



1999 HSC
Drama
Enhanced Examination Report

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1999 Higher School Certificate Drama Enhanced Examination Report

Introduction

The Group Presentation

General Comments

The high standard of Group Presentations indicates that most candidates and their teachers understand the demands of group-devised work. Examiners noted that there continue to be some difficulties in addressing specific requirements for this part of the HSC Examination and the guidelines for the development of the Group Presentation.

Candidates should have quiet, controlled surroundings that are free of interruptions for the conduct of examinations. On arrival at centres, examiners go through a checklist of requirements with teachers.

Requirements

- Teachers have a duty to ensure they are present during examinations and to complete necessary organisation prior to the day. It must not be left to examiners to complete paperwork, set up examinations or to supervise the audience. These are the teachers' responsibilities.
- Some candidates continue to use weapons or naked flames in performance. Examiners will stop performances where these appear. Teachers must take an active role in discouraging candidates from using weapons, nudity, naked flames or any implement that may endanger themselves, other candidates, or examiners during performances. Theatre is about illusion. Candidates can create the impression they require without having to use the inappropriate items.
- Candidates continue to go over or under the stipulated time for Group Presentations. Candidates should be given opportunities to perform prior to the examination to ensure time specifications are met. Teachers and candidates are reminded that examiners will stop performances which go over time.
- Content for Group Presentation must be original. Material can be drawn from a variety of sources but should be used in an original way. Increasingly, candidates are including substantial amounts of non-original work and may be penalised for doing so.
- The schools' centre number should be included on documentation rather than the school number.

Major Recommendations

Examiners felt there was a need to comment on two aspects of 1999 Group Presentations to assist future candidates. These two aspects are: Audience; and Structure and Dramatic Coherence.

Audience

- Audience is essential to theatre. Excellent performers understood that the audience needs to be engaged. Many excellent performers move the audience by making an emotional connection with them.
- An audience is engaged primarily through the performer's control of their voice and physical skills in the context of the performance space.

- Performers often create belief in their audiences through the eye contact and an invitation to ‘come on the journey’ with the performer/s.
- A key ingredient in the performance is the relationship between the performer and the audience. The audience consists of all people in the performance space.
- The audience should be organised by the teacher prior to the examination and should be supervised by a class teacher during the performance.
- In the organisation of the audience, the teacher should be aware that parents and members of the public should not be part of the audience. Neither should Year 12 drama candidates be present.

Structure and Dramatic Coherence

- An effective piece of theatre communicates through a structured and coherent performance. Excellent group presentations use the elements of drama intrinsically. They are able to:
 - control the audience focus;
 - integrate a creative use of space;
 - allow the ensemble to work confidently within the structure created;
 - create a clear and coherent and sustained theatrical statement;
 - use the given topics as springboards to an imaginative, original performance; and
 - take risks with a willingness to employ styles which they understand theatrically.

Strong Group Presentations

- were effective ensemble performances with members working towards a common objective to communicate ideas, images and character intelligently, with complexity, in an engaging piece of theatre;
- were polished performances, with well-researched themes and in-depth treatment enhanced by effective metaphors to create layers of meaning;
- incorporated sophisticated visual and physical images. Used symbolism appropriately and in context to create economic, insightful, significant and engaging scripts;
- took creative risks that worked theatrically, providing an original approach;
- demonstrated strong sense of ownership of the piece with equity of roles, shared responsibility and focus;
- were polished, dynamic, energetic and innovative, displaying a sense of theatre;
- used dramatic tension, timing, space, purposeful movement. Understood and effectively manipulated a variety of elements of drama;
- where transitions were used, they were fluid, meaningful and helped to drive the ‘through-line’ of the performance;
- used stage space inventively rather than introducing other elements such as props or repeated scene changes, blackouts or leaving the stage area. Where properties were included they were kept to a minimum but were significantly integrated to increase the dramatic effect;
- relied on the actors rather than on technical support;
- demonstrated subtly defined, and sustained characters/roles;
- had experience in performing before an audience. Understood and could effectively command the actor-audience relationship by clever control of energy, pace and rhythms;
- demonstrated high level performance skills.

