



BOARD OF STUDIES  
NEW SOUTH WALES

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# 1997 HSC

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## **EXAMINATION REPORT**

### **Drama**

#### **Including:**

- **Marking criteria**
- **Sample responses**
- **Examiners' comments**

## Acknowledgements

'Any good theatre ...', Tony Jackson, *Learning through theatre*, Tony Jackson, Routledge, 1993, p 35.

'Melodrama is essentially ...', Margaret Williams, *The Sunny South*, G Darrell, ed M Williams, Currency Press, 1975, Preface p x. Reprinted with permission.

'I can take any empty ...', Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook, Penguin, UK, 1968, p 11. Reproduced courtesy HarperCollins Publishers UK.

'Our theatre is a throw-away ...', Dario Fo, *Dario Fo, People's Court Jester*, Tony Mitchell, Methuen Theatre File, NY, 1984, p 58.

Photo: 'Marat/Sade', courtesy Magnum Photos.

'The Theatre of the Oppressed ...', Adrian Jackson, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, A Boal, Routledge, London, 1992, Intro p xxiv.

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## **DRAMA 2 UNIT EXAMINATION**

In 1997 a total of 3156 candidates presented for the 2 Unit Drama Examination.

### **THE GROUP PRESENTATION**

#### **General Comments**

Examiners were impressed with the standard of many of the Group Presentations, indicating candidate awareness of the demands of group devised work, as well as the development of strong individual and group skills.

They noted that it is important for all members of the school to be aware of, and sensitive to, the fact that an examination is in progress. Candidates deserve to be examined in the best possible conditions. For Drama, this means a controlled environment, quiet and free of interruptions of any kind, and a responsible and responsive audience.

There is still need for schools to ensure that:

- candidates are made aware of all the requirements of the Group Presentation as published in the Creative Arts KLA Topic Lists and Course Requirements booklet;
- audience and staff are made aware that no interruptions should occur during performances or interviews after performances;
- marking sheets are completed prior to the day of marking, with good quality, colour photographs of the candidates in costume;
- all other documentation is completed and signed by the principal where required;
- a program or running order with names of pieces and student numbers is provided;
- an appropriate space in the audience is reserved for the examiners, with a desk and a reading light.

It is most important that candidates be made aware that:

- no weapons of any kind should be used as part of any performance;
- no naked flame should be used as part of any performance;
- real alcohol should not be used as part of a performance;
- examiners should not be harassed in any way nor used as part of the performance.

#### **Recommendations**

- Should a problem occur in a group because of misadventure prior to the examination the Board should be notified. The minimum number for a group is three students. Where a misadventure occurs groups from the class should be re-organised to accommodate the group. Where this is not possible a Year 11 student can be used to make up the minimum number in a group; that is, three students.

- Teachers must take an active role in discouraging students from using weapons, nudity, naked flames or any implement that may endanger themselves, other students or examiners during performances. It is imperative that examiners be informed of the presence of any of the above, or anything resembling weapons, flames etc. Students should be informed that examiners will stop performances if any such items appear.
- Ensure technical equipment is not operated by a teacher or a Year 12 student. Technical equipment is to be operated by a student in Year 11 or lower.
- Ensure students are aware of the time limits and inform students that they will be stopped by examiners if they go over time.
- Inform students that prior to performing they will be asked to line up in order of photos on group sheets in order that examiners can identify students by their number and by a short description.
- The examination is not a public performance. The audience should be composed of students from Year 11 or lower. It is not the role of examiners to supervise the audience. Audience awareness of appropriate behaviour is essential to ensuring the best possible conditions for students performing. Measures should be taken by the teacher to deal with any problems if they arise.
- Ensure that the audience is aware that video cameras are not to be used during examinations.

### **The best performances:**

- presented a cohesive theatrical piece, rather than a collection of scenes;
- showed a balance of commitment to the piece from each member of the group;
- displayed high energy in strong, sophisticated ensemble work;
- realised the importance of demonstrating individual expressive skills;
- showed a strong understanding of dramatic elements;
- were able to realise several roles with clarity and complexity;
- took risks that worked theatrically and were executed with focus and conviction;
- dealt sensitively with issues, which had been thoroughly researched;
- used clear and purposeful transitions which were creative, original and physically polished;
- dealt with a simplified concept originally and with depth and complexity as opposed to dealing with many ideas superficially;
- used subtext well in the interpretation of topics;
- obviously improvised in the developmental process;
- had a clear actor-audience relationship, entertaining and engaging the audience;
- used blocking and movement creatively, eg synchronised movement/voice work, soundscapes;
- combined tight, controlled movement, timing and rhythms;
- made appropriate use of costumes/props/symbols;

- used music appropriately;
- used the stage space inventively and explored levels;
- made imaginative, risky and bold use of non-human roles;
- had experience in performing before an audience.

### **Logbooks**

The best logbooks had become an integral part of the playbuilding process:

- recording and reflecting upon the whole development process;
- confirming the commitment of all members of the group;
- recording research, analysis, rehearsal, evaluation and editing.

### **The weaker performances:**

- had little understanding of, or did not consider, the elements of drama;
- indicated unequal input from all members of the group;
- showed inadequate preparation, research, analysis and rehearsal;
- made choices contrary to their skills;
- were so fragmented that the meaning was lost;
- used poor or repetitive transitions;
- depended too heavily on blackouts/lighting;
- lacked complexity in all areas, eg role, emotion;
- made limited and ineffective use of the performance space;
- were dialogue driven;
- imitated television or 'On Stage' ideas;
- were overly didactic;
- overused music, lighting and sound effects and relied too heavily on sets and props;
- showed poor awareness of an audience relationship;
- played to the examiners.

### **Logbooks**

- were inadequate;
- reflected/confirmed a lack of understanding of the process of devised work.

## **INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS**

### **PERFORMANCE**

#### **General Comments**

Examiners once again suggested that students should be advised to consider the options for the Individual Project carefully and be fully aware of the theatrical demands of the Performance option.

The examiners noticed an interesting use of sources and improvement in the writing and editing of some self devised pieces. However, it was recommended that only students who are proficient writers should be encouraged to devise their own performance pieces.

Candidates should be aware of the minimum and maximum of the time limit (6 – 8 minutes) of the Individual Performance and the fact that ‘live’ effects such as sounds off stage are not permissible.

It is important for schools to ensure that a responsive, empathetic audience is provided for all individual performances.

It is most important that candidates be made aware that:

- no weapons of any kind should be used as part of any performance;
- no naked flame should be used as part of any performance;
- real alcohol should not be used as part of a performance;
- examiners should not be harassed in any way or used as part of the performance.

#### **The best performances:**

- were energetic and performed with conviction;
- were based on solid material that maximised the skills and strengths of the performer;
- were performances rather than monologues or audition ‘pieces’, ie were researched, analysed, adapted, developed;
- played the character truthfully and convincingly;
- explored the physical dimensions of the piece;
- displayed a passionate ownership of/involvement in the piece;
- made a clear dramatic statement with strong images and clear transitions;
- took theatrical risks that paid off;
- avoided the styles of film and psychodrama;
- had considered audience reaction;
- were aware of the ‘journey’ taken by the character and the audience;
- were highly entertaining building to an obvious finish;

- used time, pace and pause well;
- showed awareness and ‘possession’ of the space;
- used technical effects minimally but effectively;
- had a cohesive structure with a clear beginning and end.

### **Logbooks**

- confirmed the research and developmental process leading to the performance.

### **The weaker performances:**

- were under time;
- were often self-devised pieces that were poorly written or unedited stream-of-consciousness improvisations;
- used material that did not suit the skills of the performer;
- showed lack of understanding of the concepts of style and dramatic structure;
- used poor blocking, editing and transitions;
- used unmotivated gestures and movement;
- relied on film/video as sources of material;
- copied blocking and gesture from film or video;
- played multiple characters poorly;
- attempted to show off a number of skills with no apparent purpose;
- talked to empty chairs, often placed up stage;
- used gratuitous music and/or movement;
- were angst driven or psychodrama;
- were dance pieces rather than dramatic performances;
- showed little experience in performing before an audience;
- were underprepared, eg did not know lines;
- lectured the audience;
- relied heavily on technical effects and blackouts;
- were performed without warming up or taking time to get into character.

### **Logbooks**

- confirmed lack of preparation and analysis;
- were ‘not available’ to hand to the examiners.



## **DESIGN**

### **General Comments**

The standard of all Design projects clearly indicates that students and teachers are becoming more confident and knowledgeable about developing the final Design products. However, there still seems to be some difficulty in understanding and following the guidelines. Therefore exam guidelines and specifications have been included in this report.

### **Use of Logbooks in the Design Marking Process**

The logbook is crucial to the marking process. While logbooks are not marked by examiners, they fulfil the role of substantiating the process and providing an explanation of the working design. Unlike the Individual Project: Performance, students undertaking submitted Projects do not have an opportunity to discuss their work with the examiners. For this reason, it is important that students highlight the details they consider most important in their logbooks for the easy attention of examiners.

The provision of a clear design concept, separate from the logbook, is also invaluable for examiners, along with a summary of how to read the project.

Verification of logbooks by a teacher by initials and a date assists to substantiate the process, but students are advised to remove indications of their name, school and supervising teacher's comments or marks.

### **Packaging Recommendations**

- While labelling has improved, problems still occur in identifying component parts of the project. Each label should include the component number of the whole project, ie 1/6 to indicate the first item of six component pieces.
- Dangerous packaging is strictly prohibited. This includes framing or packaging in glass, metal, or sharp materials.
- Floor plans should be folded not rolled.
- Sets should be constructed of sturdy material with loose parts glued down or secured.
- Posters should be presented flat. They should not be rolled under any circumstances.
- All presentation material should be presented as one package, ideally in one folder.

### **Design Concept Recommendations**

- A design concept statement is a necessary component of each design project, and should be included with the final project as well as in the logbook.
- A concept is a clear and concise statement explaining the design, the interpretation of the play and reasons for choices. Better concepts come from the play rather than being imposed on the play without justification.

## **COSTUME DESIGN**

### **General Comments**

Candidates demonstrated increased familiarity with the specifications and criteria for Costume Design. However, there is a need to emphasise that the design concept should be consistent through all designs and needs to be articulated as a separate written statement. The concept should complement the director's vision of the play, rather than being imposed on the play.

### **Recommendations**

Future candidates should ensure that they:

- include a clear, separate design concept statement;
- label renderings with character names and the acts/scenes for which the costumes are to be used;
- include preliminary sketches and/or written descriptions of all other costumes;
- attach fabric swatches, colour samples, and other construction information in a way that does not cover the renderings.

### **CHECKLIST FOR COSTUME DESIGN**

The checklist below sets out the mandatory requirements for this project as published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

*A single design concept of one of the works from the Design/Critical Analysis text list.*

*The design should be a clearly identifiable interpretation of the style of the play, with renderings of costumes for at least two different characters — a minimum of four to a maximum of eight costume renderings in total.*

*Renderings must be at least A4 size (210 x 297 mm) but no larger than A1 ( 841 x 594 mm).*

*Preliminary sketches and/or written descriptions of all other costumes required in the production should be included.*

*Renderings may be in media such as watercolour, colour pencil, textas, collage, or a computer aided design submitted as hard copy.*

*Renderings will also include fabric swatches and/or colour samples and any special construction information.*

### **Candidates in the 'A' range:**

- included a clear concise separate statement of the design concept;
- conceived an original, innovative but appropriate concept that was sustained throughout the total design;
- presented an outstanding completion of required criteria;

- included clear effective support material, eg written notes, swatches, colour samples;
- accounted for various aspects of the play (genre, lighting, set) as a total concept so that the costume design did not exist in isolation from the play as a whole;
- had a visual image of the play that brought to life the personality, status and standing of each character;
- selected a range of characters that reflected the scope of the play;
- executed renderings with flair and outstanding presentation, using appropriate textures and materials.

### **Candidates in the ‘B’ range:**

- had an appropriate sustained visual concept — but the areas of design appropriateness and execution not equally well treated;
- did not effectively reinforce the design with support material;
- showed a clear understanding of the text and characters but lack the flair, creativity and originality of an ‘A’ response;
- demonstrated understanding of the role of the costume design in the total production and presented interesting and well thought-out concepts;
- showed a strong understanding of characters and their status;
- presented renderings well with a strong understanding of texture and colour.

### **Candidates in the ‘C’ range:**

- lacked a true designer’s concept;
- lacked a clear, written design concept;
- addressed most criteria, but in a basic manner;
- used unclear and ineffective written support notes;
- had a functional, basic interpretation of the text — a literal interpretation rather than an original approach;
- acknowledged the technical needs of the character but dealt with them superficially;
- worked in stereotypes rather than with characters;
- selected characters who offered less scope for the design concept;
- lacked execution skills, particularly a lack of care and detail.

### **Candidates in the ‘D’ range:**

- had no design concept or an inappropriate concept;
- failed to address the basic criteria;
- failed to demonstrate knowledge of the script through an effective interpretation of the play;
- worked in stereotypes rather than with characters;

- included no significant character statement in designs;
- presented inadequate renderings with poorly presented and communicated support material.

### **Candidates in the ‘E’ range:**

- presented only a partial design;
- failed to address essential criteria;
- showed no understanding of a design concept or the selected script;
- indicated no detailed knowledge of the characters;
- were poorly or unacceptably executed and presented.

## **LIGHTING DESIGN**

### **General Comments**

Candidates demonstrated a familiarity with the specifications and criteria for Lighting Design. Although there has been an improvement generally there appears to be a level of confusion in basic lighting terminology and technical hardware.

#### Recommendations

Future candidates should consider including the following material in their project:

- a comprehensive list of all lighting hardware and software used, including lanterns desk etc;
- specification of all hardware, eg lists of colour gels for lanterns, type of lanterns, wattage etc;
- a production copy of at least two scenes of the script, including all lighting cues;
- a clear indication of areas into which each lantern is focused.

### **CHECKLIST FOR LIGHTING DESIGN**

The *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook* lists the following mandatory requirements for the Lighting Design Project.

