

Edexcel GCSE Drama
Unit 3: Drama Performance
Example work (devising) 2014 - 15

Overview

This commentary should be read in conjunction with the recording of the performance, which can be accessed here:

<http://youtu.be/OwSTMDurx4s>

Please note: this recording is accessed via Youtube.

We would like to thank the teachers and students of North Bridge House School who have granted permission for this work to be used as example material.

If you would like to share examples of your students' work for units 1, 2 or 3, please contact Paul Webster by emailing TeachingPerformingArts@Pearson.com.

In order to use any work, we will need permission from all students involved (using the consent form at the end of this document) and a good quality recording.

Option A: Devised Performance

'Heroes...?'

Introduction

The unit requires students to present for examination a performance that:

- meets the Assignment Brief for the year (in this case: 'Contrast(s)')
- meets in balance all 4 assessment criteria
- meets the time requirements as detailed in the Assessment Support Guide.

The performance has been re-recorded to give clarity of both sound and vision for the purpose of this teacher support work. The comments relate to the live actual examination performance.

The level of achievement is given in bands not the actual marks awarded at the examination.

NB This is one example from one centre and should not be taken as any indication that this is the form/structure/style that is preferred or recommended by Edexcel. There is no preferred form/style/structure.

Commentary on the Overall Performance

This was a very strong ensemble performance that met all the criteria for Unit 3 at Level 1.

It met the time requirements at 15 minutes for 3 students.

It was clear throughout that it was a result of high quality teaching and learning throughout the GCSE course as well as a well-structured preparation and final rehearsal period.

It addressed the 2014 Assignment Brief in exploring the contrast between the way soldiers are portrayed to the public and how they may perceive themselves.

The students also considered (and achieved in performance) the contrast between the two main roles of Ben Collings and Scott Prince, and the different feelings of the contrast between them as their young and older selves.

The performance reflected considerable research into the characters of the two main roles and reflected the society in which the performance was set. The subsidiary roles were also clearly portrayed.

All roles were well defined using the student's understanding of the use of vocal and movement skills in performance to communicate these characters to the audience clearly and convincingly. The recording also shows the very high level of communication between all three students in the ensemble throughout the performance.

The focus on two soldiers communicated the chosen strong message throughout.

There is also highly effective and considered movement work that supports the flow of the narrative. The more abstract work enhances the whole performance and is thoughtfully integrated into the piece.

The examiner wrote immediately after the performance 'It totally engaged the audience and the examiner. There was heartfelt emotion and use of seamless style and form to communicate a gripping narrative.'

Comments on the examination performance

All students were awarded marks for both Communication and Content/Style/Form towards the top of Level 1.

Communication: stunning communication within ensemble and with audience.

Content/Style/Form: exemplary understanding of the chosen physical ensemble style, with a mature and sensitive understanding of the chosen content.

Young Scott Prince

All marks were awarded towards the top of Level 1.

Voice and Movement: Exceptionally high level of skill. Very effective moments of comedy were a positive contrast.

Roles and Characterisation: Highly convincing as main role. Other cameo roles well defined.

Ben

Voice and Movement: Exceptionally high level of skill. Effective use of comedy movements to support narrative.

Roles and Characterisation: Highly convincing as Ben. Other cameo roles well defined.

Older Scott Prince/Captain/Ben's Dad

Voice and Movement: Superb vocal clarity throughout. Movement exceptionally well defined and expressive.

Roles and Characterisation: All roles extremely well differentiated. Scott was a mature and in-depth character.

This student was awarded slightly higher marks in the above.

This is a great example of three areas that are not part of the assessment criteria but underpin and enhance the complete experience for both performers and audience:

- Enthusiasm
- Energy
- Enjoyment

Notes on the Commentary

When using the recording centres are reminded that examiners award marks only on the live performance and do not view the recordings to confirm marks.

The recordings are used by Edexcel to support monitoring procedures and provide materials for the awarding meetings and the following year's standardisation for all examiners.