Weaker Group Presentations

- tended to have a formularised approach, or superficial or cliched exploration of themes;
- incorporated a series of dramatic techniques and styles to create variety without being sure of why the techniques/styles were being used, or focused on elaborate and unnecessary plot development rather than making the most of each dramatic moment;
- often used repetitive movement and words or rhythms to link scenes in collage-type drama or used transitions that were dependent on lighting or music. Blackouts used too frequently or candidates left the stage area at the end of segments at the expense of the rhythm of the piece;
- demonstrated only basic understanding of dramatic elements, particularly timing, rhythm and tension;
- were more dependent on technical support or sets rather than actors;
- demonstrated average expressive skills, displaying limited variations in vocal and physical dimensions;
- did not use space in an inventive way;
- lacked a sense of ensemble, having no definite roles and not relating well together in the space;
- appeared as a collection of flashing or fragmented images with little or no connection and no opportunities to develop role. There was little sense of a journey. There was no clarity in material presented;
- demonstrated little understanding of dramatic elements, particularly timing, rhythm and tension. Were visually unexciting, lacking focus and concentration;
- showed a lack of understanding of the process. Presented poor logbooks, or no logbooks;
- lacked theatricality;
- imitated television, used cliched or stereotyped character/roles, relied heavily on advertising slogans, rehashed ‘OnSTAGE’ work, included irrelevant music, movement or dance as a fill or display of skills;
- had abrupt and non-theatrical endings.

Individual Project Performance

General Comments

Examiners noted that the number of candidates choosing the Individual Performance option is increasing. Candidates should be discouraged from the perception that performance is the ‘easier’ option. Teachers should be aware of student strengths and should provide assistance in guiding candidates to make choices based on these strengths. Candidates with poor expressive skills should be strongly encouraged to consider a project area more appropriate to their skills.

While candidates should be encouraged to select material themselves for the Individual Performance, teacher guidance on the choice of material is advisable. Candidates attempting an unfamiliar style of theatre without the skills or commitment to undertaking the necessary research and familiarisation with that style might be encouraged to stay with something they are more comfortable with.

Major Recommendation

Theatricality

Individual performances need to be a self-contained piece of theatre. There has been an increase in candidates presenting monologues, audition pieces or work sourced from the Internet. When approaching such material, candidates should keep dramatic context and theatricality in mind. Although there was evidence of outstanding self-devised work, candidates not proficient in dramatic writing tended to lack theatricality in their performances. Candidates who choose to write original pieces should be aware of the need to achieve a high standard of theatricality in their work.

Strong Candidates

- chose material appropriate to their strengths, demonstrating a sense of theatricality and making a coherent theatrical statement using meaningful transitions;
- understood the meaning and demands of the material and adapted the script to create an original piece of theatre;
- self-devised work demonstrated depth of research and commitment to the work;
- presented logs that exhibited excellent understanding of developmental process;
- were skilled performers who made the best use of expressive skills, cues, rhythm and timing;
- were committed to the physical demands of the piece. Used subtle means to control energy, pace and rhythm to maintain the audience relationship;
- showed an ability to engage the audience with focus and tension;
- created a clear and sophisticated portrayal of a character or characters within their range;
- displayed belief, complexity, dimension and conviction in character;
- had carefully researched the character and play and understood the character's motivation and nuances;
- confidently defined the space and used it effectively. Made definite choices on stage blocking and used purposeful movement which was inherent to the action;
- were well rehearsed and highly energised;
- relied on the actor and were not over dependent on props, lighting, music, or sound effects.

