



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

DRAMA AND THEATRE AS

SUMMER 2022

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COMPONENT 1: PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP

General Comments

It was pleasing to see most centres returning to more normal circumstances following the disruption to teaching and learning over the last two years. Most of the work submitted was of an admirable standard and moderators were enthusiastic in their feedback regarding the commitment shown in this component.

Administration:

Most centres submitted their sample on time and materials were generally well organised. There were some omissions which centres are asked to address in order to make the moderation process effective. In addition to the candidates work, centres must submit:

- Centre approval form – signed by the headteacher and complete with centre stamp
- Component 1: Programme Proforma – completed correctly with clear group numbers or appropriate notes to assist location of each piece e.g. DVD timings. Also, the chosen text must be stated and the name of the practitioner/theatre company selected for the reinterpretation work
- Copies of the reinterpreted scripts.

The candidate's work must also be accompanied by signed Candidate / Teacher Declarations and GDPR consent forms.

Centres are also asked to check the content submitted on DVD / USB to ensure the work is complete and can play easily. Most centres chapter the DVDs successfully and many add additional labelling to identify the candidates.

If submitting an encoded USB, please ensure that the password is either included in the materials or has been sent to the WJEC via the subject officer at the time of posting. Some centres included a cover letter which explained that the work was password protected and where the password had been sent.

Centres that submitted work via Surpass must ensure that all the necessary forms and candidate work is clearly labelled and easily accessible. Some centres group all the admin together in various files followed by the candidate work. Other centres group the materials by candidate with one file containing the forms, written work and the video of the practical for each individual candidate.

Please remember that candidates must be identified on screen at the start of their pieces. Separate video files of the whole cohort identified together, especially if not in costume, is not always helpful.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Text Performance and Creative Log:

Moderators were generally impressed with the work presented for faithful interpretation of the text. We are seeing less candidates that approach this element like a speech exam or an isolated assessment. Generally, the scripts were well chosen to suit candidates and the level of preparation and rehearsal was impressive. The majority of centres choose monologues for this part of the C1 and these are mostly successful. Candidates demonstrated an understanding of the original context of the scenes and the development of character was generally sound.

The AO1 assessment varied with some centres accurately applying the criteria consistently across the cohort and others marking far too generously. Teacher comments are extremely useful when gauging how a centre has arrived at a mark, but these must be related to the assessment criteria and not simply explain how hard a candidate has worked.

Candidates demonstrated that they were able to create and develop ideas and make relevant connections between theory and practice. This was often reflected in both the written and practical work.

The AO2 assessment was generally accurate regarding the rank order of candidates but several centres over inflated the marks awarded when the work often did not reflect the assessment band(s) suggested by the teacher marks. Teachers are encouraged to be objective when assessing the practical work and be realistic in terms of candidate attainment. The best candidate in a particular cohort may not be a full mark candidate when the assessment criteria is applied. Very few centres were harsh with their marking.

In general, candidates applied their skills effectively and responded well to the text work. Attention was given to a suggestion of costume and many centres created a theatrical environment for the work to be performed. This enhanced the candidate's work and supported them in realising their artistic intentions.

Most centres were mindful of the timings of the pieces and applied the necessary penalties if appropriate.

Reinterpreted Text Performance and Creative Log:

Candidates are selecting and applying a variety of practitioners/theatre companies to their work. Moderators reported that the reinterpreted pieces are often exciting and demonstrate the candidates' skills successfully. The more successful work applied the conventions and techniques of the practitioner/company from the beginning of the process. Less successful pieces created their work and then added elements as an afterthought.

Most candidates used their logs to focus the intentions of the piece and explored the practitioner/company influences successfully integrating the theory with the aims for the practical work. Less successful logs provided research notes but did not apply them to the performance to reflect artistic intentions in their practical work.

Stanislavski, Brecht, Berkoff and Artaud are still the most popular choices for practitioner and Paper Birds, Kneehigh and Frantic Assembly are the most selected theatre companies for the reinterpreted work. Some centres selected more obscure theatre companies, some with a local relevance to the centre.

Centres are reminded that when selecting Artaud, or a similar non-naturalistic practitioner, attention must be given to dialogue. There needs to be a suitable amount of text for the actors to voice. Artaud emotive vocal work is usually a staple of the Artaud influenced pieces but there must also be dialogue. If there is a lack of text, then this must be reflected in the skills marks awarded by the centre.

Moderators reported that the work presented was of a generally strong standard. The pieces being created by candidates show insight and creativity. The reinterpreted scripts must be submitted with the centre materials with the original content clearly highlighted.