*A design of lighting for a production of one of the works from the Design/Critical Analysis text list.*

*A list of all stage lanterns used indicating type and wattage.*

*A plan of the entire theatre showing the location of all lighting positions indicated on the floor plans by means of an overlay with colour coding. The area into which the lantern is to be focused must be indicated.*

*A running cue sheet.*

*A list of colour gels for each lantern.*

*A patch/dimmer arrangement chart.*

*A floor plan of the stage set indicating architectural features and major items of furniture.*

*A production copy of at least two scenes of the script indicating all lighting cues.*

*All plans to the scale of 1:25 metric which may be computer aided submitted as hard copy.*

### **Candidates in the ‘A’ range:**

- included a written statement providing the rationale for the design concept;
- showed a clear and appropriate design concept which fulfilled the script requirements;
- contributed to the ongoing dramatic action and mood, indicating a strong understanding of the text;
- conceived an effective directorial concept in staging the play, designing a set and an appropriate, innovative lighting rig;
- contained all mandatory plans and diagrams in a professionally finished presentation;
- included accurate, comprehensive and workable technical information.

### **Candidates in the ‘B’ range:**

- comprised an appropriate but not innovative design concept;
- provided a clear and logical explanation but lacked clarity in one area;
- conceived an appropriate, but not innovative directorial concept for staging;
- contained all mandatory items but lacked the flair, creativity and innovation of an ‘A’ project;
- provided accurate and appropriate technical information;
- designed a workable but not innovative design.

### **Candidates in the ‘C’ range:**

- provided a basic design concept;
- presented a functional lighting design that did not enhance other areas;
- demonstrated only a basic understanding of the script;
- used a directorial concept that lacked originality and function rather than simulating staging;
- completed most areas or was lacking in one area;
- presented a basic but logical presentation;
- showed some technical knowledge not necessarily applied effectively, eg ineffective or overloaded dimmers.

### **Candidates in the ‘D’ range:**

- provided no directorial statement;
- showed little understanding of the script;
- omitted significant items from the project;

- presented material poorly or incompletely;
- showed problems with technical understanding and ability to communicate ideas.

### **Candidates in the ‘E’ range:**

- gave no directorial statement;
- showed a minimal understanding of the script or the role of the lighting designer;
- presented only some items of the project;
- did not include a set, floor plan of theatre or a cue sheet;
- showed little technical understanding and a simplistic approach.

## **POSTER, PROGRAM, ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL COPY DESIGN**

### **General Comments**

Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the specifications and criteria for this project. However, consideration of the recommendations below is advised for future candidates and their teachers.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that students should:

- for safety reasons, refrain from using glass to frame posters, and avoid the use of any dangerous materials, eg mounting posters on metal or heavy materials such as corrugated iron or using steel covers or corners;
- avoid innovation at the cost of ignoring specifications and criteria, eg presentation of posters as fabric banners, flags, T-shirts, mugs etc.

## **CHECKLIST for POSTER, PROGRAM, ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL COPY DESIGN**

Students and teachers are reminded of the Eleven mandatory items required for this project, as indicated in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

### **Concept One**

- Poster: full colour rendering of at least A3 (420 x 297 mm size) and no larger than A1 (841 x 594 mm);
- Flier;
- Program Cover;
- Print Advertisement for Newspaper.

## **Concept Two**

- Poster: full colour rendering of at least A3 (420 x 297 mm size) and no larger than A1 (841 x 594 mm);
- Flier;
- Program Cover;
- Print Advertisement for Newspaper;
- One brief Media Release;
- One Program Insert: including an imaginary cast, crew, acknowledgements, information about the playwright, and about the history of the play;
- One Indepth Treatment: approx. 500 words.

NB: Designs may be rendered by hand or produced as computer-aided design submitted as hard copy.

## **Candidates in the ‘A’ range:**

- presented a clear and concise statement explaining each design concept;
- conceived two distinct and different concepts with strong visual impact and flair — encapsulating in each concept a visual metaphor for the whole play;
- included all eleven mandatory visual and written items (as per checklist);
- produced a professional style of presentation through appropriate selection of material for program and media release etc;
- showed a thorough understanding of the script presented through visual images and appropriate selection of material for program insert and media release;
- understood the audience to whom the design is communicating and the image that the theatre wished to portray;
- included appropriate and essential information on all publicity items in appropriate layout and form.

## **Candidates in the ‘B’ range:**

- presented two distinct and different concepts with strong visual impact;
- included all eleven mandatory items and copy but with one area lacking consistency of quality eg lack of detail in media treatment or one concept being less effective;
- presented clear and appropriate presentation but lacked ‘finish’;
- showed good understanding of the script reflected through the design concept.

### **Candidates in the ‘C’ range:**

- lacked originality in concept — an obvious choice;
- presented a pedestrian visual impact of each concept, with concepts not being distinct from each other;
- lacked the ability to sustain a visual metaphor;
- relied on computer technology to overcome conceptual difficulties;
- used generic computer images or published photographs from other productions which were presented as original work;
- included all eleven mandatory items but spent insufficient time developing the work;
- showed average quality of execution, eg uneven lettering on posters, crowded layout, priorities given to wrong areas etc;
- did not reflect sufficient understanding or familiarity with the play in their written material;
- did not always include essential information on each item.

### **Candidates in the ‘D’ range**

- did not include all major items, eg submitted only one design concept;
- failed to sustain concepts across the project;
- used generic computer images or published photographs from other productions which were presented as original work;
- did not include all eleven mandatory items or submitted half completed work, eg minimal copy, program missing essential information, no indepth treatment;
- presented a poorly finished product, but with some sense of concept;
- showed poor understanding of the script — or bizarre and inappropriate interpretations of the script;
- had a poor understanding of the role of promotional material;
- included serious flaws in each promotional item which made it fail to work effectively.

### **Candidates in the ‘E’ range:**

- presented only one concept, if any;
- had no real visual concept, simply using titles and images which had little connection with the script;
- used generic computer images or published photographs from other productions which were presented as original work;
- omitted a significant number of the eleven mandatory items;
- were only partially completed and were therefore ineffective;
- submitted a poorly finished product;
- showed little knowledge of the script;



- included written material which did not reflect sufficient understanding or familiarity with the script;
- had no understanding of the purpose of promotional material.

## **SET DESIGN**

### **General Comments**

Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the specifications and criteria for the Individual Project Set Design. However, consideration of the recommendations mentioned below will be of assistance to future candidates.

### **Recommendations**

Future candidates should consider:

- indicating the type of theatre space to be used and location of the audience;
- detailing any changes to be made to the set in the course of the performance;
- including photographs, diagrams or a scene stage plan clearly showing movement of props and scene changes;
- indicating entrances and access to all areas of the stage in the set and floor plans;
- including a human figure to scale to assist indication of proportion;
- ensuring all areas of the set are workable, eg upstairs areas;
- incorporating the atmospheric needs of the play;
- constructing working furniture to scale and avoiding the use of doll's furniture;
- ensuring the design works for the entire play and not just one scene;
- identifying the theatre space but not attempting to build it;
- avoiding reliance on technology to solve scene, or set changes, eg trapdoors, revolves;
- using sturdy material to construct sets (cardboard boxes are not recommended);
- aiming for unity in design concepts appropriate to all scenes and all actors/costumes.

### **CHECKLIST FOR SET DESIGN**

The checklist below from the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook* sets out the mandatory requirements for this project.

*Creation of a design for an aspect of production of one of the playscripts listed on the current Design/Critical Analysis list.*

*A three dimensional model built to a scale of 1:25 metric.*

OR

*A computer-aided design in the scale of 1:25.*

*Architectural floor plans of the design in a scale of 1:25.*

*A theatre floor plan with an indication of location of set on floor plan.*

### **Candidates in the ‘A’ range:**

- presented a separate well-written design statement which was directly linked to the play and justified in execution of the set;
- conceived an immediate and original but appropriate visual impact which was directly linked to the play’s thematic concerns and technical needs;
- developed a symbolic rather than literal staging of the play;
- made an effective use of the theatre space with an understanding and recognition in design of audience sightlines, seating arrangements and the needs of actors, eg appropriate acting areas, exit entrances;
- included all mandatory item particularly floor plans of the theatre with set indicated, model built to 1:25 mm scale, and inclusion of a human figure in a 1:25 mm scale to help establish proportion;
- included floor plans of the stage on a 1:25 mm scale, furniture built to scale.

### **Candidates in the ‘B’ range:**

- presented a separate well-written concise concept accounting for the ongoing action within the play;
- developed a strong visual impact clearly relating to the play’s thematic concerns and technical needs;
- failed to realise problems in one or two areas, eg effective use of space, sightlines;
- were accurate to scale with the model, items of furniture, properties and plans.

### **Candidates in the ‘C’ range:**

- gave only a reasonable accounting for the ongoing action within the design concept;
- used a visual impact that lacked flair and creativity;
- did not find a central metaphor that integrated the play as a whole;
- tended to a literal interpretation of staging such as re-creating all locations in the text rather than working symbolically;
- used the theatre space fairly successfully;
- built the model reasonably to scale, but without evidence of a skilled craftspersons approach;
- provided floor plans of stage but not reasonably to scale.

**Candidates in the ‘D’ range:**

- omitted to account for a proportion of the ongoing action;
- conceived a set which had a limited relationship to the play;
- used a completely literal interpretation of the play;
- used the stage space inappropriately;
- built the model neatly, but not to scale;
- provided no floor plans or entrances or exits for the cast.

**Candidates in the ‘E’ range:**

- indicated no obvious design concept;
- presented a set design that had minimal relationship to the text;
- showed only an elementary understanding of staging;
- showed no sense of scale;
- used impractical ideas which would not be able to be used by actors in a production.

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

### **General Comments**

On the whole, students who choose this option show a high degree of understanding and appreciation of theatre and are very articulate. The best of these projects would make invaluable teaching resources.

Teachers should be commended for the guidance and encouragement given to students through the logbooks – either through corrections of the draft, or as reminder to adhere to criteria for each section.

An increasing concern of examiners, particularly with the research papers, is that some logbooks do not show evidence of research or a drafting process. Discrepancies between a minimal log and a polished project can cast doubts over the authenticity of the work.

### **Recommendations**

For future candidates undertaking Critical Analysis Projects the following recommendations are suggested for consideration:

- be aware of the role, requirements and responsibilities in the area they have chosen to undertake, eg theatre critic, director;
- try to see to a range of live theatre experiences;
- use logbooks to consolidate the process by showing evidence of research or a drafting process;
- demonstrate research skills expected of senior students, such as acknowledging and referencing quotations through footnotes and a bibliography;
- set out material in a logical and organised way in order to answer all the criteria;
- submit all drafts as a part of the final project.

## **PORTFOLIO OF THEATRE CRITICISM**

### **General Comments**

Students generally indicated an awareness of the criteria and specification requirements for this project. There was a marked improvement this year in exposure to a diversity of live theatre experiences, and this process should be encouraged in order to allow students increased opportunities to extend their knowledge and develop critical skills.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that candidates should:

- learn how to write reviews so they are aware of the role, requirements and responsibility of the theatre critic;
- be encouraged to see a variety of theatre;
- use logbooks to consolidate reviews and the reflection process, eg better students used the logbook as a kind of debate between opinions expressed in published reviews and their own interpretations of performances.

## **CHECKLIST FOR PORTFOLIO OF THEATRE CRITICISM**

The checklist below sets out the mandatory requirements for this project as published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

*Critical analysis of at least four live theatre performances attended during the HSC Course.*

*Each critique should be approximately 850 words in length.*

*Analysis should include:*

- *detailed discussion of specific aspects of production;*
- *analysis and interpretation of particular roles;*
- *presentation of particular scenes.*

### **The strongest candidates:**

- showed a balanced and detailed criticism of all the major aspects of a production;
- could use Drama/Theatre terminology in an appropriate and substantiated style;
- wrote in an economic yet eloquent review style;
- incorporated research skills into the review, or either through knowledge of the play, investigation of the style of theatre being performed;
- demonstrated a consistent quality over the four reviews.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- tended to describe the plot rather than analyse how the action on stage contributed to the overall theatrical meaning;
- wrote colloquially, offering personal bias instead of referenced analysis;
- omitted some of the key areas mentioned in project requirements;
- were inconsistent in quality over the four reviews.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- used personal opinion that often gave a confused or misleading picture of the action on stage;
- wrote poorly, with errors that could have been eliminated through careful re-drafting;
- omitted major areas mentioned in the project requirements;
- failed to write the required number of words.

## Sample of a 'A' response

### *The Seagull* by Anton Chekov

On the 13th of March, the Company B production of Anton Chekov's Comedy in Four Acts, *The Seagull*, played at Belvoir Theatre, in Sydney. It is directed by Neil Armfield and displays his keen understanding of Chekov's play. Armfield successfully reveals Chekov's overwhelming sense of tedium and futility in everyday life. The bleak, naturalistic set design and the stark lighting effects add perfectly to the depressing atmosphere that prevails throughout Chekov's script. Unfortunately, Armfield is unable to capture the infinitely important complexities of human relationships, which are crucial to the performance and though we are presented with superb individual performances, it is the lack of cohesion between the cast members which often means that important moments are lost.

Neil Armfield has created an impressive and innovative production for Company B. He states that he wished to incorporate a relaxed atmosphere, more akin to what was done in *'Up The Road'* last year. Because of the necessary 'worldly' aspect of Chekov's plays interpretations can often seem quiet tedious. To counter this, traditional productions tend to focus on using complex sets but these are often very static. Armfield moves away from this by using a new translation and trying to incorporate stylistic devices that make the play 'as accidental as it feels'. This new interpretation has given Chekov's classic a new lease on life, revealing its timeless character.

### Comments

The opening paragraph integrates information (when and where the play was viewed) with an expression of the production's perceived shortcomings which were substantiated when addressing individual performances later in the review. The second paragraph indicated some research by stating Armfield's intention and also elaborates on elements of production mentioned in the introduction. The style is formal, yet engaging and accessible.

## **RESEARCH**

### **General Comments**

In general students displayed sophisticated research and analysis skills in this area. A wide variety of topics were covered.