Weaker Candidates

- were highly disjointed and lacking in cohesion, without considering a performance style;
- failed to provide a context for the performance and often had unclear endings;
- recited material without conviction, belief or focus;
- were vocally weak;
- used unmotivated movement blocking and unnecessary pacing;
- often relied on props or costumes;
- were unanimated in presentation or spoke to an invisible person on stage without acknowledging the audience, often acting in profile;
- lacked an understanding of the elements of drama, eg had specific problems with focus, cues, tempo, pacing and rhythm. Performances lacked energy;
- presented a monologue with no analysis or development of role or character;
- played themselves or multiple characters ineffectively;
- made poor choices in attempting cross-gender or age roles;

- were under-time and under-worked, at times reading from books or scripts;
- showed little understanding of the relationship with the audience; were not theatrical or coherent;
- had slow, messy transitions or too many transitions, eg turning away from the audience, dropping out of character and turning back to the audience as a new character;
- presented poorly written, self-devised monologues, or personal, didactic diatribes and ultraisms which were confessional in style, or told life stories without a sense of character. Content was often self-indulgent, emotional or angst-ridden, dealing with rape, incest, teenage angst, or simplistic ideas which lacked maturity;
- did not understand the difference between storytelling and enactment;
- gratuitously included song and dance in an attempt to add extra time to a short piece.

The Individual Project

Logbooks in the Marking Process

Examiners expressed concern over the number of candidates still presenting or submitting projects without logbooks. While the logbook is not marked by examiners, it is essential in assisting the examiners in substantiating the process and understanding much of the candidate's approach to the work. The logbook must be available to examiners on the day of the examinations and must accompany submitted projects.

The logbook in hard copy projects takes the place of the discussion process which examiners have access to in the Individual Project: Performance. Therefore, it is essential that in the log the candidate highlights, in some manner, the details they consider most important.

Each candidate must present their own logbook, both for individual projects and for the group presentation. One logbook for the entire group does not fulfill examination requirements.

Candidates who present for examinations without logbooks are noted by examiners.

It is a requirement that logs be assessed as a part of school-based assessment. When markers are corroborating the authenticity of candidate work, the teacher's initials and dates in logbooks are useful. So, verification of the logbook by the candidate's teacher is essential. This is best achieved by the teacher initialing and dating the logbook on a regular basis, ie fortnightly or monthly. However, the candidate should remove any indication of his or her name, the teacher's grading or marks and the name of the school.

Candidates should indicate in logbooks the names of any outside tutors, the nature of the assistance provided and dates. Logbooks should clearly indicate workshops attended and give the name and specific details of assistance provided by people outside of school, not only tutors but also production houses, service bureaus, theatre companies, etc.

If the teacher is unable to verify candidate work, appropriate school procedures for non-certification should be followed prior to the examination, including informing the Board of Studies.

Individual Project: Design

General Comments

The standard of Design Projects has improved in several areas indicating that candidates and teachers are becoming more aware of the guidelines. However, in some projects there still continues to be difficulties in addressing the guidelines specified in the KLA Handbook. It is recommended that teachers read and discuss the guidelines, recommendations and criteria checklists with their candidates.

Candidates and teachers also need to be aware of the difference between plagiarism and appropriation. Images, like quotes, should be sourced and logbooks should provide evidence of how an existing image has been manipulated/recontextualised to support the needs of the play.

The design concept is a clear and precise statement which explains the design. This concept should come from a clear understanding and interpretation of the play, not something imposed on the play. The design concept statement is a necessary component of each design project. The provision of the design concept, both included in the logbook and written out separately from the logbook, is of immense help to examiners.

General recommendations on packaging for all design projects:

- Each part of a design project should be labeled and numbered, such as 1/5 to identify the first of five component items.
- Where possible all parts of a project should be presented in one package, ideally in one folder. Items should not be presented double sided, ie one item on the back of another item.
- Posters and costume designs should be presented flat, not rolled. It is an inappropriate and unnecessary expense to frame these works under glass or perspex or in timber, metal or mounted on clay.
- Floor plans for set and lighting design should be folded, not rolled.
- Sets should be constructed of sturdy material such as very light plywood, balsa wood, and styrofoam core board. Loose pieces should be securely glued or fastened into place.
- Any Dangerous Packaging is strictly prohibited. Excessive framing, wrapping, padding, and mounting are to be discouraged as it usually detracts rather than enhances work.

Costume Design

General Comments

The standard of costume design was extremely high this year, which confirms these candidates and teachers have taken note of the specifications and criteria for Costume Design. However, there is a need to state again that there must be a unified concept throughout all the designs. This concept, which reinforces the director's vision of the play, should be stated succinctly in a separate written statement.