Most candidates applied their chosen practitioner/theatre company well and it was evident immediately in the performances how the work had been influenced. Some work did not focus on one practitioner and candidates were not clear in their choices. Centres must also check that the practitioner/theatre company stated on the Programme Proforma is correct. Most of the reinterpreted work was supported by excellent lighting and sound plots. Whilst, this is not assessed, it did help the candidates to realise their artistic vision and make stronger connections between theory and practice. Acting candidates are reminded that their written work may contain reference to the development of technical ideas but should focus on the skills required for acting. Some candidates wrote insightfully about the lighting, sound and costume but ignored the development of how the acting influences were applied.

As with the faithful text, centre assessment was generally in line with the assessment criteria but there were centres where marking was, once again, generous. There were also occasions where candidates were given blanket marks within a group and, whilst it is appreciated that sometimes that will be the case with a high achieving group, there is usually some differentiation in attainment in a larger group.

Evaluation:

AO4 assessment was generally accurate within most centres. Where candidates had analysed and evaluated the process, teachers had identified this in their marking and comments. Candidates must be reminded that when evaluating their performance or design, they must focus on their chosen skill. Actors need to focus on the acting skills and designers should focus on their selected area. Very often the actors especially will analyse the lighting, sound, set and costumes at the expense of analysing their own skills.

Thank you for the work that has been carried out in centres in preparation for the AS assessment. It has been a challenging time for Drama teachers and centres must be commended for the work their candidates have managed to create.

Summary of key points

Centres are reminded that the Creative Logs are not simply the rehearsal logs/notes. Candidates must use their process notes to construct a piece of work that responds to the AO1 criteria.

Ensure that the chosen practitioner/theatre company's artistic aims are clearly implemented into the reinterpretation performance. Do not mix and match between practitioners or companies.

Ensure that candidates concentrate on their chosen skill (performance or design) within the creative logs and the evaluation.

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COMPONENT 2: TEXT IN THEATRE

General Comments

The standard of the work in this component continues to improve; candidates and teachers are secure with how to prepare for the demands of each question and are confident with these approaches. Responses to all questions showed a high level of engagement with the set texts chosen by the centres and were often highly creative and engaging. There was evidence of equal engagement with the work of a sound designer, director and set designer in the candidates work. All the texts were selected by centres for study; with the most answered being *Hedda Gabler*, *Machinal* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. There was however a tendency to answer on *Hedda Gabler* in a very literary way - these responses illustrated an exciting and thoughtful engagement with this text. They made interesting connections with the play as a whole, themes and feminist theory. However, the balance between textual understanding, analysis and the demands of the question must be met to gain the marks allocated. With regard to adaptations for 2022 summer session: There were no changes within this component. Centres were reminded that “live recordings/ streams of productions may be used as live theatre references / influences for question (c) for each text”.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question (a):

Responses to this question conveyed a clear understanding of the potential for sound design ideas for their set text in the given extract. Candidates identified the location and atmosphere and illustrated their ideas: type of sound and impact upon the audience. Most candidates seemed confident with this expectation and were able to cover both requirements for AO3 in their response. Candidates have become more confident with the appropriate and frequent use of subject specific terminology. The understanding of diegetic and non-diegetic sounds was used confidently, but candidates who did not use this subject specific knowledge were still able to access marks for this type of sound design if they described their cue in other ways. Candidates' approach to answering the question varied. Some worked through the bullet points and others combined these into a blended response. Both styles of response were effective. Answers that linked directly to “cues” in the extract were particularly successful. These candidates were able to develop their response to indicate length of their lighting effect directly with the dialogue, stage direction or action of the extract. Some candidates needed to connect their sound ideas to location and atmosphere more directly.

Highly successful responses showed a perceptive and knowledgeable understanding of how sound can be layered, manipulated and distorted to create atmosphere. Combined with a detailed understanding of how the intensity of a cue can be controlled, these responses conveyed a confident understanding of how sound can create an impact upon the audience. Successful answers combined several types of sounds in different contexts. e.g. detailed description of music used to transition between scenes in *Machinal* and to create an understanding of location and atmosphere in the court of *As You Like It*. These were combined with sound effects indicating action e.g. clinking of chains on the women in *Trojan Women*.

Less successful answers considered atmosphere in a general way and were unclear how the atmosphere might change with the action and dialogue of the extract. This often led to a repetitive and general response. Closer reading of the extract given will help with identifying these changes - the extract included moments where the action of a character indicates a change in atmosphere - e.g. arrival / entrance of a character [*Hedda Gabler*] or the movement of a character [*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* - Margaret gives Big Daddy his present]. Some candidates did not indicate the intensity of the sound effect or did so but did not adjust this to accommodate further action in the extract. Had they done so they would have conveyed an understanding of how the dynamics of sound can work and how it impacts upon the audience. One volume of sound only would in practice create a chaotic soundscape which might not convey the changes in atmosphere in the extract.