### **Recommendations**

- Students should liaise with their teachers over the appropriateness of their topic and the careful formulation of the proposal for investigation.
- Logbooks must contain evidence of investigation, reflection and drafts of the final project.

### **CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS**

The checklist below sets out the mandatory requirements for this project as published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

*A 3500 word report showing independent research exploring the chosen area, dealing with a form, style movement or tradition of Drama, or the work of an individual creative artist, performance group or theoretician.*

*May not duplicate work covered in Content Area 4 or 5 or in any other subject for the HSC.*

*Project should include:*

- *documented research or other research methods where appropriate;*
- *bibliographic accuracy in footnotes and bibliography.*

### **The strongest candidates:**

- showed a high degree of personal interest and commitment;
- wrote in the formal yet accessible style of writing expected of a research paper;
- demonstrated thorough and well documented research techniques, including personal approaches, surveys, use of the Internet etc.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- usually lapsed from criticism into description;
- had an inconsistent writing style;
- provided a good deal of information, but only cursory analysis.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- were well under the 3500 word requirement;
- chose an inappropriate topic such as film rather than theatre, eg Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*;

- had not taken sufficient and prepared their work hastily, resulting in incoherent structure;
- transcribed or downloaded information with a negligible attempt at synthesis.

## Samples of high-quality work

### Sample 1. A clear and concise proposal

Proposed Question:

‘How did the elements/features of Dada Performance express the actor/artist’s need to confront the “fatal world” during the years 1916 – 1924? Are there any of these elements/features evident in contemporary theatre practice to confront the audience in the same way?’

### Comment

This sample outlines the specific period to be investigated and the inclusion of the special terms ‘fatal world’, which are later expanded upon in the project, and includes modern theatre so that the whole piece becomes more than just an extended history project.

### Sample 2. An effective introduction

Introduction

Modern Tragedy is neither a rejection nor a simple reiteration of conventional tragedy. It is instead a reinvention of the tragic concept in the context of the twentieth century. The nature of the Tragedy has not changed, but the focus has.

In a culture that places less emphasis on the supernatural, the concept of Fate is redefined in terms of the secular rather than the divine. Eugene O’Neill saw heredity as a modern equivalent to the Greek sense of Fate. In O’Neill’s plays, *Long Days Journey Into Night* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, heredity is as powerful a determining force in the lives of the protagonists as the will of the Gods was in Greek tragedy.

The transformation of Western Civilisation from the feudal to the democratic has extinguished the importance of the tragic hero’s social standing. Modern tragedy tends, instead, to explore the predicament of the common person, paving the way for tragic heroes like Arthur Miller’s Willy Loman. In modern, complex society, tragedy has expanded to become a criticism of a social order that denies characters, like Willy Loman, their ‘personal dignity’.<sup>1</sup>

The reduction in heroes’ social status has changed the nature of tragic victory. A new idea of tragic victory has been advanced. Revelation and exultation are no longer a required conclusion; the often futile struggle towards these two ends is a tragic victory in itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Arthur ‘Tragedy and The Common Man’ in *Two Modern American Tragedies*. Edited by John D. Hurrell. New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961. p. 39



## 2. TRAGEDY

The acceptance, rejection or re-evaluation of Aristotle's *Poetics* has formed the basis of all subsequent tragic theories. Aristotle's major requirement revolved around plot, 'the soul of tragedy'.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle deduced that tragedy: ... is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude<sup>3</sup> ... A perfect tragedy should be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation ... A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal (4) or by Recognition (5) or by both...<sup>4</sup>

### Comments

This candidate quickly traces the development of some complex theatrical ideas and provides a sound foundation for the direction of the project.

The writing style and the footnoting also exemplify the standard expected for a research project.

### Sample 3. An effective conclusion

Erwin Piscator's political development led him to seek three main qualities in his productions, which were immediacy, totality and authenticity.

Piscator and Brecht both complemented each other's work and Brecht obviously had respect for Piscator. They were often linked to each other throughout their careers and Brecht said, 'Piscator's theatre was the most radical. I took part in all his experiments and every single one was aimed to increase the theatre's value as education'.

Brecht's comment about taking part in all of Piscator's experiments was typical of his little modesty.

One of the main contributing factors to Piscator's success was his impressive use of multi-media effects and unique settings.

Piscator also had the courage to present controversial political plays which often reflected significant political developments going on at the same time.

Many of Piscator's contemporaries influenced and encouraged his style of directing. Those contemporaries included Reinhardt, Expressionists, Leopold Jessner, Meyerhold, Einstein, Chaplin and the Bauhaus in Dessau.

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2 Aristotle, *The Poetics*, Translated by S.H.Butcher. (online) available on <http://libertyonlin.hypermall.com/Aristotle/Poetics=Body.html>.

3 In the *Poetics*, Aristotle states that, 'we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad'.

4 Aristotle says: 'Reversal of the Situation is by a change by which the action veers round.'

Many directors and playwrights in the 20th century have also been strongly influenced and inspired by Piscator's directing such as director Peter Brook, playwright Caryl Churchill and the multi-talented Dario Fo. Piscator had a strong influence over 20th century American Political Theatre for example 'Acto-Vietnam Campesino' (1970) showed a Piscator-like sequence of slides showing Vietnam, farm labour, crop dusting and corpses.

It has been questioned whether theatre can change societies opinions, Piscator demonstrated how theatre can appeal in order to accelerate the transformation of society but his theatre was not totally influential as he seems to have little effect in preventing the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich whom he despised.

'Piscator's theatre had a progressive political purpose, it's intentions were to produce plays that would seize on contemporary events and act politically'. Erwin Piscator was a strong voice of his time and has made many significant contributions to German, European and Worlds theatre within this century.

His main contributions came through his imaginative directing which incorporated a wide variety of multi-media effects and developing amazing unique settings.

Piscator was a largely unsung, dramatic innovator whose influences have been hidden and ignored due to how controversial and how extremely politically didactic his productions were, whilst Brecht, 'the one communist dramatist with any international reputation,' has been often highly recognised.

## **Comments**

This student draws together all the various strands examined in a project and arrives at a synthesised and justified summary of the often underrated contributions of this practitioner.

## **DIRECTOR'S PRODUCTION PREPARATION**

### **General Comments**

This is a difficult project to undertake considering the level of imagination of concept and organisation of material required. However, some of the results produced by students this year were of the highest quality.

### **Recommendations**

Students attempting this project need to ensure that:

- all aspects of the criteria are covered and are clearly labelled in the final project;
- the logbook should not contain material that should be included in the notebook;
- pre-production notes should only apply to the work in question. For example, there is no need to download copious information about George Bernard Shaw, only what is relevant to *St Joan*;
- a unit summary is a division of the work into scenes or beats, revealing the unfolding nature of dramatic action and structure;
- blocking or annotation is required only for key scenes, not the whole play.

## **CHECKLIST FOR DIRECTOR'S PRODUCTION PREPARATION**

The checklist below sets out the mandatory requirements for this project as published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

*A folio of work based on one of the texts listed on the current Design/Critical Analysis Text List.*

*An outline of the Design Concept.*

*Pre-production notes describing and explaining the approach to work being adopted by the Director.*

*A unit summary of the work and the division of work into units of action.*

*An annotated script of one Act and production notes indicating possible blocking of key sequences and scenic effects.*

*Analysis of Characters, discussing motivation, physicality and relationships where appropriate.*

*Notes on research undertaken on the work with particular reference to its social context, its author and his/her other works.*

### **The strongest candidates:**

- had an imaginative, sometimes audacious flair in articulating a theatrical vision for the play;
- had a grasp on the role of the director and could structure their notebook accordingly;
- showed a profound understanding of the work in question;
- were clearly and coherently organised.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- tended to describe what was already in the play, much like an English essay, rather than articulate a theatrical vision;
- had a vision that was unclear difficult to stage;
- dealt with aspects of the criteria in a very cursory way.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- left out major portions of the criteria, most notably a unifying concept;
- had a good deal of colourful filler for design, but minimal analysis;
- had major problems with organisation of material.

### **Samples of high-quality director's notebook**

#### **Sample 1. A clearly articulated directorial concept**

##### Directorial Concept

Critics have commented that unlike many of the Black playwrights of her time, Lorraine Hansberry's political messages are not militant. Rather, her skill lies in the gentle revelation of meaning. While the plot of 'a Raisin in the Sun' is obvious, Hansberry's thematic concerns are more implicit, integrated in such a way that interpretation is left to the individual.

One can accept Hansberry's play on a superficial level or examine the wider implications of it. Superficial, 'Raisin' is about inter-personal relationships and conflicts within the Younger family. It is about what happens to this small black family challenged by racism. Hansberry examines the effects of self-delusion.

Look a bit deeper and we realise that Hansberry's portrayal of the Younger family is an analogy for the struggle of African America as a whole. It becomes apparent that each character portrays an aspect of the African American position in society: In Mama's wisdom, Hansberry's message is that the binds of oppression have served only strengthen the values, morals and ideologies of the people; Walter's self-realisation and the strength which results from it symbolises the spiritual strength which can be gained from black consciousness; Beneatha's interest in her heritage reflects hope for the future. Through her women, Hansberry emphasises not only the importance of women in black culture, but the strength of women in society as a whole, which at the time she wrote the play was being denied.

In a letter to her mother, Hansberry wrote, '... it is a play that tells the truth about people, Negroes and life and I think it will help a lot of people to understand how we are just as complicated as they are — and just as mixed up — but above all, that we have among our miserable and downtrodden ranks — people who are the very essence of human dignity. That is what, after all the laughter and tears, the play is supposed to say ...'

Hansberry's play has universal significance. 'a Raisin in the Sun' can be looked at as being about more than just the Youngers, or even the plight of black Americans in recent centuries. Hansberry lays emphasis on humanity as a whole. She exposes prejudice as a feature of all societies, whether

it be racial, sexual or otherwise. The underlying theme of 'raisin' is the capacity of man to fight, survive and possibly even win the fight for justice and equality. Hansberry examines the potential pride to create divisive barriers within society, and conversely the importance of pride in maintaining cultural heritage and continuity.

When the play opened in 1959, the first play by a black woman to be produced on Broadway, Hansberry said, '... I like to think that I wrote the play out of a specific intellectual point of view. I believe that real drama has to do with the audience involvement and achieving the emotional transformation of people on the stage.' Her work is evocative and thought-provoking. It is only after we have appreciated her play for its entertainment value and explicit themes, do we come to realise the potency and universality of the implicit themes.

Voila!

With my childhood in South Africa, the land of apartheid, I have played naive observer of true racial vilification. I have seen the way mankind exploits the internal barriers which decide us. Hansberry was accurate in saying that racial intolerance has its foundations in the human tendencies of ignorance and compliance.

Society may have changed, but humanity hasn't. Ignorance and compliance are perpetual. Oppression will always exist, be it black, white or otherwise. It is my intention to enhance audience understanding of the universality and timelessness of Hansberry's thematic concerns.

In order to examine the worldwide oppression of blacks in recent times, I have enlarged the focus of the play to include the countries of South Africa and Australia as well as Hansberry's America. This will be done mainly through projection of still frames depicting black suffering over the years, coupled with relevant freeze-frames and the use of American rhythm and blues music, South African black harmonies and the sound of the Australian didgeridoo. Although it is set 'somewhere between World War II and 1959', Hansberry's play reads as though it was set in today's society. There are no specific references which allude to incidents of the past. It is timeless. Both pictures and music have been taken from sources spanning the latter half of this century. Together with minor updating of costume and the set as the play proceeds, I intend to emphasise the timelessness and global significance of the piece and the fact that although written prior to the successes of the American Civil Rights Movement, it remains a truthful depiction of racism today.

Hansberry once said, '... one cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know and react to the miseries which afflict this world.'

Through photographic images, music, costumes and set, Hansberry's inferred message will be conveyed.

## **Comments**

This student shows a personal commitment to the project, an awareness of the wider political and theatrical ramifications of the work and sound research on which to base the vision.

## **Sample 2. Character analysis**

Jack Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans

### **Interpretation**

Dunois is as close as Shaw gets in the play to creating a full-blown romantic hero, but he is still a prosaic realist. This down-to-earth, practical quality of his is a fine complement to Joan's hot-headedness: if Joan is fire, then Dunois is steel. There is a powerful chemistry between the two of them, and it is true that Dunois is Joan's only friend over the course of the play. Even if he is forced to abandon her to the mercy of the Church at the end though, because he understands the world better than she. Nevertheless Dunois is an admirable character, witty but not pretentious, courageous and intelligent. The audience should find it easy to believe that he is a natural charmer of ladies and an inspirational leader.

### **Motivation**

To see France completely freed of the English, but he wants it to be a true and sure victory. He knows that the only way to do this is by making intelligent, rational and considered tactical decisions. He believes just as much as anyone in the inspirational power of Joan, but knows at the same time that it is not the only thing that will win the war for them. Eventually this is the reason that he must leave Joan to her doom.

### **Physicality**

Dunois has a fine and upstanding posture, but a free and easy disposition which makes him seem friendly and casual. His self-assurance is not forced but rather a side-effect of his cheerfulness. He is not, however, vapid or shallow; he is often serious and contemplative.

### **Costuming**

Dunois is always in his well-used armour, prepared for battle. The colour scheme of his clothes is a deep royal blue, suggestive of his nobility, but is of a simple cut reflecting his humility.

His broadsword is distinctive in that it looks tarnished and dented through use, unlike those of the other French lords who wear them primarily for show.

### **Relationships**

- |            |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joan:      | a soldierly comradeship, a respect and friendship, but also an undeniable attraction. He settles for acting as a brother figure.                                                      |
| The Count: | He is friendly and respectful, content to let things run as they are, and is quiet about his achievements but acknowledges that they owe most of their gain and glory to his efforts. |

## **Comments**

This kind of approach is helpful for students when working on realistic or naturalistic plays. The use of Stanislavskian terminology to provide a theatrical interpretation of character.

# SCRIPTWRITING

## General Comments

The examiners felt that there continued to be an overall understanding by the candidature of aspects of the structure, characterisation, setting and theatrical styles which were needed to write a complete and cohesive play. There was a pleasing variety of topics that showed that students were prepared to take risks with both form and content.