Candidates should ensure that they:

- include a clear, separate design concept statement;
- label each rendering on the front with the character's name and the act/scene for which the costume has been designed;

- attach a small fabric swatch or colour sample and other construction information on the front of the rendering in a way which does not obscure the character figure. They should not include items of jewellery, chains, buttons, etc;
- make the size of the character figure occupy most of the page. Minimum size for the character figure is A4. Candidates should note that A4 is not a recommendation for the size of paper. For this reason, A3 is a more satisfactory paper size for costume renderings;
- submit the preliminary sketches or written descriptions on a board/paper of the same size as the other renderings;
- do not detract from the renderings by over-elaborate decorations or extraneous borders, edges or trim;
- do not send excessive amounts of extraneous research material;
- separate the project work clearly from the log book.

Stronger Candidates

- conceived an original, innovative but appropriate concept which was sustained and unified throughout the total design;
- accounted for the various aspects of the play such as genre, lighting, 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 produced renderings which created an immediate impression of the characters and their dramatic function in the play;
- selected a range of characters which reflected the scope of the play;
- included clear, effective support material such as swatches, written notes, colour samples as part of the renderings;
- included a clear, concise separate statement of the design concept.

Weaker Candidates

- produced renderings which lacked any sense of individuality and often gave the appearance of fashion models rather than dramatic characters;
- did not have a unified design concept for the play;
- did not present the costume design in the context of the play;
- had a confused image of the character and dealt in stereotypes rather than dramatic character;
- produced renderings for minor characters whose impact within the play is minimal;
- had unclear or ineffective written support;
- lacked a clear, written design concept;
- demonstrated little knowledge of the play.

Set Design

General Comments

There was an overall improvement in model construction this year. Candidates are exploring better options for building materials and have a greater sense of the theatre space. The set must contribute to the play by providing an appropriate environment for the action and candidates should also have a sense of what the audience will see from their perspective. Scale still creates some problems and candidates should take note of the following recommendations.

Candidates should ensure that they:

- understand and correctly use the prescribed scale of 1:25 metric. It is essential that candidates have a 1:25 scale ruler when working on their designs. A useful aid in coming to terms with the problem is to construct a cut-out cardboard human figure in scale. This means that a 1.8 metre tall human figure will be approximately 7cm (70mm) in actual size;
- identify the specific theatre space and stage configuration they will work on early in the development of the design. However, it is counterproductive and a poor use of time to construct the entire theatre;
- are aware of the actor/audience relationship, especially in relation to sight lines, masking, etc;
- do not attempt to produce any lighting effects. Torches, batteries, etc. should not be used;
- ensure that small items of setting that are not stuck down, yet packed with the design, have their positions marked on the floor plan that accompanies the work.

Stronger Candidates

- produced a model with visual impact which was directly linked to the play's themes and technical needs by looking for a symbolic or metaphoric approach;
- produced a model that gave an accurate representation of how the full scale setting would look and work in the theatre or performance space;
- made an effective use of the theatre space with an understanding and recognition of audience sight lines, seating arrangements and the needs of actors, eg appropriate acting areas, entrances, exits, levels, etc;
- included all the mandatory items particularly the floor plan of the theatre, the floor plan of the stage area with the set, furniture and large props indicated, all in correct scale;
- included all the necessary items of furniture, props and the human figure in correct scale;
- presented a separate, well-written design statement which was linked directly to the play and justified in the execution of the set.

Weaker Candidates

- failed to clearly identify a specific theatre space for their design, creating an unclear resolution of the onstage/offstage positions or providing an adequate understanding of audience sight lines;
- produced a design concept that did not address the thematic concerns of the play and tended to be a literal interpretation rather than a symbolic and metaphoric approach;
- produced a model that had some elements of scale, but either overcompensated or under-compensated for the technical requirements of the play;
- were only partially successful in their awareness of the requirements of the theatre space and did not provide imaginative solutions to staging problems, multiple scenes, etc;
- did not provide floor plans as required by the criteria;
- did not present a separate clear succinct statement of the design concept;
- relied on impractical solutions that could not work in a theatre.

