

Examiners' Report Summer 2008

iGCSE

iGCSE Drama 4348/01

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4348 Paper 1 Practical Examination

In the second year of the examination, the number of candidates more than trebled from the previous year. The majority of candidates performed scripted pieces. There was a wide range of pieces performed from plays in terms of historical periods, from Greek, to Shakespeare, to Wilde - also in terms of modern pieces, for example, 'The Perils of Pauline', 'Bold Girls', 'The Pillowman', 'Blood Brothers' and 'She's Behind You'. Some of the work seen was, as in the previous year, 'off the scale', with candidates' performances showing depth and sensitivity in 'serious pieces' and excellent comic timing in more 'light hearted pieces'. At other times, some candidates' interpretations were affected by a lack of a clear understanding of the roles being played, with vocal delivery lacking the necessary changes of pace and modulation needed. Some of these pieces were somewhat static at times, lacking clear appreciation of the chosen styles and forms.

The minority of candidates offering acting chose the devised option, once again, within this option work of excellence was seen, with candidates creating a role or roles with clear commitment and imagination. In some cases work in the devised option was appropriate, but lacked the challenge to enable candidates to raise their attainment to the levels needed to achieve higher marks.

Some pieces integrated scripted scenes into largely devised pieces or vice versa very effectively. This is perfectly acceptable within the specification. For the first time in this specification some centres had candidates offering the performance support option. Once again, the attainment of candidates choosing this option was varied.

Examiner identification of candidates is crucial in this examination. Although all candidates clearly identified themselves, as required, before pieces started, there were occasions where identification at certain points in performances was not possible. For example, if action was not captured on camera or if candidates wore visors completely covering their faces.

The overall attainment of candidates was similar to the previous year. Many candidates produced work of excellence, with weaker candidates often displaying some success in their performances.

4348 Paper 2 Written Examination

Question 1

This question was answered well on the whole, with candidates largely adhering to the suggested parameters contained in the bullet points of the question. There were one or two centres where the candidates struggled to arrive at a “rehearsal technique” and it may be that centres would benefit from explicitly using and explaining these during the preparation phase for performance. From the evidence presented, in some instances, it appeared that candidates had done very little exploration of their characters and obviously these candidates were at a disadvantage when answering this question.

By and large however, the answers to this question were comprehensive and offered varying extents of evaluation, depending on the level of the student.

Question 2

This question was also answered well on the whole, with most students understanding the concept that was being explored and able to offer some evidence in response. Even in some of the higher level responses however, some students chose to discuss quite small decisions made during the process, and then tried to extract meaningful discourse from these small decisions. This proved an arduous task for the candidates on occasion and it might help them if their teacher(s) flagged up significant decisions made during the rehearsal process, and discussed alternatives. Candidates who actively considered alternatives scored well. Many mid-level candidates were content to describe the decisions and offer a level of evaluation, but without a meaningful attempt at a discussion. Lower level candidates described the decisions made without great detail and offered very little sense of evaluation.

Question 3

Many candidates struggled with technical terminology on this question but the instructions for the candidates to provide a diagram proved useful here and most candidates took advantage of this to explain their ideas. Students also struggled with some of the basic concepts of lighting on occasion, including colour (“black” light) and where lights needed to be hung in order to have an effect onstage and the kinds of effect that could be achieved through angles. Some centres had prepared their students with set design ideas and their students were able to adapt these to provide largely workable lighting designs with clear explanations as to how the lighting would impact upon the audience at a given moment.

Successful candidates followed the guidance given in the bullet points comprehensively and began by giving very clear and detailed explanations of why each moment was significant. Weaker candidates largely managed to do this too, but to a lesser extent and found it more difficult to describe what lighting would look like in any detail and how it would make an impact. In some cases, it was clear that students had not had much experience of either seeing or using stage lights and these candidates were clearly disadvantaged on this question.

Question 4

Most students seemed to have been prepared for this question and were able to explain what one theme in the play was. Weaker candidates found it more difficult to go on to explain why the theme was important today with any meaningful depth but stronger candidates seemed to have very clear and comprehensive responses planned to this type of question. It was a pleasure to read some very intelligent and worthwhile responses to this question, with some students clearly expressing meaningful views and opinions and relating them to the text. The communication of the theme to the audience proved more challenging to a larger number of candidates, with some at the higher levels struggling to produce meaningful examples of how this might be achieved onstage. Conversely, there were also some excellent responses with careful consideration of acting skills and staging being given in the response. Mid-level responses tended to be less detailed in this section of the answer and low-level responses found this part of the question very demanding.

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