Candidates considering scriptwriting should ensure they:

- have read scripts from a variety of theatrical styles;
- experience a variety of live theatre and are able to communicate adequately in the written form;
- are fully aware of the practicalities of production for the theatre.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that candidates should:

- be careful to follow the criteria for this project area, particularly in regard to length and setting out. Scripts should be proofread for spelling, grammar, punctuation and to ensure uniform format throughout.
- be aware of the importance of the recording process of the development of the script in their logbooks. The logbooks should reflect the original concept, the development, drafting and refining of the script. Logbooks should also show evidence of the teacher's monitoring the development of the project.

## CHECKLIST FOR SCRIPTWRITING

The checklist below sets out the mandatory requirements for this project as published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook*.

*A script for a complete play for a live presentation.*

*The script may be original or an adaptation of a short story or other non-dramatic work.*

*The script should be typed with double spacing, preferably in 10–12 font and 15–20 pages of A4 size.*

*Character lists, dialogue formatting, and all other scriptwriting conventions should be followed.*

*There should be evidence in the logbook of preliminary drafts.*

*The Logbook must be submitted with the script.*

*Stage settings or complicated scenic, technical effects should be described in sufficient detail to indicate that they are practicable in the production of the play.*

### **The strongest candidates:**

- developed original ideas rather than adapting from another form;
- showed evidence of research and logbooks which also contained a great deal of research about the subject of the script and characterisation;
- showed a good understanding of the audience;
- used dramatic tension to engage the audience;
- showed evidence of good editing and workshopping;
- structured the piece well, with a clear setting of place, time and plot;
- tended to keep to one set and did not make complex leaps in time and place;
- did not rely on sound effects or complex staging, but used them to enhance the drama;
- allowed characters to reveal themselves by incorporating elements other than dialogue and by talking about things other than themselves;
- developed characters that were believable with appropriate language and behaviour;
- were able to produce a strong and appropriate ending.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- tended to write stories concentrating on plot and narrative;
- showed limited development of dramatic tension which often led to predictable outcomes;
- had difficulty indicating the passing of time from scene to scene;
- showed limited characterisation and character interaction often relying on monologues;
- used stereotyped characters and materials.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- submitted scripts which were poorly constructed and confusing;
- wrote film scripts which were not suitable for live presentation;
- gave imprecise stage directions, if any;
- included too many scene or set changes;
- used too many characters;
- gave little or no character description or setting;
- ended the play abruptly.

### **Samples of high quality work**

The following samples of student work reflect various qualities desirable in 'Above Average Projects'.



## Sample 1. Demonstrates a good beginning and a worthy ending

### Scene 1

A quiet street. OLDER ANNA walks on with a violin case. She walks slowly across from the left, upstage, to downstage, right. She opens the case and lovingly takes out a red scarf, she fingers it gently then puts it around her neck. She then takes her violin out carefully and begins to play a soft, sad melody. The music fades gradually with the lights until it is silent and dark.

### Scene 8

(Downstage, to the right) OLDER ANNA still on the street playing. A young couple walk slowly by, arm in arm. They are so involved in each other that they do not notice her and pass by oblivious. ANNA's melody starts to slow down, she then takes off her red scarf, wraps it lovingly round her violin and puts them in her case. As she snaps it shut, the lights go down.

The End

## Sample 2. Demonstrates an impressive character list

### CHARACTER LIST

- Mary Evans:** Aged 18 years. Restless, impulsive, energetic, slight build. Dressed in school uniform. Friend of Josephine.
- Josephine Shotton:** Aged 18 years. Daughter of Headmaster. Conformist, anxious, self-conscious, wears glasses. Dressed in school uniform.
- George:** Aged 19 years. Dirty, dishevelled, self absorbed, lacking in social graces, wears dirty overalls.
- Charles Shotton:** Josephine's father and Headmaster of St Peter's College, a private co-educational school. Tall, conservative, strict, inflexible. Wears a suit.

## Sample 3. Demonstrates a strong opening

### SCENE 1

*This scene takes place in the group therapy room. It is about midday but it is dark, as the curtains are shut. The only light is the spotlight on Clive. There are five chairs, in the shape of an arch, just left of centre stage. There is one chair on the middle — centre stage, which when the person is sitting on it, faces right, directly looking at the other chairs, this is Henrietta's seat. Next to Henrietta's seat is a small coffee type table, on it is an intercom, a jug of water and some glasses. There is a window that is in the centre of the stage's rear wall. There is a door in the back right corner, it actually cuts off the corner.*

*Clive is standing in the centre of the group therapy room. There is a bottle on the ground, full of straws. Clive is standing above the bottle with one straw in his hand. He holds the straw up to the light as if examining it. He brings it to eye level and stares at it for about 5 seconds. He then takes the straw and places it to his lips, giving it a 'good luck kiss'. He then holds the straw between both palms and aims it over the top of the open bottle. He looks to the heavens, looks back at the*

bottle and finally releases the straw. It misses the bottle. There is silence. Clive is completely still, staring at the bottle for about five seconds, after which he looks up with his teeth gritted, eyes shut and face screwed up in anger, looking once again, and shaking his hands towards the heavens.

Clive: *Laughing, but angry, (pacing back and forth in front of the bottle).* Can you believe it! *(No longer laughing)* The last one, the last bloody one! And it missed! *(Laughing again)*

Oh well it only took me *(fuming again)* THREE HOURS, THREE BLOODY HOURS!

*(In sheer rage, he picks up the straw and holds it at eye level)* YOU BASTARD, YOU LITTLE BASTARD! Three hours I wasted and you, you come along and blow it all away.

*(In total rage he rips the straw into pieces and begins to eat it fiercely, he then turns towards the bottle, grunts ferociously and charges toward it, grunts again and throws it at the closed door).* *(Clive, still raging moves quickly towards the chairs and is just about to throw one when Henrietta enters, wearing a white Doctor type gown)*

#### **Sample 4. Demonstrates effective layout and stage directions**

Jo: Yeah, fidgeting, just ... I don't know, sit still or something. I'm trying to do this 'cos integration' thing.

Mary: *(Sits down next to Jo rigidly. Long pause. Jo looks at her)* See I'm no fidget. *(Laughs)* Why are you studying maths anyway? We just finished doing a maths exam.

Jo: That was a week ago.

Mary: Yeah exactly *(Pause)* How did you go anyway?

Jo: What?

Mary: In maths.

Jo: Oh yeah, not bad. Gee, what was it? *(Looks through her folder, finally finds an exam paper and looks at it)* That's right, 42.

Mary: *(Stops playing with her ruler)* Geez, give us a look. *(Takes paper)* That's incredible.

Jo: It's not incredible.

Mary: It is. Walsh only got 39 this time and even he was happy. *(Does a sum with a calculator)* That's 84%.

Jo: I know, 42 out of 50

Mary: But don't you always like to check with the calculator, you know, just to be sure? I hate being unsure of things. There's no mistake with the calculator. You actually see your mark in print on a screen.

Jo: *(Mock serious)* Yeah technology is amazing these days.

Mary: You know what I mean. Don't you ever think that?

Jo: *(Joking )* No. Surprisingly. I've never thought of calculators like that until just now. *(Laughs)* Let me get on with this. *(She starts to study).*

Mary: *(Flipping through paper)* I thought you couldn't do time payments.

Jo: Well, I can't, not really.

Mary: Mm, *(Looks at paper)* Yeah, obviously, 12 out of 12.

Jo: Occasionally you just get it, I don't know, lucky.

## **Sample 5. Demonstrates an exemplary setting**

### **Setting**

*The play all occurs in the one room. The office of the psychiatrist, Richard. The set is very minimal, with a generic leather psychiatrist's couch in the centre of the stage, which is lit with a spotlight for most of the play. Behind that sits a large, ornate leather chair. Apart from these two pieces of furniture, there is nothing on the stage.*

# **VIDEO**

## **General Comments**

Candidates demonstrated a familiarity with the specifications and criteria for the Individual Project Video.

## **Logbooks**

The candidates' logbooks for the video project should continue to record the process of experimentation from pre-production to post-production decisions. The logbook should be a detailed, journalised account of the process of making the video, with regular critical reflections on the work in progress.

The storyboard and post production editing script should fit into the logbooks and be identified either at the front or the back of the logbook.

Teachers' comments help in the verification process of the candidate's work. Drama teachers are encouraged to initial their logbook comments rather than sign their names.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that candidates should:

- produce a practice video prior to attempting the HSC Video entry;
- remove the in-camera time and date display;
- ensure the sound level of the recording and post production is such that it can be easily heard and is consistent across all scenes sound quality is just as important as visual quality;
- present the best sound and picture quality. The new tape used for the original shoot should always be the tape from which the edited/final version (also a new tape) is constructed. Any subsequent versions must be constructed from the original shooting tape or master, not from another edited version. Each time a candidate dubs from an edited tape the sound and picture quality is reduced.
- put down a control track on the new video before editing onto it;
- edit the final video onto the beginning of a new tape;
- rewind the tape to the beginning before submitting;
- remove the auto focus quality on the camera while shooting;
- remove the tab from the back of the video cassette to ensure it is not accidentally taped over;
- clearly identify the video tape as well as the tape cover with the title;
- submit a video that is a work of fiction, not documentary, music clip or 'real TV';
- produce a video which engages the viewer.

## **CHECKLIST FOR VIDEO**

The checklist below is published in the *1997 HSC Examination Prescribed Text, Topics, Projects and Works Handbook* and is included for student and teacher consideration of the mandatory requirements for this project. Familiarisation with the checklist is strongly recommended for students attempting this project.

### **VIDEO**

*Preparation of a short but complete narrative video drama developed by the student.*

*An edited video 5–7 minutes in length in VHS format.*

### **LOGBOOK**

*Must show pre-production development.*

*Storyboard detailing narrative, types of shots, sound track and special effects.*

*Shooting script with dates, description of shots, location and notes on continuity.*

*A post-production editing script.*

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

*Students must undertake the following roles: Writer, Director, Editor.*

*The student cannot act in the Video themselves, nor have someone else complete the camera work for them.*

*The quality of on camera acting is not taken into consideration in marking.*

### **The strongest candidates:**

- established setting character and mood in opening shots and images;
- demonstrated an understanding of the need to present establishing shots of a location;
- presented simple stories that were coherent, using appropriate video language and utilised their wide knowledge and experience of film and television drama;
- achieved satire and comedy in scripts, filming and post-production processes when appropriate to the genre of the work;
- edited stories to create pace;
- produced a well-edited work closer to the 5 minute length than the 7 minute end of the range;
- considered the impact of the sound track on the dramatic intent of the story and recognised the importance of picture quality;
- presented the progression of one idea in their logbook, meeting the challenge of this idea creatively rather than switching to another idea.

**The weaker candidates:**

- produced a video that lacked coherence in its narrative construction and failed to engage the viewer;
- produced a video that was a documentary rather than the required work of fiction in the form of video drama;
- gave little consideration to costume, setting and location;
- presented stereotypical characters;
- showed lack of familiarity with the editing processes;
- produced too many wipes, strobos, tracers and dissolve effects without furthering the action of the fiction;
- used gratuitous violence, mimicking the style of Tarantino and some television cop shows, thus neglecting a creative interpretation of their story.

# THE WRITTEN PAPER

## SECTION 1

### Drama and Theatre in Australian Societies and Cultures

#### Question 1: Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre

Texts set for study:

Roger Bennett, *Funerals and Circuses*

Jimmy Chi and Knuckles, *Bran Nue Dae*

Jack Davis et al, *Plays from Black Australia*

Robert J Merritt, *The Cakeman*

- (a) **In Aboriginal theatre, familiar forms of white theatre are used to say new things. Discuss this statement, with reference to TWO plays from the set texts.**

#### The strongest candidates:

- combined an understanding of ‘white’ theatre conventions as appropriated by black playwrights and extended this to include their effectiveness on stage;
- showed a sophisticated understanding of the ‘new’ issues presented in the plays;
- confidently addressed ways in which the playwrights’ choices of familiar theatrical techniques enhanced audience experience of the ideas being expressed.

#### Candidates in the middle range:

- referred only to content and issues and described rather than analysed the theatrical forms being used;
- confidently described black theatre but were at times confused regarding familiar forms of ‘white’ theatre that had been appropriated by the playwrights;
- referred to plays in insufficient detail or focused heavily on one play as opposed to the two required.

#### The weaker candidates:

- retold the story of the plays;
- could neither attempt to define nor acknowledge what was ‘white’ or ‘black’ theatre;
- tended to report lists of features they hoped related to the question;

- confused the plays;
- showed little understanding of the plays in production.

**(b) Contemporary Aboriginal theatre often presents indigenous characters living in the context of a mixed society.**

**Choose ONE play you have studied from the set texts and discuss how it explores this experience on stage.**

## General Comment

More candidates responded to this question than to Part (a).

### The strongest candidates:

- discussed the issues and how they were explored on stage;
- were able to sustain detailed and perceptive comments on the chosen play.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- lacked enough specific detail on one play;
- tended to describe content and report action or plot without linking these details to the experience that was created on stage;
- were confused at times in their discussion of the play or referred to more than one play;
- produced a very simplistic and generalised response;
- lapsed into storytelling and character profiles.

### The weaker candidates:

- did not refer to the text or presentation of material on the stage;
- confused characters and plays.