Poster, Program, Advertising and Promotional Copy Design

General Comments

This area of design requires candidates to show skills with both visual images and written descriptions. Many candidates were unable to combine both requirements to produce effective designs. Candidates should note that the same copy for the media releases might be used in both design concepts with appropriate layout and format changes.

Candidates must ensure that:

- there are TWO completely different and separate design concepts;
- each item (poster, program, flyer, etc) is clearly labeled for BOTH concepts and simply presented;
- candidates do not send banners, flags, T-shirts, mugs, tape recordings, or videos as part of this project;
- no glass is used. Poster Designs should not be presented in any metal or wood frames. Designs should not be fastened onto any wood metal fabric or ceramic mountings;
- layout for the program includes, in addition to the cast and crew and acknowledgments, information about the playwright and a background to or history of the play;
- each concept has an indepth media treatment which may take the form of an interview with cast or crew members, production designers, playwright or director, a magazine article on the production, theatre company producing the play, the playwrights intentions etc, pre-publicity material in the form of pre-review of the play in rehearsal written by the publicist (not a critic).

Stronger Candidates

- conceived TWO distinct and different concepts with strong visual impact which contained in EACH design a visual metaphor for the whole play and which was unified among all the items;
- demonstrated a thorough understanding of the play which was presented though the visual images and the appropriate use of material for the program insert and media release;
- understood the audience for which the design was aimed and the image that the theatre company wished to convey;
- adapted the elements of the design and the necessary information to suit the different requirements for each of the mandatory items and produced a style of presentation appropriate for each item;
- presented a clear and concise written statement explaining EACH design concept which was separate from the logbook.

Weaker Candidates

- presented only one strong concept which was not sustained across the required items, or, presented a commonplace visual image for each concept with little distinction between the two concepts;
- used common computer generated images or photographs from other sources which were not appropriate to the design concept;
- showed average quality of execution such as uneven lettering, crowded layout, visual emphasis given to wrong areas, insufficient information for the given item, etc;
- did not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the play in the written work;
- did not present a clear, concise written statement for EACH design concept;

- did not include all mandatory items or submitted half-completed work;
- had a poor understanding of the purpose of promotional material;
- presented no written design concept.

Lighting Design

General Comments

Many candidates find difficulty in ensuring that the examiners can easily understand the means they are using to show all the various areas, lanterns, etc. All lists must be clearly labelled, overlays should be neat and uncluttered, standard lantern keys should be used and standard colour coding used throughout the design. Candidates should not submit models of theatres for this project.

Candidates must ensure that:

- a clearly written design concept is presented with the work that outlines how the lighting will enhance the movement, action and setting of the play and support its themes and issues;
- the plans are folded or presented flat, not rolled;
- lanterns are all clearly numbered so that cross referencing is possible between plans and charts;
- appropriate standardised symbols are used to indicate type of lanterns;
- they have explained their choices of colour and lantern angle in terms of how they will contribute to the mood and atmosphere being built within the play;
- the stage setting is indicated on the floor plan of the stage under the rig so that they can be read together;
- overlays indicating the area on which the lantern is focused should be clear and well annotated. Candidates should use the manufacturers recommended beam spread when drawing the overlays to ensure adequate light coverage for the effect required;
- special lanterns and effects are used to enhance mood and atmosphere and not at the expense of the actor trying to work in that lighting state.

Stronger Candidates

- showed a clear and appropriate design concept which fulfilled and enhanced the themes and issues of the play;
- conceived an effective directorial concept in staging the play, designing the set and planning the lighting rig;
- contained all the mandatory plans and diagrams in a professional presentation which included plastic/translucent overlays indicating the required lanterns and the areas to be lit;
- included a clear floorplan of the set showing walls, items of furniture, levels, etc;
- included a clear functional copy of two scenes of the play indicating the lighting cues;
- presented a separate written statement providing the rationale for the design concept.

Weaker Candidates

- presented a functional design that did not enhance the theatrical needs of the play;
- demonstrated only a basic understanding of the script and the role of lighting in enhancing the mood or atmosphere;
- lacked the technical skill to realise the design in the plotting of appropriate lanterns and covering the stage adequately;
- showed little technical understanding and had a very simplistic approach.

