



GCE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCE
DRAMA AND THEATRE
AS/Advanced**

SUMMER 2019

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Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

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DRAMA AND THEATRE

General Certificate of Education

Summer 2019

Advanced Subsidiary/Advanced

UNIT 1: THEATRE WORKSHOP

General Comments

This year saw challenging and diverse work submitted which showed that intelligent experimental and devising work had been conducted, and the majority of centres should be praised for pushing boundaries and for being prepared to take risks.

It was very pleasing to see how some centres had developed the work and there were some truly fantastic performances where completely naturalistic text was pulled in every direction to create very interesting work. Some good examples of this were the performance of Pinter's work in the style of Brecht and Berkoff. There was a good range of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* in the style of Berkoff, and *Into the Woods* in the style of Complicite. Constant use was made of The Frantic Assembly Company and the vast majority of centres by now use the style correctly and incorporate the movement work as part of the dialogue rather than as a supplement of 'chair duets' work every now and then.

There is a clear development in the practical work with centres really having fun and experimenting.

ADMINISTRATION

Quite a few problems occurred this year since centres did not send the correct forms to moderators. Many moderators had to communicate back and forth before getting the required work.

The following must be sent to the moderators:

- (i) The centre's approval form – the moderation cannot commence unless this form is signed
- (ii) A programme with the candidates' names and the order and timing of the group on the DVD or the memory stick.
- (iii) The final script which shows the original script and the re-interpreted parts. This is mandatory in order to see and understand how the candidates have re-interpreted the work. One script for every group is sufficient.
- (iv) The candidates' individual mark sheets with the creative log
- (v) The centre should ensure that the DVD / memory stick works prior to sending it to the moderator.
- (vi) The candidates should introduce themselves clearly at the start of their practical work.

Comments on individual questions/sections

AO1 – THE CREATIVE LOG

- The best had clearly split the work into sections and were therefore completely aware of each section's requirements. The research has to be relevant. Candidates shouldn't print pages of irrelevant research from the internet. A scrapbook containing research and information should not be sent.
- Overall, the creative logs contained a coherent and effective discussion of the relevant research, the techniques and conventions used, and they succeeded in creating a clear link between dramatic theory and practice.
- Supporting work was submitted as attachments in a more effective manner this year. Photographs or 'screen shots' of sketches, mind maps etc. were used, rather than the items themselves. There were clear references to them in order to justify their inclusion.
- The practice record should take us through the process of creating a character, working on the techniques and how the work came together. The best work manages to discuss what didn't work and how they refined the work ready for the final performance. It must always come back to the work's artistic intention and how that reflects the practitioner or the company.
- Remember that the evaluation is completely separate to the creative log.
- It is completely necessary for the teacher to regularly annotate the work as this is invaluable for the moderator to see why the teacher has awarded a mark. The evaluation grid also needs to be used, and should be quoted from whilst marking.
- Generally, the marking of the creative log tends to be generous in a number of centres.

AO2 – THE PERFORMANCE

- Many centres should be praised for genuinely fantastic work this year. Work that demonstrated a solid understanding of the practitioner/company and work that demonstrated signs of discussion and research to create a challenging and ambitious re-interpretation.
- Once again this year, there was practical work in which the techniques were not clear. Where the practitioner or the company had been included every now and then instead of penetrating through the work and driving it. The process often requires taking a step back and asking whether the practitioner/company is clear in the work, or if specific scenes need to be re-worked etc. The work must be refined constantly and this is the devising process at its best. It is organic and develops all the time and the development should be welcomed and challenged constantly.

AO4 – THE EVALUATION

- Overall, the analysis and the evaluation was very good, with the majority evaluating the performance in a detailed and perceptive way, referring to the performing skills, the objectives and the practitioner / theatre company in a competent manner.
- Generally, the analysis and the evaluation were effective with the majority of candidates managing to refer to suitable key moments in the final performance and their personal contribution to the success of the work. This was a strength in the reports alongside constructive references to potential improvements.