## Sample of an 'A' response to Question 1 (a)

*Roger Bennett's Funerals and Circuses and Jimmy Chi's Bran Nue Dae are two contemporary pieces of Aboriginal theatre which make use of familiar forms of 'white' theatre to say new things.*

*Both plays make use of song and dance to emphasise their message of hope and reconciliation. This familiar, enjoyable convention of 'white' theatre enables both playwrights to deal with more controversial and sensitive issues such as land rights, racial violence and black deaths in custody, on a more indirect level.*

*The role of music and song in both plays exemplifies the use of a familiar form of white theatre, to say new things. In Funerals and Circuses the songs of Paul Kelly evolve out of the action and dialogue of the characters, as opposed to a full scale musical where the action of the play stops*



for the music. In this sense, Kelly's songs are able to grant the character a stronger identity and strength, which they may not have had without the songs. In Bennett's play, the songs are essential to expressing the themes of racial conflict that lie at the heart of the story. When Joseph sings 'Deadly' he exclaims 'They tried to break my spirit, put a blanket on my soul'. These words relate directly to the issue of black deaths in custody — often Aboriginal prisoners used blankets to hang themselves. Likewise the words of the inmates in the song 'Linjoo Blues' ring loud in the ears of the audience — stop your messing with my head' — words that resonate the way in which a white culture has been forced upon the Aboriginal people. Evidently these issues are newly being dealt with in theatre and Aboriginal playwrights like Bennett, have discovered that an effective way to express them to a mainstream audience is to use 'white' forms of theatre like music and song.

Although it is certainly a more light-hearted play than *Funerals and Circuses*, Jimmy Chi's piece, *Bran Nue Dae* also has some important themes to express. A full-scale musical — the first Aboriginal one to ever grace the stage — *Bran Nue Dae* combines a diverse mix of musical styles from gospel — 'Children of Glory' — to country and western, 'Is You Mah Baby', and rock and roll. Yet, however vibrant and catchy these songs may be, they possess often startling critical wit. When Willie sings 'There's nothing I would rather be than Aborigine, and watch you take my land away', in 'Nothing I Would Rather Be', his words drip with sarcasm, and Chi is evidently trying to nudge his audience gently to an awareness of Aboriginal issues and culture without throwing hard-hitting political statements in their face. Yet the conciliatory nature of *Bran Nue Dae* is where its success lies, and Chi understands that using the appealing 'white' theatre form of musical theatre, he will appeal to a wider audience and be able to introduce them, to new things.

In *Funerals and Circuses* Bennett also makes use of the 'promenade' style of theatre to appeal to an open-minded audience. His staging moves the audience from the pub set in the foyer, to the main street set in the theatre, and then back again to the foyer for another scene in the pub. By utilising this form of 'white' theatre, Bennett is aiming to appeal to an audience who are open-minded and willing to get involved in the action of the play. In this sense Bennett hopes that the audience will also be more open-minded to the themes of racial conflict and hope for a better future which he so evidently wishes to explore. These issues are new themes which are being explored in contemporary Aboriginal theatre and are confronting enough for an audience to feel threatened by, if not set in familiar 'white' theatre forms. Bennett obviously understands this and has written his play to accommodate this circumstance.

However, while it is evident that both playwrights do make use of 'white' theatre forms to express their messages and say new things, they have also been heavily influenced by Aboriginal culture and intersperse this in their plays. Both *Funerals and Circuses* and *Bran Nue Dae* have been densely based on the Aboriginal experiences of the playwrights and actors. *Funerals and Circuses* was in fact devised through a series of improvisation sessions that Bennett underwent with the actors. In this sense the actors were able to bring their own experiences to the play, granting it a greater authenticity and a strong cultural essence. This technique is also used to compose traditional Aboriginal dance, and thus *Funerals and Circuses* is able to directly reflect Aboriginal culture. Also in *Funerals and Circuses*, the 'fourth wall' of a conventional theatre has been shattered and greater audience intimacy created. Both these effects have evidently made the task of presenting new ideas to the audience a lot easier.

Chi's *Bran Nue Dae* relies heavily on its light-hearted nature to succeed in expressing new ideas about Aboriginal race relations to the audience. Unlike the hard-hitting Aboriginal theatre of Davis, contemporary Aboriginal theatre concentrates on emphasising this message of hope, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the 'Finale' song of the play ... 'On the way to a Bran Nue Dae!'.

*Chi is also aware of the need to reach out to the mass audience and while the set seems elaborate, complete with the ponds of water, it is accessible to any environment and was even performed on grass with a ring of flares marking the stage.*

*Essentially both plays resonate Aboriginal influence and it is evident that while the playwrights made use of 'white' theatre forms, they also intend to appeal to a mass audience through the vibrancy of Aboriginal culture.*

*Both plays present us with the usual conventions of any 'white' script-a-plot, a conflict and an ending. In Funerals and Circuses we are thrown into a scene seething with racial conflict. The dialogue of characters such as Kev highlight this: 'I told you not to go to any nigger wedding'. Bennett's stage directions also inform us that the main road 'divides black from white' and the language is also blunt and sometimes brutal in expressing its message. However, as readers and as audience, we cannot deny that these new ideas and themes come through. Likewise in Bran Nue Dae, the general movement of the play is familiar to us. We meet Willie who, expelled from Missionary School in Perth, begins his journey home to Broome. Along the way he meets up with Uncle Tadpole, and two pot-seeking hippies, Marijuana Mary and Slippery. In the end all characters discover they are related — a sneaky metaphor Chi has created to express that all Australians, whether black or white, are family. Thus these themes and new ideas come through to us via conventions and theatre forms that are undoubtedly familiar to the audience.*

*In the contemporary Aboriginal plays, Funerals and Circuses and Bran Nue Dae the respective playwrights, Roger Bennett and Jimmy Chi, have utilised many forms of white theatre to say new things to the audience which revolve around themes based on Aboriginal issues as controversial as land rights and black deaths in custody. For both playwrights it is essential to make use of these 'white' forms of theatre so they can appeal to a mainstream audience of white Australians and effect their views about black/white relations.*

## **QUESTION 2: Theatre in Education**

Texts set for study:

Manuel Ashton, *Fossils*

Nick Enright, *A Property of the Clan*

David Holman, *No Worries: Three Plays for Children*

Peta Murray, *Spitting Chips*

**(a) Writers and performers in Theatre in Education set out to make the subject matter in their plays relevant to their audiences.**

**What techniques do the plays you have studied use to achieve this aim?**

### **General Comments**

- Option (a) was by far the most popular question.
- Responses generally displayed clear understanding and knowledge.
- Some responses made valid and insightful comparisons between the plays.

- Most candidates wrote confidently about the intentions of the playwrights.
- Option (b) tended to lead less able students towards generalisations as it did not require students to refer specifically to stylistic elements.

**The strongest candidates:**

- referred to the plays as a whole rather than just listing the techniques as examples;
- displayed a sophisticated understanding of the links between theatrical techniques and relevance of subject matter to a younger audience;
- discussed the actions of both writers and performers.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- lacked detail or focused heavily on only one play;
- discussed relevant content in plays without referring to the techniques used.

**The weaker candidates:**

- retold the plot of the plays only;
- retold information about Theatre in Education with no reference to the question.

**(b) ‘Any good theatre will of itself be educational — that is when it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience, when it makes us look afresh at the world, when it extends our notion of who we are.’**

**Discuss this statement in relation to TWO of the Theatre in Education plays you have studied.**

**The strongest candidates:**

- dealt specifically with all aspects of the quote yet approached their answers holistically.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- discussed the concept of the educational nature of Theatre in Education but did not refer to ‘initiates’, ‘extends’ and ‘questions’.

**The weaker candidates:**

- did not refer to the question specifically;
- retold the plot of the plays.

### Sample of an 'A' response to Question 2 (b):

*Tony Jackson's statement is an essentially apt summary of the objective of Theatre-in-Education. Indeed, to use his words, both the plays I have studied ultimately lead to a 'questioning process' where both playwrights raise discussion and force us to think about the issues their plays explore. In David Holman's No Worries he makes us look afresh at the world and the challenge for Matty in adaptation. In Nick Enright's A Property of the Clan he questions, I feel, mateship. More emphatically, he makes us look at the world of Blackrock and questions the way we label and discriminate people. Both plays use theatrical techniques to achieve these objectives as they both provide thought-provoking intent in the educational context.*

*The method Holman uses in No Worries to question us and make us 'look afresh at the world we live in' is through the use of the Singers, sounds and other techniques. Firstly though, I think it is important to define the term Theatre-in-Education, as defined by its founders Gordon Vallins and Tony Richardson in the 1960's — 'a theatre of ideas, simple and imaginative that communicate with the children in their own environment'. Indeed, by making the central protagonist of each play roughly the same age as the target audience, both plays are able to grasp our attention and force us to think about the issues because of the vernacular settings, especially in The Property of the Clan. However, by the end of the play it seems we are encouraged to construct our own views from the evidence the play provides. In No Worries Holman initially engages the young audience before the 'questioning process' begins. Before any dialogue is spoken, there is a stage direction,*

*'The cast mingle with the young audience and introduce themselves and chat'. Furthermore, the first line in the play is 'G'day' by the Singers, attempting to involve the young audience in the world of the play. That way, Holman is able to explore the issues he wants us to think about as we watch the play.*

*Enright's Property of the Clan begins with an immediately identifiable setting for a teenage audience — an instant picture of 'the world we live in'. This vernacular setting is very important in this play because it draws the audience into its own environment. Quite deliberately Enright begins with a classroom scene where Glen talks about a direct, relevant issue of our society — Aboriginal dislocation — '... they were separated from their own culture and its traditions. And they were conditioned ...' indeed Glen provides a portent for what the teenagers of Blackrock become, 'conditioned' by the way they have been brought up, for example, Jared's homophobic attitude. In this first scene, Glen is also called a 'spock' for saying something intellectual. We find later that Glen stands outside the male stereotype and is labelled discriminately for being like that (something Enright questions later in the play).*

*So, clearly, the first scene in A Property of the Clan establishes a vernacular setting for the audience, which makes it easier for us later in the play to 'look afresh at the world' and 'examine our notion of who we are'.*

*I feel Holman emphasises the challenges of 'adaptation' for not only Matty, but for her parents and for Binh. The technique of using the Singers is particularly effective in this instance, firstly acting as the transition between the two 'worlds' as Dad hoses that 'country smell' off the ute, and sharing the pain that Matty feels as she left '... it was then the pain that started up again; she would see them nevermore ...'*

*So, if any part of the young audience is confused in the action, they have the words of the Singers for an indication of the mood and tone of the scenes through the slow melodies and pace of the music.*

*Holman uses sounds in the city to indicate contrasts and multicultural diversity, and bright lights to emphasise the difference between the country and the city. Matty responds to the challenge of adaptation by turning mute and phlegmatic. Here I feel Holman forces us to think about the challenge for an eight year old of fitting in a strange place. Furthermore, he shows us that adults too are vulnerable to change, as Dad says to Matty, 'Look, Matilda, do you think we're having it easy?'. He suggests a different view of a world, where adults are not always the 'bad' people that some young people see them. Binh also faces the challenge of adapting, indicated clearly in the play through her use of the Vietnamese language.*

*By the end of the play, when the two people who originally did not fit in, come together in unity and friendship, Holman ultimately forces us to think about the challenge of adaptation, and our response to it, because as Holman himself suggests 'there is a kid, or was a kid, inside all of us'.*

*The aspect of A Property of the Clan that raises most discussion is often the issue of prejudice and discrimination. The way these issues are presented in the play have the capacity to make us 'look afresh at the world' and 'our notion of who we are'. For example, in one of the classroom scenes, that ironically 'educate' and 'question' the characters in the scene in an educational context, we see Rachel talking about this particular issue. The teacher's response is: 'We're discovering that prejudice and discrimination are based on assumptionsÉ it's your race, your looks, your gender, your beliefs that make you vulnerable'. Indeed, looking at the dramatic structure, the scene following this sees Jared labelling Glen a 'suss-dog' for standing outside the male stereotype — or one who does not drink, chew gum, surf or have sex so early. More emphatically, Jared's assessment of Glen is entirely based on other people's assumptions, as he follows this up with 'they reckon ...' Furthermore, he dislikes being labelled an 'idiot' himself after Rachel's thought-provoking speech in the scene preceding.*

*This issue of labels and discrimination is presented provocatively, assisted by the use of typical teenage language and an identifiable setting. It seems in both plays, that the limited use of properties assist us to respond to the issues in a non-literal and imaginative way, rather than with our preconceptions. So, Enright is able to force us think about the way we label or discriminate on the basis of appearances or actions or beliefs. As a result he makes us examine our notion of who we are.*

*In conclusion, No Worries and A Property of the Clan could be classified as Theatre-in-Education plays because of their ability to inform and raise discussion about the issues in an educational context. Naturally the playwrights, as discussed, must engage their audience, through dramatic techniques and this leads to a 'questioning process' which helps us look at the world from another interesting, provocative and absorbing perspective.*

### **Question 3: State or Regional Theatre Companies**

**(a) Theatre should be for everyone — no matter what age.**

**What evidence have you found, in both the operations and artistic policy of the theatre company you have studied, that this is an important principle for state or regional companies.**

#### **The strongest candidates:**

- analysed the degree of importance of the issue of ‘inclusiveness’ to their chosen theatre company;
- were able to discriminate in their selection and ordering of supporting evidence to create a persuasive response;
- were able to evaluate both the operations and artistic policy of their chosen theatre company in the context of the question.

#### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- tended to reproduce a ‘list-like’ formatted response, reporting their knowledge without analysing such information in relation to the question.

#### **The weaker candidates:**

- could not link their ideas or information sufficiently to imply an understanding of the question.

**(b) A theatre company can provide what it thinks the public is familiar with, but must also try to give its audience new theatrical experiences.**

**Discuss this statement, with reference to the state or regional theatre company you have studied.**

#### **The strongest candidates:**

- examined the practices and policies of their chosen theatre company;
- formulated and sustained a discussion of the relationship between the new and the familiar;
- engaged directly in a discussion of the company’s relationship with its audience.

#### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- responded to the question with generalisations about the issues raised without making specific reference to the practices or policies of their chosen company.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- could not recall enough information to sustain any sort of coherent response;
- did not understand the concepts of new theatrical experiences as different from familiar theatrical experiences.

### **Question 4: Australian Theatre 1965–75**

Texts set for study:

Boddy and Ellis, *The Legend of King O'Malley*

Jack Hibberd, *A Stretch of the Imagination*

John Romeril, *The Floating World*

David Williamson, *Don's Party*

Alexander Buzo, *The Front Room Boys*

- (a) Discuss why and how Australian theatre from 1965 to 1975 attempted to present new people, new problems, and new ideas on stage. In your answer, refer to at least TWO of the plays set for study.**

### **General Comment**

Most candidates chose this option.