Question (b)

In their response to this question most candidates chose to connect all the bullet points together in their response rather than a paragraph on each. e.g. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*: Big Mama's shouting of her opening lines [interaction] indicates her need to be heard [character motivation] and how she is overcompensating for the tension felt about Big Daddy's illness. Candidates combined this with, and explanation of, how this would be directed with reference to her movement and positioning and/ or interaction with Reverend Tooker. Successful candidates were aware of some of the subtle interchanges between characters as they silently acknowledge the subtext of each other's dialogue or react silently to the entrance or exit of a new character. The arrival of a new character always creates a change in dynamic amongst those on stage and successful candidates were able to discuss how a director would consider this. e.g. *As You Like It* - the Duke's exit at the end of the extract where, how and impact on other characters. Perceptive ideas about interaction also included the use of space inhabited by the characters. Close proxemics infer secrecy; *Hedda Gabler* - between Brack and Hedda, and Big Daddy- *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* "barking" insults at a distance from Big Mama; conveying his lack of respect for her (women in general) and a violence in their relationship.

Less successful candidates approached this response as an actor rather than a director and discussed rehearsal techniques (not asked for in the question) and focused heavily on an individual character's vocal and physical skills. Whilst a director might advise an actor regarding the latter the question focused the response on character motivation, movement and positioning within your chosen performance space and interaction. Often these candidates did not leave themselves enough time to cover all the demands of the question. The question also indicated that responses indicate the chosen performance space. This might have been explicit or implicit in their response and examiners accepted either as an indication of understanding how performance space is considered by a director. Less successful responses were muddled about the performance space being used by them as a director. The correct use of terminology regarding parts of the stage would have helped to indicate the choice of space. Stage directions are particularly helpful to a director. Candidates might choose to follow them or make their own choice about the movement and positioning in the extract - but they are a valuable starting point and guide candidates towards; entrances and exits, actions and movement of characters and proxemics. Less successful candidates ignored these in their reading of the extract.

Question (c)

AO3

Candidates found responding to *type of performance space, your chosen production style set and props, impact upon the audience*- a structured format. They would often establish their performance space with justification of its impact to an audience and identify the qualities and conventions of their production style, which would be illustrated in their set design ideas.

Successful candidates chose their two extracts that created a contrast in style, action or location. The length of these do not need to be entire scenes. The term 'extract' is used rather than 'scene' so that the length is chosen by the candidate- this could be one page. Candidates studying *Machinal*, for example, considered two extracts in concurrent episodes and also considered the transition from one Episode to another in their ideas for set and props. These candidates were able to focus in detail on the small extract at the end of one episode and the beginning of the other. They considered colour, texture, multifunctional qualities, easy of movement of set and props and how this created meaning and impact upon and audience. Floor coverings were used successfully to add symbolic meaning. Ideas were connected closely to their knowledge of the themes of the play. Candidates used their chosen performance space to create meaning to their audience e.g. *in the round* - where the audience were peering down on the action, as if looking into a machine [*Machinal*].

Some candidates found connecting original production conditions to their ideas a challenge, especially where their own ideas were similar to the original production. Their ideas do not need to reinterpret the play they can be similar or the same. However, their response needs to identify knowledge and understanding of the original production conditions. Some candidates were uncertain about the performance space they had chosen which meant visualising their ideas was difficult. Knowledge about furniture and props in the space was well described and justified. However, the set structure or space around these was omitted. Entrance and exits into a constructed space needed consideration as did the way actors might use the space.

AO4

It was very pleasing to see how extensive the experience had been of candidates in attending live theatre or watching streamed live productions. Many candidates had a variety of experiences in varying styles to choose from. Successful candidates selected appropriate live theatre examples to analyse. They focused on key details of set and /or props to evaluate and link to their own idea. Particularly successful candidates developed ideas observed and developed them further- supporting their concept with reference to their intended impact upon the audience.

Some candidates used 4 or 5 examples of live theatre effectively but a closer focus on 2 [the minimum] or 3 would have led to a more focused and succinct response. Less successful candidates spent a lot of time explaining the plot of a production viewed rather than focusing on key points of set and props. Where a production had inspired the ideas of a candidate; analysis and evaluation of the production is essential to avoid the appearance of "copying" the idea exactly. The link made must be to their own interpretation however similar. Some candidates also included suggestions regarding costume which was not asked for.

Summary of key points

- Close reading of the extract given; useful for identifying helpful cues / stage directions and assist in referring to key moments as examples.
- Study the text from a practical perspective to avoid over theorising the interpretation.
- Select appropriate live theatre for the element in the question e.g. set and props. Make links to own idea and evaluate the live production.
- Keep the focus on live theatre to key moments to avoid retelling plot. Consider personal response to the performance.
- The choice of performance space has an impact upon the audience and should be considered by designers.



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