Summary of key points

- Ensure that the correct documentation is sent to the moderator and that the DVD or the memory stick works properly.
- Ensure that there is a programme with the candidates' names and the order and timing of the group on the DVD or the memory stick.
- The final script must be sent to the moderator, which shows the original script from the scene

- Ensure that the creative log discusses the work of **creating, developing and refining** by discussing the techniques in detail and keeping the artistic intention clear.
- Please remember that the evaluation is completely separate to the creative log.
- It is good practice for the teacher to annotate the work.
- Please ensure that the techniques are completely clear in the practical work.

On behalf of all moderators, thank you very much for the pleasure of moderating interesting and ambitious work.

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UNIT 2: TEXT IN THEATRE

General Comments

There were excellent responses to the Unit 2 paper this year. *A View From The Bridge* proved to be the most popular text with many centres choosing *Medea* and *Ubu*. A few centres studied Ibsen and Shakespeare with the fewest studying Saunders Lewis' *Woman Made of Flowers*. The timing of answers and the evaluative responses have improved across the board.

Comments on individual questions/sections

(a) Some candidates struggled with positioning the characters within their chosen performance space for the extract under examination. Many did not use the hook of the first bullet point to detail their chosen performance space and style thus making the character positioning within the extract difficult to analyse. Many students did not note the basic terminology required to state the character positioning within their space and therefore failed to note how the movement to and from those positions created the desired atmosphere between the characters within the extract. Some chose to sketch a grid of the US, CS, and DS positions to support their direction of the extract. When candidates did state their performance style, a few failed to apply the style to their answer.

(b) (i) Many candidates were unaware of the original production style of their chosen text. Many candidates' sound and lighting ideas complimented their choice of stage and production style and consequently these answers were well-structured and detailed. Other successful answers incorporated video projections into their lighting ideas. SFX was generally effective with creative use of recorded sound effects creating their design effect; the use of underscoring music was often successful also.

A minority addressed the question as a full staging question with the LX and SFX as a tag on at the end. LX responses at times were lacking in detail, some generalised stating they would use 'normal lighting' or 'I would light the whole stage' which is unsatisfactory at this level.

(b) (ii) The most successful candidates detailed how the LX and SFX design in live performances they had witnessed had influenced their choices in (b) (i). Within these successful answers the live theatre influences were relevant and well-linked to the design ideas in (b) (i).

Some candidates wrote a general evaluation of set and costume rather than focusing on the question requirements. Less successful candidates could generally evaluate what they had seen effectively but then failed to relate to the choices made in (b) (i) and sometimes offered different ideas to those they had originally stated.

- (c) This question proved to be the most successful. Candidates reflected good understanding of relationship across the texts and understood the motivation of the characters under examination. This question was generally very well answered. Some had stronger analysis of the first chosen extract in comparison to their second, which could have been a timing issue. Some candidates also weighted the vocal or physical skills of one character more than the other.

Summary of key points

1. Candidates should use the bullet points within the questions to form their answers. Some tend to include irrelevant details which are not stipulated within the question
2. Question (b) (ii) needs to link directly with the ideas discussed in (b) (i). The live theatre influences must be relevant and link to the points made in the previous question
3. Performance style should be consistent throughout the answer. Any design ideas should also link with the chosen production style.

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UNIT 3: TEXT IN ACTION

General Comments

It is always a pleasure to mark our centres' Unit 3 work, and this year was no different. All the examiners confirmed they had seen fantastic work from some centres which pushed boundaries and created and submitted innovative work. The majority of centres succeeded in creating a theatrical event that was incredibly special and from which the candidates received practical education of the highest order. Teachers and candidates worked very hard ensuring that the practical work was of a very high standard. There were a few excellent examples of set, light, sound, costume and make up design, and generally it could be said that this element of the exam had developed considerably and the candidates genuinely understood the requirements of the technical tasks and had created dynamic work which contributed so much to the performance.

It is obvious that the vast majority of centres give their pupils very special theatrical experiences, ensuring they regularly see live productions, get the chance to work with theatre practitioners and professional companies, and this can clearly be seen in the practical work.

ADMINISTRATION

There were no big problems encountered in terms of administration, even though many examiners say it is very difficult to contact centres over the phone as teachers are with a class etc., so it is suggested that each teacher provides a personal e-mail address rather than the school e-mail or the administrative officer. You must also remember that the examiners need the pro-forma early enough in order to prepare, read the plays and to ensure a clear understanding of the practitioners / Theatre Company beforehand.