### **The strongest candidates:**

- dealt effectively with the 'why' as well as the 'how' of the question;
- linked an understanding of the historical period with the new theatrical features of the period;
- combined their analysis with a good detailed knowledge of two plays;
- could envisage the drama on stage as a new idea.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- did not respond in sufficient detail;
- wrote at length about the political and social aspects of the period but failed to discuss the plays in any depth;
- had fair knowledge of the plays but did not link this to an on stage experience.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- quoted examples of obscene language without linking them to the question;
- were not able to refer to more than one play.

**(b) Playwrights and theatre workers between 1965 and 1975 were exploring a self-consciously Australian larrikin\* style that suited the climate of the time and attracted new Australian audiences.**

*\*larrikin      rebellious, irreverent, cheeky*

**Discuss this statement, with reference to at least TWO of the plays set for study.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- indicated an understanding of the concept of 'larrikin style' and were able to link this with the climate of the time;
- were able to discuss the role of theatre workers and playwrights in the development of this style;
- began to grapple with specific performance spaces, gave examples and understood how these affected theatre styles.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- were unable to understand the requirements of the question but reported or described in detail many features of two plays;
- over-reported the climate of the time and neglected to refer sufficiently to the plays.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- asserted simplistic claims about the plays without reference to the question;
- merely re-told the story of the play.

### **Sample of an 'A' response to Question 3:**

*The New Wave movement attempted to find an Australian identity that Australian audiences could recognise. Writers such as David Williamson and Jack Hibberd found this in their distinctive style of depicting Australians in their 'rough' and 'raw' new theatre. This type of 'larrikin' and aggressive theatre that moved away from conventional and established theatre drew audiences in because it was something with which they could identify. With plays such as Don's Party the people, the situation and the setting, all represented the time and the feelings of the audience. Similarly, Stretch of the Imagination presented a figure of Monk O'Neil who was a symbol of Australia itself, and of the social rituals that belonged to it. Plays such as these reflect a time when people were searching to find and connect with their Australian culture.*

*Don's Party by David Williamson is a perfect reflection of the social norms of the 1960s and 70s. Its setting, in the urban city of Melbourne, contrasts with earlier plays with the bush and shearing image, shows Williamson's attempt to shift to a modern viewpoint of Australian culture, and experiment with a new image.*

*The style of Don's Party is shown in the language and the characters of the play. It contains a bunch of old male Uni mates, and their wives, at a dinner party for the 1969 federal election.*



Williamson presents his characters in a truly Australian stereotype, and the birth of the 'ocker' links strongly with the larrikin style of theatre. The character of Cooley is the epitome of males in Australia, — 'care for a screw' and 'I get more \*\*\*\* when I say screw' are examples of the sexual revolution of the time, where marriage was being questioned and communal living at a high. This crude, cheeky and arrogant stereotype is what audiences responded to in their demand to see themselves represented on stage.

Don's Party also highlights the social interactions of the time. All the characters are middle class, educated people, sitting in a play surrounded by alcohol, sex, violence, chauvinism and mateship, typical of the New Wave's attempt to find an identity. 'Whack these in the Westinghouse' and 'Hey Kath, got any cornflakes?' feed the audience's familiarity and humour, and they can thrive on seeing drama that truly represents the people and cultural trends that were emerging at this time, with 'the men outside talking politics and the women inside talking about babies; the all-Australian party'.

Hibberd's style of performance was also in response to the change in the times. In his play *A Stretch of the Imagination*, the intimate and open style allowed Hibberd to help find Australia's identity. *Monk O'Neil* is a mix of the ocker and the old bushman. His crude and ockerish language is distinctive to the larrikin style of the time.

'Many women swooned before my growth' shows the typical characteristic of stereotypical males in their attempt to assert themselves as accomplished sexual performers and boosted egos. The grotesque presentation of the play, with intimate actor/audience style, allows Monk to confront the audience by describing his prostate problem, urinate on stage and shoot his dog. Although the audience is startled by his openness and raw energy, they can sympathise with the character as well.

Monk's yarn telling and his slips into his past, show him to be a literary genius, 'clutching Ulysses', a questionable speaker of Latin and French, a world traveller where he saw Stravinsky and Proust, climbed Mt Kosciusko with Les Darcy and was a springboard champion. Whether his tales are true or not, he is simply representing the deeper image of humanity and relationships of the time.

Monk's mateship with Mort, 'you were a tower of strength to me Mort', and his horse Cromwell are aspects which Hibberd highlights as typically Australian. Using plenty of 'Aussie' vernacular — 'fair crack of the whip', 'out behind the dunnies', 'Dorabella shot through' — the audience is confronted with an image of a rough but recognisable figure that is juxtaposed to the established image of what Australia really is.

These plays by Williamson and Hibberd were widely accepted by Australians at this time, not only because of the shift of consciousness around Australia in the 60s, but because they were ready to find out who they really were. The characters presented in an intimate and open way by *LaMama* and *Nimrod*, simply highlighted social rituals of Australians, the problems they faced and the people themselves. The audiences were attracted to the plays to see themselves presented on the stage, and to laugh at the familiarity and delight in the rawness of the pure larrikin 'rough theatre' in which it was presented.

## Question 5: Nineteenth-century Australian Melodrama

Texts set for study:

Dampier and Walch, *Robbery Under Arms*

George Darrell, *The Sunny South*

(a) **‘Melodrama is essentially visual theatre, and ... tends to look very thin and disjointed on the page.’**

**Discuss how both *Robbery Under Arms* and *The Sunny South*, in performance, would have created what Williams calls a ‘stirring theatrical experience’ for their original Australian audiences.**

### The strongest candidates:

- gave examples of how the audience was stirred emotionally by the theatrical techniques, ie. spectacular stage effects, sensational incidents, sentimental interludes, spectacular scenes images;
- discussed the uses of Australian idiom and language;
- analysed how Australian audiences were stirred by Australian stereotypical characters;
- confidently discussed the nature of original Australian audiences and how they liked to see their new country’s attitudes and values reflected on the stage.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- tended to write themselves into the question, concentrating on the ‘visual’ but tending to ignore the ‘looks thin on the page’;
- discussed only visual theatre and made no attempt to analyse the effect of this visual presentation on the audience.

### The weaker candidates:

- merely described techniques of melodrama without referring to the question.

(b) **Australian nineteenth-century melodrama was largely based on the English model but that model could never be taken seriously in Australia; the tone and style were much more light-hearted.**

**Discuss this statement, with reference to *Robbery Under Arms* and *The Sunny South*.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- displayed a knowledge of English melodrama and could effectively compare it to the Australian model;
- understood the tone and style of the original theatrical presentation;
- made confident and detailed reference to both plays.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- coped well with a discussion of the light-hearted tone connecting this concept to the features of Australian society (more democratic tenor) and heroes and heroines within the plays;
- often neglected completely or barely referred to style;
- tended to reveal little real knowledge of English melodrama and invent convenient features to compare with Australian melodrama;
- showed only a superficial knowledge of nineteenth-century melodrama staging techniques.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- revealed little or no knowledge of the plays;
- showed little or no understanding of the tone or style of the plays.

## **Question 6: Louis Nowra**

Texts set for study:

*The Golden Age*

*Summer of the Aliens*

*Sunrise*

*Visions*

### **General Comments**

The complexity of texts and subject matter in this topic tended to promote thoughtful and sophisticated responses from the better candidates, many of whom were able to extract levels of meaning and to explain these in theatrical terms.

**(a) Nowra presents his ideas in a strongly visual way, often confronting the audience with shocking, thought provoking images.**

**Discuss this statement, with reference to at least TWO of the plays set for study.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- displayed a detailed knowledge of the ideas and images presented by Nowra;
- used an articulate style to discuss techniques in detail;
- discussed more than two texts confidently.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- displayed little understanding of the intention/purpose behind the images they cited, relying on a retelling of the plot.

**(b) A dominant theme in Nowra’s work is the confrontation between the individual’s vision of the world and the reality outside.**

**Analyse how Nowra explores this confrontation theatrically. In your answer, refer to TWO plays that you have studied.**

### **General Comments**

This question generally promoted a ‘thematic’ response supported by some vague reference to the ‘theatricality’ of presentation. Many candidates did not explore this aspect of the question in any detail.

### **The strongest candidates:**

- understood the plays deeply and were able to link the symbolic techniques to the themes and deeper levels of meaning.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- became ‘lost’ and were unable to reconcile the two dimensions of the question;
- resorted to simple descriptions of the characters.

## **Question 7: Women and Contemporary Theatre**

Women Performers

Robyn Archer

Wendy Harmer

Justine Saunders

Ruth Cracknell

Women Playwrights

Linda Aronson, *Dinkum Assorted*

Alma de Groen, *The Rivers of China*

Dorothy Hewitt, *The Chapel Perilous*

Hannie Rayson, *Falling from Grace*

**(a) An artist who is a woman will only have an impact if she deals in her art with women's issues.**

**To what extent is this statement true of the work of the woman performer and the woman playwright you have studied?**

**The strongest candidates:**

- took a very definite line of argument;
- organised their detailed knowledge of unrelated performers and playwrights into a coherent and direct response to the question;
- demonstrated sophisticated understanding of what makes an impact on an audience.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- described techniques used by performer and playwright and reported details of their careers, but did not relate as well to the question;
- tended to generalise about women's issues in relation to playwrights and performers and struggled to connect their ideas to specific examples from the plays or the performers' work.

**The weaker candidates:**

- only discussed a performer or a playwright;
- gave potted histories or plot summaries;
- did not come to grips with the question.

**(b) To what extent have the performer AND the playwright you have studied contributed to and enhanced the place of women in contemporary theatre?**

**The strongest candidates:**

- tended to be very comprehensive in their coverage of the performer and playwright, while making sophisticated assessments of their contribution to contemporary Australian Theatre;
- could relate to the work of the performer and playwright to specific enhancement of women in contemporary Australian Theatre.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- superficially surveyed the work and life of the performer and playwright but managed to make some comment on their contribution;
- gave detailed descriptive reporting of achievements with little or no link to contribution or enhancement of the place of women.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- failed to answer the question;
- regurgitated known facts;
- were very generalised;
- failed to refer to both performer and playwright.

### **Sample of an ‘A’ response to Question 7:**

*The statement ‘An artist who is a woman will only have an impact if she deals in her art with women’s issues’ is true, but only to a minimal extent. To clarify this opinion I will provide a juxtaposition of a female playwright, Alma de Groen (with particular reference to her play The Rivers of China) and one female performer, Ruth Cracknell.*

*The impact, or what one could say is the artistic accomplishment of female artists balances not only on their philosophies and thoughts from a female perspective, but more importantly on their creative ability to illuminate and provide insight on the fundamental exploration of humanity that is ‘art’.*

*Ruth Cracknell is a highly esteemed and successful performer. She has reached a level of recognition that few actors (male or female) can hope to achieve. However it was not her prerogative to perform in plays that dealt predominantly with ‘female’ issues. She was born into the theatrical world in the time of national cultural insecurity of the 1950s, and immediately found her strength in the realm of comedy. She physically challenged the stereotypical image of ‘feminine’ beauty because of her height — but talent cannot be suppressed by superficial externals.*

*Cracknell’s philosophies of life and her art are not overtly ‘feminist’. They are the manifestation of her strong, confident and optimistic perspective on humanity ...*

*‘I believe in the power of creativity and the imagination, because they might just be the things that allow us to survive.’*

*Her art, she explains is ‘a creative thing, not a personal thing’ and her decision to perform nude scenes in Spider and Rose reinforces her integrity as an actor.*

*The large range of genres in which she has performed demonstrates her versatility and capabilities. Her theatrical experience is immense including The Importance of Being Ernest, Just Ruth, Happy Days, and Machiavelli, Machiavelli. Nonchalantly digressing from absurdism to cabaret, contemporary drama to forms of the avant-garde, Cracknell displays that her ability as a performer rests not in her dealings with ‘women’s issues’, but on the contrary, her pragmatic, inherent sense of equality which appreciates art as a pure form of human expression, regardless of gender and any gender-related perspective.*

*Alma de Groen provides a contrast to Cracknell as she has dealt almost exclusively with what could be called ‘women’s issues’. The play The Rivers of China is definitely feminist in its use of the essential characteristics of this style. The eclectic nature of the play provides a liberal context in which the playwright has interpolated a tapestry of theatrical forms — symbolism, non-naturalism, impression.*

*The episodic style, however disjointed, can be seen to hold significance as conventional linear plot development doesn’t ‘correspond with the female experience which is essentially fragmentary and shifting’ (Mary Kay Higgins).*

*Alma de Groen attempts to dispel the preconceived stereotyped images of women (child-rearer, mother, wife, cook, sewer, cleaner) as projected through her experimental use of symbols, language and poetry. She illuminates the standard colloquial dialogue with Shakespearean verse, lyrical poetry and heightened prose to rupture the chasm between sublime psychological subtleties and the external portrayal of the mind.*

*The eruption of logical conceptions of form and space is also challenged as the creation of the female dystopia presents a world which is both imaginative and disturbing. This setting provides the audience with a base on which to make their evaluations about the equilibrium of colonial imperialism. Katherine Mansfield is the paradigm of the colonial female in the male territory of the patriarchal canon. Her quest for the 'rivers of China' is symbolically a nomadic foray into the unknown, and she incongruously discovers a utopian conceptual space for the female explorer.*

*This play transgresses the limitations of constrictive feminist-based theatre, as with her previous plays, 'Going Home' and 'Vocations'. It goes beyond that to reach a level of dramatic supremacy because it surpasses the conceptions of gender and explores the fundamental truths and questions of humanity and their expression through art.*

*The exchange between Rachel and Audra reveals this ...*

*Audra: We don't know our history. We'll never know.*

*Rachel: Does that mean we should do the same to them? Does that make us the same?*

*Audra: It makes us safe.*

*Rachel: It makes us liars.*

*The concerns of the play are intermingled: the irrationality of a society torn by gender conflict in which both the powerful and the powerless are threatened by the loss of their essential humanity, and the emergence, the revival of the spirit of life, through language/art, which as expressed by Rachel may lead humanity toward more noble aspirations.*

## SECTION II: Drama and Theatre in Societies and Cultures Other Than Australian

### Question 8: Shakespeare in Performance

Texts set for study:

*The Taming of the Shrew*

*Romeo and Juliet*

*The Merchant of Venice*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

#### General Comments

Part (a) was more popular and there was a huge range of responses. Part (b) demanded an understanding of the concepts of pace and subplot and reference to two plays. *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were referred to most often. There were some good answers on *The Taming of the Shrew* but few on *The Merchant of Venice*.

