared for the examination.

Students need to remember that they must pay close attention to **every** word contained in the performance focus. Their performances must address all the details in the dot points, which includes ensuring that assessors can clearly identify two or more examples where words are plural. Weaker students often omitted specified details of the prescribed structure in their performance. These students could not score full marks for criterion 1 and, as a consequence, they could not score full marks for any other criterion either. It is vital that teachers remind students of the significance of this.

Each prescribed structure required students to direct their performance to a specified audience. Students needed to establish for the assessors where in the performance space that specified audience was and, if their audience moved, to continue to maintain this focus (criterion 9). Some students seemed to think that the clear establishment and maintenance of the implied audience was optional – this is not the case.

As in previous years, some students demonstrated a lack of understanding of the non-naturalistic performance style. As stated in the 2005 Drama Performance examination, non-naturalistic performance styles focus on ‘a manipulation of time and space as well as the narrative elements of the drama’. Too much of students’ performance was naturalistic, leaving them little time to fulfil the requirements of the examination. A lack of understanding of non-naturalism had a direct impact on the assessment of the use of expressive skills (criterion 8), the development of the dramatic potential of the subject matter (criterion 2) and the use of the prescribed performance style (criterion 4). Also of concern was a seeming lack of understanding of the word ‘recreates’. It is essential that students **do** rather than tell; they must ‘act out’ rather than be a ‘talking head’. Weaker students tended to rely on conversation or narration – students must inform their work throughout with dramatic action. The terminology section on page 14 of the examination paper stated, ‘The emphasis in the recreation must be on action rather than narration; doing rather than telling.’ Better work was characterised by minimum words and maximum appropriate action.

Timing was generally handled better this year. Most students presented work that was within the allowed seven minutes of performance time, and very few students had to be stopped as a result of going over time. The use of props was also better this year with fewer students bringing an unnecessary number of props into the performance space. Teachers need to remember that the Drama solo performance examination is primarily an acting task, and the use of stagecraft, while important, is secondary to this. If the student cannot carry his or her own props into and out of the examination space on their own and within the allotted time, then the props should not be included in the performance. It should also be noted that it is unwise for students to share props. Changes to room scheduling and performance times can create unnecessary stress for students who choose to do this.

Students who presented better work demonstrated extensive research and a richness of detail within their performance. This depth of research is essential in order to show the level of understanding of the prescribed stimulus and to be able to incorporate the stimulus into the performance. Better work was also characterised by sophisticated and effective use of editing. In preparing for this examination, students should gather a considerable amount of appropriate raw material for the creation of the character(s) and the dramatic action. They should then choose the very best material to include in the examination, carefully editing their raw material in order to shape their work into a seven-minute (maximum) solo performance.

As in past years, some students presented their performance in ‘street clothes’. Teachers should discourage this. Street clothes automatically give the student’s work a contemporary look and feel that is not always appropriate for the character and is not helpful in trying to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the non-naturalistic performance style. Inappropriate jewellery and loose hair that is not tied back or out of the face also contribute to a lack of belief in the character being performed. Unnecessarily exposed flesh is also a poor choice which further erodes belief in the character being presented. Teachers should also remind students who choose to wear ‘theatre blacks’ that they could significantly enhance their performance making a few symbolic additions to this base costume.



SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The characters

Structure chosen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
%	14.2	5.4	17.3	11.3	16.4	5.6	2.8	6.6	8.1	12.4

Pride

This structure was popular with both male and female students, and students who chose it presented some of the most stunning work seen in this examination. Strong performances were characterised by the demonstration of a very clear insight into *Pride*, especially in a global context, without a reliance on words. Strong work also contained highly contrasting characters, sophisticated reference to the stimulus, innovative use of symbol and props, and highly stylised movement. Weaker performances showed little understanding or demonstration of purgatory, no evidence of the stimulus, and none of the ‘evolution’ required by dot point two of the performance focus. Also, many weaker performances failed to demonstrate the theatrical convention of caricature or the dramatic element of climax. Some students seemed to think that yelling demonstrated climax; however, this was not an adequate response.

The Resident

This structure was particularly popular with female students. The best work was characterised by a cleverly interwoven story that had seamless transitions between character, time and place, as well as highly effective use of symbol, especially with costume choices. Better responses also demonstrated a good understanding of the tone and content of the stimulus (the newspaper article) and considerable skill with the theatrical convention of caricature. Weaker students tended to overplay the seriousness of the content and failed to create a sense of the ‘public meeting’. This lower standard of work also showed a lack of understanding of caricature, and was presented through talking rather than action.