Critical Analysis

General Comments

Over the past few years, it has become obvious that candidates have been heeding the comments of the examiners. Most candidates demonstrate a facility for structuring a theatre review or developing an abstract or proposal for a research project or understanding the role of a director. Teachers are to be congratulated for their generally fine work in giving candidates the skills required to complete the demanding tasks of any of the three sections of this component of the Individual Project.

For future candidates undertaking critical analysis projects, the following recommendations are suggested:

- candidates should carefully consider the criteria applied to the specific project area;
- a logbook must be submitted;
- the logbook should contain evidence of reflection and research. Reflection is indicated by drafts of material that have been revised, edited and reworked. Research is indicated by extensive note-taking and connecting to the material relevant to the project — not just endless photocopies and downloads from the Internet;
- candidates should focus on the process of achieving the aim of the project with regular entries in logbooks;
- the logbook can also be used to show research into the demands and specific responsibilities of the particular area of critical analysis — the theatre reviewer, the researcher or the director.

Portfolio of Theatre Criticism

General Comments

Candidates generally indicated an awareness of the criteria and specification requirements for this project. The criteria states that each of the critiques should be approximately 850 words in length. Submissions significantly under or over the word limits will be penalised and candidates should aim for critiques between 700-900 words. There was an improvement again this year in exposure to a diversity of live theatre experiences.

It is recommended that candidates should:

- investigate thoroughly and become competent in the practice of theatre reviewing;
- demonstrate evidence of drafting and refinement of the writing process of reviews in the log. Even though only four reviews are required, the evidence in the logbooks of the strongest candidates showed that they had drafted several reviews on a variety of theatre productions;
- be encouraged to see a variety of theatre — mainstream, experimental, community local, the big musicals, etc. More importantly, they need to have an appropriate knowledge of the style of theatre they are witnessing;
- be aware that reviewing a school production may restrict the range and depth of analysis in their review;
- be aware that the four reviews must be from performances attended from the commencement of HSC Drama in Term 4, to its completion in Term 3 in Year 12;
- be aware that critiques should be written in a formal style and have a coherent structure.

Stronger Candidates

- could identify the main concept of a production and comment on elements relating to the execution of the concept on stage;
- demonstrated a sophisticated command of theatre terms and applied them appropriately;
- had written on a variety of productions;
- included relevant research to support criticism;
- wrote in an articulate and original manner;
- adhered to the prescribed word limit.

Weaker Candidates

- gave simple descriptions of elements without reference to how this contributed to the concept on stage, eg ‘The actors were good ...’ or ‘The lighting was bright ...’;
- substituted personal opinion for informed analysis;
- retold the plot and omitted key aspects of the criteria;
- wrote in an inconsistent style;
- submitted responses drastically under length or less than 4 reviews;
- showed little evidence of re-drafting and re-editing error-ridden work.

Research

General Comments

Candidates covered a variety of topics and in general displayed sophisticated research and analysis skills. Over the past few years, candidates’ access to information has been made far easier through the Internet. Candidates must be aware that all resources should be used carefully and acknowledged accordingly. Engagement with the resource and displaying an understanding of the research undertaken is of paramount importance. It must be strongly stressed that teachers must advise candidates not to undertake any project that is connected with any topic area already being studied in Content Areas 4 and 5.

It is recommended that candidates should:

- consider the criteria for research projects;
- adhere to the following format: The Abstract or Proposition, followed by the Body of the Project, then the Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography and any Appendices;
- be aware that references should be accurately footnoted throughout;
- be advised that if projects are significantly under or over the 3500-word limit, they will be penalised;
- present typed submissions in size 12 font, double-spaced;
- be aware that it is crucial to formulate an appropriate abstract – one that is neither too broad nor too narrow;
- avoid making references to film and television unless they have a strong connection to the theatre;
- avoid straight biographies of artists. Abstracts should be framed in terms of measuring the contribution of the artist to the respective aspect of drama or theatre.

Stronger Candidates

- provided a well articulated and developed proposal;
- made a strong, substantiated use of a variety of resources and made references throughout the project;
- displayed engagement with the resources and made attempts to draw conclusions in relation to the proposal;
- wrote in formal register expected of a research paper.