Almost every centre had ensured that all the sheets and administrative work are ready for the examiner at the start of the exam, this certainly makes things easier. It is strongly suggested that centres prepare a programme or sheet with the order of performances for the examiner in order to facilitate the running of the exam and photos of the candidates ensure they are correctly identified, especially if they all wear black.

The majority of centres conducted the exam in an organised and problem-free manner, and without taking too much time changing locations or sets. The most organised centres were the ones where all the candidates supported each other. There were parents or pupils in the audiences and a true theatrical atmosphere was created by most centres. Each centre had succeeded in creating an atmosphere with sound and lighting, with some very fortunate to have a drama studio or halls, however it must be said that those centres in classrooms or different locations had created an atmosphere as appropriate.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PERFORMANCES

Generally, it must be said that the centres work hard to ensure two very different styles which give the candidates the best possible opportunities to show their acting or technical ability.

Some centres need to be fully aware that the script work should be based on **style**, and the devising work should be based on **practitioners** or **a recognised theatre company**. Please ensure also that the candidates are fully aware of which techniques are being used and that they provide a basis for the work from the start. Those techniques must clearly be seen in the devising work and the script. Being totally certain of the techniques makes it easier for them to write and record the process in the Process and Evaluation Report.

There were mature and sophisticated performances of well-known and new, challenging and ambitious texts. There were signs of practice on the text work and candidates showed a clear understanding of the text's requirements and style. Most texts were performed naturalistically.

Most centres produced challenging, ambitious and very interesting devising work. The practitioners or the Theatre Company were very clear and ensured that the candidates reach their potential. Unfortunately, some centres performed naturalistically even though they used Brecht or Berkoff or Frantic Assembly with a little physical work every now and again to show the practitioner or the Theatre Company. There were several good examples of the work of Kneehigh, Paper Birds, *Gair am Air* and Splendid this year. Care should be taken in stating the influence of Theatr Genedlaethol or Royal Shakespeare as those are the companies' names, and the style changes from production to production depending on the director.

There were excellent examples of Brecht's work showing the frustrations of young candidates in the world's contemporary issues such as mental health, sexuality, war and the current government.

Some still believe that movement, screaming and getting completely lost in the moment conveys Artaud, which is fair enough, but under exam conditions words and dialogue must be developed in order to successfully 'apply performing skills' and the 'ability to communicate with the audience'.

Again this year, it is emphasised that the two extracts must clearly differentiate between style and practitioner or theatre company and that the techniques must be very clear in order to succeed in reaching the highest band.

Generally the technical candidates develop well, showing that they've worked closely with a group of actors from the start of the process.

Again, there were examples where the technical candidates hadn't included examples of research notes or a sheet with the performance cues, or no understanding of the practitioner or the performance style and centres must ensure this is in place in order to give the candidates an opportunity to reach their potential.

PROCESS AND EVALUATION REPORT

Most centres have developed a system of working consistently on sections 1 and 2 of the report during the preparatory period so that only part 3 remains after the performances. This is by far the best work as the process is written when everything is live and clearer to the candidates rather than having to try and write everything at the end of the performance. It is obvious that many centres have clear guidelines so the candidates understand exactly what is required.

It should be ensured that section 3 analyses and evaluates the performance by discussing the performance skills, the techniques and the audience's reaction. There is a tendency to continue to discuss the process so no real evaluation occurs.

Many centres still do not split the report into three sections so the work tends to jump from one thing to another without structure. The need to write in three clear sections is emphasised again this year.

Section 1 should concentrate entirely on how the stimulus is inputted, show a clear understanding of the practitioner, company or style and which techniques are being developed. Attachments could also be included in part one.

Section 2 should concentrate on the creative process and how the work was developed and refined. It should also include a discussion of the influence live theatre had on their ideas etc. The research must be incorporated into the process and it should show how those techniques drove the work. Some kind of diary or notes should be kept during the preparation period and Sections 1 and 2 could be prepared prior to the performance.