**(a) Choose ONE of the plays set for study. What aspects of the play are likely to appeal to audiences in the late twentieth century? How could the play appeal to modern audiences, using modern rather than Elizabethan performance conventions?**

#### The strongest candidates:

- demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the play and its central concerns and were able to use this in reference to how the scenes, relationships and characters could be presented to contemporary audiences;
- understood the importance of directorial concept in productions;
- recognised that the richness of the language did not have to be subordinated for contemporary appeal;
- discussed and compared examples of contemporary productions and their appeal to contemporary audiences;
- discussed aspect/elements in the play, eg characters, conflicts, issues, which were 'universal' in appeal and ways in which contemporary productions had focused on these theatrically;
- knew about Elizabethan conventions and mentioned these to compare/illustrate the different conventions used by contemporary productions;
- discussed the way technology creates new staging opportunities that appeal to the changing/higher expectations of contemporary audiences;
- recognised that some values and beliefs in the play were difficult for contemporary audiences to accept and understand;
- recognised that many of Shakespeare's conventions, such as the episodic structures, variety



of language, stagecraft and even the ‘breeness’ of the Elizabethan stage, allowed for ease of translation into a contemporary production;

- suggested their own original ideas about how the play might be staged to make sense of themes, concerns and context.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- demonstrated an understanding of the central issues in the play and could refer to specific scenes and characters;
- indicated a general knowledge of Elizabethan conventions and compared these to some contemporary conventions;
- gave some examples of contemporary productions and their interpretations of the play’s central concerns;
- discussed some of the impacts of modern technology on productions of the play;
- compared the different productions they had seen or read about;
- addressed both parts of the question;
- gave some production suggestions of their own.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- did not have sufficient depth or understanding of the play;
- gave few specific examples of contemporary productions and did not relate these specifically to the question;
- relied only on film versions;
- had little or no knowledge of Elizabethan conventions;
- suggested that the language of the play should be ‘modernised’ or was an insurmountable problem for audiences;
- assumed ‘modern audiences’ to be their own peer group and that productions should appeal to that group only;
- retold the story of the play without addressing the question;
- wrote at length about their own ‘possible’ production without relating this to the central concerns of the play.

**(b) The rapid pace and complexity of plot and subplot in Shakespeare’s plays appeal to modern audiences accustomed to film and television.**

**Discuss this statement, with reference to TWO plays you have studied.**

**The strongest candidates:**

- addressed and understood the concepts of ‘rapid pace’, ‘complexity of plot’ and the functions of ‘subplot’;
- demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the plays and used specific examples of scenes, complex plot structures and subplots;
- addressed both plays in a balanced way;
- related the elements of pace, complexity of structure and subplots in the plays to modern audiences accustomed to film and television;
- gave examples of technology creating new opportunities for staging which appealed to audiences used to film and television;
- discussed other aspects and theatrical elements in the plays which also appeal to modern audiences, eg the characters, inter-relationships, variety of language, universal themes, issues and conflicts.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- addressed both plays;
- showed an understanding of ‘pace’, ‘plot’ and the functions of ‘subplots’ in the chosen plays;
- used examples of modern productions which focused on rapid pace and/or plot complexity and the perspectives afforded by subplot to engage the audience;
- discussed the elements in the plays that appealed to modern audiences such as thematic concerns, language, issues and characterisation;
- understood the importance of directorial concept in productions;
- recognised that the richness of the language did not have to be subordinated for contemporary appeal.

**The weaker candidates:**

- concentrated on one play only;
- simply retold the plots of the plays;
- did not demonstrate an understanding of the question or the concepts;
- did not give examples of productions which they had seen or read about;
- gave examples from films only;
- lacked specific knowledge or had poor understanding of the plays;
- did not discuss all three concepts.

## Question 9: Caryl Churchill

Texts set for study:

*Fen*

*Cloud Nine*

*Vinegar Tom*

*Serious Money*

### General Comments

Part (a) seemed to be more popular and offered more opportunities for those who had studied *Serious Money*. There were some excellent responses in this topic and to this question in particular. The emphasis on Churchill's manipulation of historical periods in Part (b) proved difficult for some candidates. *Cloud Nine* appears to be the most commonly taught text, followed by *Fen* and *Vinegar Tom*.

**(a) Discuss the theatrical techniques that Caryl Churchill employs in her plays to disrupt audience expectations of gender roles and social values. In your answer, refer to TWO plays that you have studied.**

### The strongest candidates:

- understood the concept of theatrical techniques;
- demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the theatrical techniques in both plays and were able to relate these to the effects they created on issues of gender roles and other social values;
- understood the particular historical context in which the plays were written and the audience expectations of both theatrical techniques and accepted social values and gender roles;
- explained how Churchill's stagecraft drew on the work of Brecht, Artaud et al to challenge accepted social values;
- used appropriate examples from each play to illustrate their argument;
- addressed both 'gender roles' and 'social values';
- understood and discussed the cultural and artistic context in which the plays were written.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- discussed Churchill's theatrical techniques and were able to give examples;
- addressed both plays equally;
- discussed both 'gender roles' and 'social values';
- gave a general discussion of the way Churchill's theatrical techniques disrupted conventional audience expectations of theatrical performances and thus challenged accepted social values.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- presented ‘English literature’ responses giving analysis of characterisation, use of language and themes without reference to these as elements in a theatrical performance;
- demonstrated poor understanding of the concepts, particularly ‘social concepts’;
- did not refer to specific examples from the plays;
- referred to one play more than the other.

**(b) Caryl Churchill’s plays often break out of a single historical period. What techniques does she use and for what purpose? In your answer, refer to TWO plays you have studied.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- understood the implications of ‘historical periods’ and how they are manipulated in each of the plays;
- realised and were able to articulate the purpose of the playwright;
- gave detailed examples of the theatrical techniques in each of the plays and related these to the playwright’s purpose;
- addressed both plays in a balanced way;
- were able to visualise the plays in performance and show how the different historical periods could affect the perception of the audience;
- included other techniques used by Churchill in relation to her manipulation of ‘historical period’ and time sequences;
- could relate the specific ‘historical periods’ used to particular purposes in each play, eg in *Cloud Nine* to show the relationship between racial and political oppression.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- described the historical juxtapositions of the periods in the plays without explaining their purpose;
- described the surface differences in historical periods, using examples from both plays;
- gave specific examples of theatrical techniques used in the plays to manipulate changes in historical perspectives;
- had only a general knowledge of the historical periods used in the plays.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- tended to write ‘English literature’ responses;
- were not able to visualise the plays in performance;
- did not understand Churchill’s choice of particular periods;
- lacked knowledge of the ‘historical periods’ in the plays;
- were not able to discuss or use examples from two plays.

## Question 10: Greek Tragedy

Texts set for study:

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Euripides, *The Bacchae*

### General Comments

Part (b) was answered better, and attracted a good range of responses.

Students who had learnt this topic experientially or had seen performances were advantaged by this more practical study.

**(a) Discuss the ways women are presented on stage in BOTH Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *The Bacchae*.**

### The strongest candidates:

- displayed a thorough knowledge and understanding of both plays;
- realised the different presentations of women in both plays, including the chorus in *The Bacchae*, and were able to define and compare them cleverly;
- were able to relate this to the status of women in Greek society;
- showed extensive knowledge of Greek performance conventions;
- could visualise the plays on the stage using Greek theatrical conventions and discuss this in the light of the question;
- were able to discuss visual images as well as characters and situations;
- managed a strong discussion of the role of the female chorus in *The Bacchae*;
- showed how the inclusion of female characters contributed to the theatricality of the play;
- demonstrated an understanding of the role of women in Greek society;
- balanced their response between the two plays.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- identified the role of women in each play;
- showed an understanding of Greek theatrical conventions and were able to use this in discussing the question;
- used some examples and quotations to support arguments;
- were aware of the role of women in Greek society and related this to events in the plays;
- concentrated on one play more than the other.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- presented an unbalanced approach, concentrating mainly on *Antigone*;
- demonstrated a lack of knowledge of Greek performance conventions, eg that only male actors were used;
- wrote sexist diatribes based on current feminist issues rather than answering the question.

**(b) Conflict as portrayed in Greek tragedy is not always a simplistic ‘right versus wrong’, but often two ideals up against each other.**

**Discuss the ways conflict is presented on stage by both characters and chorus in EITHER *Antigone* OR *The Bacchae*.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- presented a strong argument which they discussed thoroughly;
- were able to identify the central conflict as based around character representation and different ideals and lines of action;
- showed a clear understanding of both sides of the main issues;
- understood that Greek drama was about debate;
- were able to discuss the visual impact of the effect of the conflict in action on the Greek stage;
- included discussion of the chorus and the minor characters and their effect on the audience.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- had some understanding of the central conflict and were able to discuss the ‘ideals’;
- attempted to explain the conflicting sides of the issue;
- attempted to relate the conflict to Greek staging conventions;
- showed some understanding of the role of debate in Greek drama and the role of the Chorus in debate.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- mentioned only the most basic, obvious examples of conflict;
- were limited in their knowledge of the plays and Greek theatrical conventions;
- resorted to storytelling;
- were not able to relate the points made to the staging of the play;
- expressed ideas poorly.

### Sample of an 'A' response to Question 10:

*The conflict in Antigone by Sophocles is far from simplistically 'right versus wrong'. Sophocles sets up two ideals through the characters of Antigone and Creon, which both have elements of truth in them. Antigone fights for her family her loyalty is to her family and the gods of the city, rather than to the city. But Creon's loyalty appears to be with the city and his own ambition. On stage the conflict between these ideals would be shown through the use of masks, staging devices, the chorus and dialogue and debate.*

*Masks played an important part in the understanding the audience had of the conflict. The mask of Antigone would have been feminine, yet strong and suffering. This mask would help to show her character and hence convey her ideals more clearly to the audience. Creon's mask would have been stern and proud, reflecting his character and attitude. The contrast of these two masks created would have heightened the contrasts between the natures of Antigone and Creon, and hence portray the central conflict of the characters, and the situation, vividly.*

*The chorus is also central to the presentation of conflict in Antigone. The chorus fulfils a number of roles such as providing an objective spectator so the audience can look at the conflict subjectively. The chorus also helps create mood and tension which enhances the conflict between the characters and provides a more profound effect. For example, the chorus sets up the joyful mood in the parados of victory, which is in direct contrast/conflict to the prologue which is desperate and serious. This contrast heightens the conflict between Antigone and the chorus, when Antigone appears on stage, determined to follow the correct burial procedures for both her brothers, and seeking, but not obtaining the sanction of the chorus to disobey Creon's edict.*

*Yet, throughout the play the chorus gradually changes its attitude, using the Greek dramatic convention of debate, and comes to side with Antigone rather than Creon — 'Now even I would break his law'. The chorus' attitude to Creon also changes from being subservient to him — 'only a fool could be in love with death' (referring to breaking Creon's orders)— and becomes more antagonistic towards him: 'Creon has shown the world, [that] of all ills afflicting man, lack of judgement is the worst'.*

*This changing attitude of the chorus heightens the dramatic action and conflict between Creon and Antigone, and thus presents the conflict of the two ideals they represent more effectively on stage.*

*Conflict between characters and within characters is presented through dialogue. In the third Episode, the conflict between Haemon and Creon is effectively portrayed through 'stichemythia'. Haemon attempts to advise his father saying 'the people of Thebes against your decree, but are afraid', but Creon retorts, 'Am I to be advised by a junior?'. This series of short statements and replies quickens the pace and creates visual conflict between the characters. The interjections of the chorus are also important, such as, 'they are both talking sense', because it allows the audience to weigh up the arguments being presented and understand the conflict of the ideals.*

*The conflict within Antigone is also presented through dialogue. Although she will not ask for mercy, she is daunted by death. She claims she would 'never have gone against the will of the people' had it been the 'rotting' body of a husband or child, as these are replaceable. Yet for a brother she would sacrifice all, as she has no family left. This speech emphasises the strong loyalty she has for her family, and evokes sympathy and understanding from her audience. This sympathy heightens the conflict between loyalty to city and ambition, and turns the audience slightly against Creon. Thus the conflict of issues in the play is successfully presented on stage to allow an audience to consider the issues being presented.*

*The use of the stage space also helps to portray conflict between characters and chorus, and the ideals each represents. In Antigone there would have been an altar in the centre of the orchestra at which Antigone would kneel, imploring the gods, 'If these men are wrong, let the gods mete out no worse judgement on them, than I have suffered at their hands'. This use of space evokes sympathy for her cause, taking the audiences attention to the centre of the stage with the action, and heightening her conflict with Creon. Also when Euridice enters the central door, the portend of her death is heightened by this central stage image.*

*The fear of her death is justly founded, and is yet one more sorrow for Creon. His utter downfall, however, evokes sympathy from his audience as he says, 'I am nothing'. The ruin of the proud man is pitiful, yet it emphasises the issue of man's need to revere the gods and to make clear and well-founded judgements. Thus, through the use of staging effects and actor/audience empathy, Sophocles presents the manifold conflicts in Antigone.*

*Sophocles has successfully presented on stage his themes of loyalty to family, the state and the gods, and the conflict that can be created for people who cannot accept all three. His manipulation of the dialogue, masks and characters presents the conflict of ideals, and causes his audience to question and listen to debate as the issues are presented and resolved on the stage.*

## Question 11: Peter Brook

This topic was still not a popular choice. The questions elicited a broad range of responses. Although Part (a) was handled better, Part (b) was more popular.