The Security Guard

This was a very popular structure with female students. Less successful work lacked humour, which was a requirement of the comedy performance style. Lower-scoring performances demonstrated very few details of the Trojan War and often failed to make any link between the Trojan War and the security breaches. There tended to be far too much time spent on the details in dot point two and no time demonstrating the ‘consequences’ in dot point three. Highly successful works were typified by complex and witty scripts, clever and inventive ways of demonstrating the convention ‘disjointed time sequences’, and excellent physicality and satire. Performances at this level clearly and effectively explored the intricacies of dot point three.

The Country Women’s Association (CWA) member

Strong work in this prescribed structure captured the quirky nature of eccentric characters without resorting to mockery. There was an engaging blend of the comic with the serious, and the use of the dramatic element ‘mood’ was highly effective. Work at this top level clearly demonstrated aspects of Epic theatre and contained particularly appropriate use of the convention ‘song’. Some students composed original songs while others cleverly changed the lyrics of songs from specific eras with very good effect. Weaker work did not demonstrate an understanding of the convention ‘lyrical and symbolic’, or show skill with aspects of Epic theatre. It was also often difficult to identify the use of mood in weaker performances.

The Shakespearean Character

The very best work contained a strong sense of Shakespeare and his ‘world’. High-scoring students understood the irony of placing a strange character into *Romeo and Juliet* and created very physical performances with very few props. Also, the sophisticated use of heightened language was particularly effective in exploring the Elizabethan theatre and the potential for humour. Lower-scoring students simply acted out scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* and made little or no reference to the consequences that were essential in addressing dot point three. Some students chose to perform as an actor rather than a character from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This was a poor choice.

Asahina Daigo

Within the strongest performances there were highly symbolic imagery and skilful references to the Manga comic stimulus. These performances captured the stylised action of the comic strip style through effective use of exaggerated movement. There was also intelligent and sophisticated use of sound, sensitive and appropriate references to Shinto, and powerful use of stillness and silence. Humour was also well used to convey cultural misunderstandings. Weaker students who performed this structure often demonstrated no sense of the Manga comic stimulus and had little



coherence in their story development. Poorer performances showed little understanding of the conventions and didn't address the 'new insight' that was a requirement in dot point three.

The Enemy Alien

This structure attracted some highly effective non-naturalistic performances that made great use of the dramatic element of mood. The strongest works demonstrated sophisticated transformations between locations; not just in the creation of different locations, but more importantly with the dramatically inventive ways these transformations were explored in performance. The best work was particularly detailed and created an empathetic character with an interesting background. There was also a strong reference to the contributions he made to society, which was a requirement of dot point three. Weaker students' work tended to focus on a stereotypical character and poor attempts were made at accent. This work lacked historical detail, suggesting poor, if any, research, and was largely naturalistic. Performing naturalistically was an inappropriate choice.

Precious Ramotswe

The more successful students captured the charm and warmth of Precious beautifully. They conveyed a thoroughly believable sense of her 'world' through skilful work with the convention 'transformation of character', using accent, physical shape and energy. 'Transformation of object' was also handled particularly well, both in the use of an object in different ways, the excellent transitions between objects, and the dramatic ways that the transformations take place. Less successful work tended to re-tell one of the cases in the novel, which was off task, and contained a level of political comment that was not appropriate for this character. Work at this level also didn't address the distinction between Botswana and Johannesburg which was part of the 'case' in dot point three.

Ford Prefect

This was a popular choice with male students. The best work was highly physical and often quite 'twisted' in the choice of humour. This twisted humour was appropriate and consistent with the stimulus, and showed a good understanding of the 'world' created by Adams in his novel. High-scoring work was also characterised by a well-written and edited script and excellent use of satire and heightened language. The work was witty, fast-paced, and used sound to great effect. Weaker work seemed to be based more upon the film, which was not set as either stimulus or reference material in this examination, and didn't assist at all with dot point three. Connecting the 'moon landing' with the character proved to be difficult for weaker students.

The Beauty Queen

Strong performances in this prescribed structure were characterised by highly researched and tightly edited scripts that captured the complexity of Helena Rubenstein or Elizabeth Arden. Top students conveyed a real sense of the ACNE personnel. Their work also demonstrated a good understanding of the rivalry between the two women as well as the personal cost. Students often created an original rather than predictable vision for the future. Also, great use was made of pathos. Less successful students presented their performances with naturalistic dialogue. Acting as a 'talking head' without dramatic action did not fulfil the requirements of the examination. There was little sense of the era(s) in lower-scoring performances and fleeting reference to the rivalry and the personal cost.