Teacher's guidance

The following guidance for supporting students with the Unit 3 examination has been provided by the Head of Drama at North Bridge House, Amelia Morse:

To enable students to shine in Unit 3, it is imperative that they showcase their abilities by playing to their strengths. I have found that when students devise their own work, as opposed to using a play text, they can tailor the creation of roles to their specific skills. Devising also enables them to have ownership over their piece and a deeper connection with the words used, as the spoken language has come organically from their own construction. Students are often far freer when they are not feeling constrained by the words of another writer, and therefore their delivery is more natural and truthful.

When creating and structuring pieces of Drama (be they devised or scripted, or during KS3, 4 or 5), it is helpful for students to understand the necessity of smooth transitions between moments of action. Long, drawn out pauses between scenes or dialogue slows the pace and an audience can become disengaged. I urge students to find interesting and unique ways to show the passing of time or locations. A character circling the stage after a monologue can swiftly move the piece on, a series of Freeze Frames showing events is punchier than long narrative, or phrases delivered by characters that provide a snap shot of key moments can show a character's progression in life. Using monologues between scenes can be an effective way of ending a scene and starting another.

The work can be taken to a much higher level by pace, momentum and fluidity. Blackouts slow Drama down and can often be avoided by making choices that keep moments flowing seamlessly into the next. Walking and talking at the same time takes out unnecessary pauses. It is worth spending time honing devising abilities and focusing purely on use of energy and pace. Opening with a bang enables the audience to be engaged from the outset. Editing work and being discerning about irrelevant pieces of information that don't move the story on is a useful skill for students to acquire.

A valuable concept to bear in mind is that all theatre should have a message, whether it's a piece of Theatre in Education or not. Drama pieces should have a meaning and a message -what is the piece about? What do you want the audience to be thinking about as they leave? What is the driving force behind the piece? This therefore guides decisions and focuses the Drama on crucial points, rather than people just "talking" on stage.

It can be hugely beneficial to have all candidates on stage all of the time throughout the Drama. Exits and entrances slow the momentum down. However, if the character is frozen in role on stage they can instantly become part of the action.

Using all performers in scenes is a useful tool, even when a particular character is not present in the scene. Candidates can take on the role of a radio broadcast, complete with a presenter and jingles, or the hospital bed and a beeping life support machine, for example.

Showing a character's emotion physically through an abstract image can be highly effective. Instead of stating how a character may be feeling the group could consider symbolically showing it, for example the group creating a barricade around them, symbolically showing their inner feelings of being trapped in a more sophisticated way. Making choices regarding interesting movement and symbolism enables candidates to further reveal their movement skills. Fight sequences can often look much slicker and more professional when created as a series of Freeze Frames, or performed in slow motion, providing that reactions through face are delivered with conviction. The incorporation of Explorative Strategies is important. However, it is often very interesting to see them being used in a unique way by thinking outside the box. The concept of Angels and Devils could be shown as characters circling round the focal character articulating the "dos" and "don'ts", which builds to a climax. Direct Address enables students to make eye contact with the Examiner and therefore is an important part of communicating the meaning. It can show confidence and fearlessness. The inclusion of a monologue for everyone in the group (not necessarily every character) is an effective way of gaining marks and showcasing ability and range.

Making sophisticated choices in terms of storylines gives candidates more scope. Allowing students to generate their own ideas in terms of plot and content often

provides them with a deeper ownership over the piece. Enabling them to gain the necessary devising skills early on in their learning of Drama means that by the time it really counts the smooth transitions and sophisticated choices have been developed, and students naturally make interesting decisions. It also means that they have a tool kit of previous ideas to select from.

Student feedback

You can see a short film of the students talking about how they created 'Heroes...?' here:

<http://youtu.be/EVW6SQyiMMY>

General commentary on Unit 3

Unit 3 is worth 40% of the total marks for Drama GCSE. Therefore examiners expect to see work that not only meets the requirements of this unit as detailed in the specification and Assessment Support Guide but reflects that 40% of a two year GCSE course has been spent in preparation for this final examination.

During the Programme of Study it is expected that all students will be given the opportunity to become confident and skilled performers.

There should be time spent in teaching the medium and elements of drama as well as how the strategies can be used in the preparation period for the final exam performance.

It was clear that these students understood and could select and use in performance from a wide range of theatre forms/styles. These were used with confidence and sensitivity throughout.