Most candidates demonstrated an adequate understanding of the separate productions, particularly *Marat/Sade*. The nature of the questions was such that the better candidates were able to excel. Few candidates fell into the middle range.

**(a) 'I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across that space while someone else is watching and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.'**

**Discuss this idea with reference to Brook's emphasis on the importance of the actor compared with other theatrical elements. In your answer, refer to his productions of *Marat/Sade* and EITHER *King Lear* OR *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

### The strongest candidates:

- presented a view that synthesised Brook's theatre practices/influences and the purpose of his work, particularly in the 1960s and '70s;
- were able to identify the importance of 'the actor' and the actor's relationship to the audience as the starting point for all theatre, and how this drew Brook to Brecht and Artaud;
- were able to integrate their discussion of the actor and the theatrical elements.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- had a fair understanding of Brook's theatre practices but could not connect these to the actor;
- did not know the productions/plays well enough.



**The weaker candidates:**

- wrote prepared responses discussing the directional influences on Brook and simply retold the story of the production;
  - relied on a discussion of acting and rehearsal techniques only.
- (b) **Look carefully at the picture below. How do the images in it reflect key elements of Brook's production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade*?**



Photo: Courtesy Magnum Photos

**The strongest candidates:**

- were able to identify salient features of the photo and relate them to Brook's practices, theories and the performance;
- were able to look at the formal structures that were represented eg. play within a play, staging, costuming, characterisation, props, status;
- were able to recognise Brook's fluid use of the space — chaos at times, absolute stillness at others.

**The weaker candidates:**

- described the *Marat/Sade* in general and made little or no reference to the picture;
- described some aspects of the picture without reference to the play.

**Question 12: Dario Fo**

Texts set for study:

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist*

*Can't Pay? Won't Pay!*

*Mistero Buffo*

*Trumpets and Raspberries*

- (a) **‘Our theatre is a throw-away theatre (un teatro da bruciare), a theatre that won’t go down in bourgeois history, but that is useful, like a newspaper article, a debate or a political action.’**

**Discuss this statement, with reference to TWO plays you have studied.**

## **General Comments**

This was a difficult question which was answered well by most students.

### **The strongest candidates:**

- understood the implications of the quotation and gave clear explanations of the idea of ‘throw-away theatre’;
- concentrated on the idea of politically empowering the audience, and, as such, Fo’s theatre being a useful tool which served the same purpose as a newspaper, debate or political action;
- used examples of makeshift performance spaces and continual ‘updating’ of plays in performance to emphasise this;
- referred to examples of themes, performance convention and techniques from both plays to expand the meaning of the quotation;
- were able to discuss Fo’s political purpose, illustrating the ideals well with examples from both plays;
- displayed a real understanding of Fo’s ability to use a range of dramatic and theatrical conventions from medieval theatre and commedia to Brecht, and gave examples of these to address the question;
- explained the irony in the statement, in that his recent award of the Nobel Prize for Literature means that his theatre has gone ‘down in bourgeois history’.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- showed an understanding of the political nature of Fo’s theatre and were able to see the implications of this in the question;
- discussed Fo’s philosophies and techniques in detail but did not use sufficient reference to the plays;
- found it difficult to manipulate the material they had studied to answer the question;
- tended to refer to one play more than the other.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- did not understand the terms of the question;
- discussed the plays with little reference to the question.

**(b) Franca Rame refers to the ‘satirical violence’ of Dario Fo’s scripts.**

**Discuss how Fo combines violence and satire as ingredients of farce, and analyse the purpose they serve. In your answer make reference to at least TWO plays you have studied.**

**The strongest candidates:**

- showed sound knowledge and understanding of the plays and Fo’s purpose, and were able to relate this to the question;
- defined the terms ‘farce’, ‘violence’ and ‘satire’, addressing verbal and physical violence as part of the definition;
- discussed violence and satire as part of farce and related them to the political purpose in the plays;
- supported their opinions with examples and quotations from the chosen plays;
- realised the political impact on the audience and were able to discuss the use of farce/comedy to achieve this;
- showed their knowledge of Fo’s experience in acting and theatre history to make satire and farce work effectively, eg fast paced dialogue, slapstick, puns, dramatic irony, disguise;
- referred to the plays equally.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- knew and understood the purpose of Fo’s work, and the role of farce in achieving his aims;
- used examples from the plays studied;
- seemed unable to define the terms successfully;
- listed techniques and examples with little reference to their political purpose;
- referred unequally to the plays chosen.

**The weaker candidates:**

- merely retold the story of one of the plays;
- listed some of Fo’s theatrical techniques;
- did not address Fo’s political purpose.

## **Question 13: Augusto Boal**

### **General Comments**

Part (a) allowed stronger candidates to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of Boal's practice, and mount an argument.

Part (b) appeared to be the more popular question and was chosen by many of the weaker candidates who were not able to address the issue of theatre as a 'force for change' in any depth, but wrote definitions and descriptions. The majority wrote about 'the spect-actor', 'forum theatre' and 'the cop in the head'. The other concepts were less often addressed and generally poorly understood.

**(a) 'The Theatre of the Oppressed is about acting rather than talking, questioning rather than giving answers, analysing rather than accepting.'**

**Discuss this statement in the light of Boal's political objectives.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- had a sophisticated understanding of the aesthetic and political theory underpinning Boal's practices;
- addressed the three concepts of 'acting', 'questioning' and 'analysing' in the quotation and discussed them in relation to Boal's political objectives;
- used the quotation to structure their argument;
- analysed the quotation and kept referring to it in their answers;
- offered an explicit and critical analysis of Boal's political objectives and their cultural context;
- related Boal's forms of theatre and practices to his political objectives;
- demonstrated, with examples, how the forms and practices encouraged 'acting', 'questioning' and 'analysing';
- defined terms clearly and understood the complexity of meaning attached to concepts such as 'acting'.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- addressed the concepts in the quotation;
- gave examples of Boal's practices and related them generally to political objectives;
- had a general understanding of Boal's political objectives as wanting to overcome oppression in some way;
- discussed the three generally known forms of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, ie Forum Theatre, Image Theatre and Invisible Theatre.

### The weaker candidates:

- recited large amounts of information from the text without relating it to the question;
- appeared to write prepared answers which had no relation to the question;
- listed Boal's practices without relating them to the question;
- wrote in depth about one practice;
- discussed the quotation only.

**(b) In a world where forms of oppression have been a constant in society, Boal believed that theatre should be a force for change.**

**With specific reference to THREE of the following concepts, discuss how Boal expected this change to occur.**

*the spect-actor*

*forum theatre*

*the cop in the head*

*magic solutions*

*dynamising the image*

*model and anti-model.*

### The strongest candidates:

- addressed the assumptions in the statement, such as what constituted real change;
- identified forms of oppression that were universal, such as poverty and exploitation, and related these to the cultural context of Boal's work;
- explained each concept clearly and related it to the idea of theatre as a force for change;
- understood the theatricality of each of the concepts and how it affected participants in Theatre of the Oppressed;
- wrote in a balanced way about each of the concepts;
- gave appropriate examples of each of the concepts and the ways in which these attempted to change the lives and perceptions of the participants.

### Candidates in the middle range:

- wrote about each of the concepts;
- gave examples of practices to demonstrate how the concepts were used in Boal's work;
- discussed some forms of oppression addressed in Boal's work;
- gave some examples of how the practices had been used to bring about change in the participants;
- defined each concept correctly.

### **The weaker candidates:**

- lacked a clear understanding of the concepts;
- did not address the idea of theatre as a force for change;
- were confused about which ‘forms of oppression’ Boal was addressing in his practices;
- wrote uneven amounts on one or two of the concepts;
- did not give examples of the practices.

## **Question 14: Commedia dell’arte**

### **General Comments**

This appeared to be the most popular topic in this section, and was generally answered well, though Part (a) was handled better than Part (b). It appears that plot function and Regional origin need to be emphasised more along with a stronger emphasis on the culture in which Commedia originated.

**(a) The stock characters were clearly differentiated in terms of their appearance, regional origin, relationships, and plot function.**

**Discuss this statement, with close reference to THREE of the characters.**

### **The strongest candidates:**

- dealt successfully with all aspects of the question, especially ‘origin’ and ‘function’;
- were able to demonstrate how these characteristics differentiated the stock characters and were able to extend these into a discussion about how this was intrinsic to the theatre style;
- were knowledgeable about the masks and the physicality that went with them;
- used specific examples to support the discussion of relationships and plot function;
- had a strong awareness of social contexts, differences and historical bases;
- examined status relationships as well as ‘love’ relationships;
- displayed a clear understanding of the purpose of Commedia and its social implications;
- used specific scenarios well to illustrate responses;
- understood regional origins and the relevance of stock characters to Italian society – and how they worked as devices of satire.

### **Candidates in the middle range:**

- concentrated on appearance and movement and did not seem to be aware of plot function or origins;
- were unable to clarify the dramatic purpose of the characters in terms of plot function and relationships apart from the ‘master servant’ relationship;

- confused the status of some stock characters;
- listed descriptive facts rather than analysed.

**The weaker candidates:**

- inaccurately described the appearance of the characters and plot functions;
- listed the characters;
- only described one character;
- often did not understand the terminology of the question;
- did not discuss specific characters, but dealt with groups, eg ‘old men’, ‘lovers’.

**(b) Although the innamorati were not the main attraction of the troupe, they played a significant role in the performances of the scenarios.**

**Discuss the contribution of the young lovers to Commedia dell’arte, referring to their functions in the improvised plots and their relationships to the other stock characters.**

**The strongest candidates:**

- looked at the pivotal role of the lovers in providing conflict/entertainment;
- understood the lover’s appeal to the audience as lovers, and as a satire on love;
- discussed the plot functions of the lovers;
- explained the language and poetry used by the lovers;
- realised the lovers as a source/catalyst for the zannis;
- clearly detailed their relationships with the other characters, using examples of scenarios as support.

**Candidates in the middle range:**

- concentrated on retelling scenarios at the expense of detailing the plot functions of the lovers in those scenarios;
- could not define the interconnection of the lovers to the plots;
- gave details of some relationships with other characters.

**The weaker candidates:**

- did not understand who the innamorati were and were unable to identify or name them;
- used inaccurate examples of the lovers;
- discussed the lovers as minor characters;
- used the question to discuss other stock characters with only a cursory reference to their relationship with the lovers.

## **THE MARKING PROCESS**

### **Itinerant Marking**

#### **The Group Presentation and Individual Project: Performance**

Pilot (practice) marking was carried out over two days (Friday and Saturday) a fortnight prior to the practical examination. From those participating, the final itinerant marking team and Senior Examiners were chosen, with the remainder comprising the reserve list.

A selection of talented Year 10 students had been asked to form groups and prepare one of the topics from the Topic List using the same guidelines as those used by HSC students.

The applicants selected for pilot marking were taken through the processes they would need to bear in mind when marking performances, namely:

- the need to use the whole range of marks;
- that candidate's performances should initially be impression marked using an A–E range, followed by reference to the criteria printed in the Subject Manual.

Printouts indicating the possible marks, the criteria and working mark sheets were provided.

Performers were assessed and ranked individually by each marker, opinions discussed in pairs then shared in a plenary-style discussion led and extended by the Supervisor of Marking.

This led to a better awareness of the need to eliminate preconceived ideas and standards and base assessment entirely on the candidature presenting. Marks and ranking were shared and discussed in order to highlight and consider any inconsistencies and work through the possible reasons and solutions.

Markers were asked to record their marks, rankings and notes and these were collected at the conclusion of the pilot marking and used by the Supervisor of Marking as part of the criteria for selection of the final teams.

As the **Individual Project: Performance** is also marked by the itinerant marking teams, part of the pilot marking period was allocated to the criteria and process of assessing and ranking candidates attempting this project.

Each candidate was double-marked in both the Group Presentation and the Individual Project Performance.

At the debriefing impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of Group Presentations and the Individual Project: Performances were recorded and suggestions for future candidates and teachers were collated as a basis for this section of the Examination Report.

### **Submitted Projects**

Using the criteria printed in the Subject Manual for each project area, Senior Examiners selected examples that were indicators of the full range of probable marks. These were then used in the pilot marking process.



Under the guidance of the Supervisor of Marking, Senior Examiners prepared an impression marking sheet using the literal grades A–E, and a more detailed sheet correlating the marks possible for the project within this range.

At briefing meetings the emphasis was placed upon parity between the projects, using the full range of marks and the project criteria.

Though the pilot marking is brief, it is solid and sustained, providing strong and clear guidelines for each team.

At the conclusion of marking, markers are required to comment on the projects, listing strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for future candidates. These comments are then collated as the basis for this report.

### **The Written Paper**

Sample scripts from each question were selected for pilot marking. These samples represented a possible range of answers, and were graded into categories, A–E, as described below.

Markers spent pilot sessions categorising scripts to confirm their impressions of the range of responses, then discussing and consolidating the process of allocating marks.

The **A** response (20 – 19 marks)

- shows an excellent understanding of the demands of the question;
- addresses each part of the question in a logical and coherent way;
- substantiates the answer with examples, quotations, evidence from the set text(s)/recommended reading and general knowledge of drama and theatre;
- analyses and critically debates the issues;
- shows an excellent understanding of specific dramatic terms.

The **B** response (18, 17, 16, 15 marks)

- shows an understanding of the demands of the question;
- gives relevant examples from recommended set texts;
- begins to grapple with the complexities of the issues raised by the question.

The **C** response (14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7 marks)

- shows a limited understanding of the demands of the question;
- fails to give sufficient supportive details or examples;
- retells the plot of the set text(s);
- reiterates the general history of the topic;
- reveals factual knowledge of the topic unrelated to the question.

**The D** response (6, 5, 4, 3 marks)

- shows a lack of understanding of the question;
- gives insufficient information or irrelevant information;
- may give incorrect information;
- fails to analyse the issues.

**The E** response (2, 1, 0 marks)

- is very short;
- reveals little or no understanding of the requirements of the question and lacks any general knowledge about the terms used in Drama and Theatre;
- shows no familiarity with the general topic or texts set/recommended;
- includes, in some cases, candidates who try to answer all seven questions in each section, instead of one, as required.