Section 3 should then concentrate on analysing and evaluating the final performance by discussing their performance skills, the success of the techniques and its effectiveness on their work. What was the audience's reaction and was the stimulus successfully incorporated into their work.

Summary of key points

- The examiners need the pro-forma early enough in order to prepare and to read the plays, and to ensure a clear understanding of the practitioner / Theatre Company beforehand.
- The centres should prepare a programme or a sheet with the order of performances for the examiner, and photos of the candidates ensure easy identification.
- The script work must be based on **style** and the devising work on **practitioners** or a **recognised theatre company**
- **Please ensure** that the candidates are **very clear** which techniques are used and that this should provide a basis for the work from the off.
- There must be **words and dialogue** whilst using the practitioner Artaud in order to 'apply performing skills' and the 'ability to communicate with the audience'.
- The two parts must demonstrate a clear difference in style and practitioner or theatre company
- Technical candidates must have examples of research notes, a sheet of the performance cues etc in order to give the candidates an opportunity to reach their potential
- Please ensure that the report is in **three clear sections**.

On behalf of all examiners, thank you to all the teachers for supporting our candidates and for going beyond all school timetables to ensure they are given valuable experiences which certainly develops them not only as intelligent performers but as confident, organized and conscientious young people.

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UNIT 4: TEXT IN PERFORMANCE

General Comments

We had an excellent range of texts this year, which were obviously well taught across the board. *Sweeney Todd* and *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* remain the most popular. There were only a few rubric concerns e.g. answering both texts from Section A and some timing issues with candidates not completing the paper. These were a minority however and most centres had developed their students to answer with maturity.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A:

- (i) This answer had been well prepared with excellent detail on motivation linked to the character's voice and movement. The best answered linked a performance style to create the desired atmosphere in the extract, structuring the answer into approximately three key moments. Most used the style of the original and covered the whole extract with precision. Mrs Lovett and Grace were very successful, with the Commander, David Jones & Nain offering some insightful performance suggestions as well.
 - (ii) The evaluations were generally much better with a focus on the influences for their acting choices. The evaluations of the live performances in some centres far outweighed the link to the decisions made in (i). Again centres are reminded of the importance of making the live theatre discussing relevant the creative choices made in the previous question. A few candidates evaluated design elements here that were not linked to the question.
- (b) This answer was also generally well-presented covering the four design elements of stage, set, lighting and sound in clearly. Many chose site specific areas for *Mametz*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning* but failed to mention the stage type for the extract and what atmosphere this stage type would create for the audience. A few candidates missed the atmosphere created through design elements and others failed to provide a set. Attention must be given to lighting terminology; sound effects were mostly effective, but again this year, many *Sweeney Todd* answers did not discuss or acknowledge the music and the orchestra.

SECTION B:

- (i) With regards to relating directorial choices to the whole play, the best centres could weave their character positioning and movements into whole play themes, relating their direction to a contemporary audience. The best answers linked their performance style to the original performance style. Again, those that chose site specific locations didn't always discuss where the audience was placed and so positioning was either vague or difficult to gauge. Some candidates struggled to direct their actors positioning on their chosen performance space. A few candidates confused the concept of a contemporary audience as keeping a young audience interested. Some candidates did not provide a stage configuration or performance space within the opening of the essay to be able to position their characters within. When referring to the extract, the most successful candidates could refer to the positioning of characters within the opening, during the extract and as it closed.
- (ii) In general the movement and character positioning influences were better here than in the similar question in Section A. Some referred to contemporary adaptations that influenced their movement choices, which were extremely effective. Others rejected creative ideas they had witnessed in live theatre productions, explaining why their concepts would be different. Again some candidates provided general analysis not referring to how their live theatre productions influenced their directorial choices in (b) (i).

Summary of key points

- When referring to live theatre influences, candidates should reference the where and when they saw the performance whilst answering how those influenced their choices for the key parts of the previous question
- The question on live theatre states 'productions' as does the specification, therefore candidates should refer to more than one production when evaluating their influences
- *Sweeney Todd* is a musical and the orchestra and songs create the atmosphere Sondheim intended. This should be referenced, or if not used should be explained and justified.



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