Weaker Candidates

- adhered to a mostly descriptive approach to their topic, providing little or inconsistent analysis;
- based projects on proposals that were either too difficult to substantiate or obvious and self-evident;
- had superficial research and references;
- did not adequately acknowledge resources and references;
- needed more synthesis of the research material;
- submitted projects under-length.

Director's Production Preparation

General Comments

Candidates generally indicated an understanding of the role of the director and the importance of vision and overall concept. There has been strong improvement in the presentation of the folders and it is strongly recommended that candidates follow the guidelines below and recommendations made by examiners.

It is recommended that candidates should:

- provide a table of contents for ease of reference;
- provide a statement of vision or concept;
- provide research and pre-production notes;
- provide a character analysis;
- address issues such as lighting, set, sound and costume;
- provide a unit summary of the work – this is a division of the work into scenes, beats or units of action;
- provide an annotation of one or two scenes;
- provide a bibliography or list of resources or references;
- note that the key component to the Director's Production Preparation is the concept or vision and that all other areas should be strongly referred to and integrated with that vision.

Stronger Candidates

- showed a profound and sophisticated understanding of the work in question;
- demonstrated an intimate knowledge of the text;
- could use this knowledge to develop an interesting and imaginative concept of the work on stage;
- were able to communicate original insights about the work and had a clear vision;
- integrated all aspects of theatre into the overall concept;

- presented a clearly organised folio of work;
- communicated the practicalities of bringing the text alive on stage.

Weaker Candidates

- offered an interpretation like a literary essay, rather than a creative engagement with the text;
- presented a simplistic or unclear concept;
- ignored key aspects of the criteria for examining;
- were mainly descriptive rather than analytical in key areas, eg character analysis;
- displayed only a superficial understanding of the text;
- had little idea about the role or responsibility of the director;
- offered a very disorganised and/or minimal folio.

Scriptwriting

General Comments

The examiners felt that there continues to be an improvement by the candidature in the treatment of the structure, characterisation, setting and theatrical styles that are needed to write a complete and cohesive play for live presentation. There were more candidates who were prepared to explore their material through different theatrical forms, eg absurdist, morality plays, children's theatre, and there was more use of humour.

Some candidates ignored the requirements of submitting a logbook.

Candidates considering scriptwriting should ensure they:

- experience a variety of live theatre
- have read scripts from a variety of theatrical styles
- are able to communicate adequately in the written form
- are fully aware of the practicalities for the theatre
- are aware that any adaptations must be from non-dramatic scripts, eg short stories
- are aware that adaptations cannot be from already scripted plays or films.
- keep a thorough record of the development and drafting of the play.

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 consistency;
- be aware of the importance of recording 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 teacher monitoring of the development of the project.

Stronger Candidates

- showed evidence of research and submitted logbooks which also contained a great deal of research about the subject of the script and characterisation;
- showed that any research was applied appropriately within the dramatic text;
- showed a good understanding of audience and used dramatic tension to engage them;
- showed evidence of good editing and had workshopped the script with a variety of people;
- were able to manipulate props and stage directions to promote dramatic action;

- did not rely on narrators;
- wrote scripts that were character-driven, not plot-driven;
- found a distinctive dramatic voice for each character;
- were clear on the type of stage and set suitable for the play, often including a set design.

Weaker Candidates

- tended to write scripts concentrating on plot and narrative, using stereotyped characters and material;
- showed limited development of dramatic tension;
- confused writing for the theatre with writing for film and television;
- showed limited understanding of the purpose of stage directions;
- relied on the use of the narrator to show passage of time and action;
- did not integrate their research into dramatic dialogue;
- had a vague idea of the setting of the play which often affected the practicality of the production.

Video Drama

General Comments

The examiners felt that there was a marked improvement in the general standard of the candidature.

Conceptually, the works presented greater clarity and sophistication than in previous years. Candidates seem to have a greater awareness that a film is primarily a story told with pictures and they are managing to move their narrative through the use of filmic techniques.

The technical standard is higher, as candidates seem to now have more ready access to equipment. Sound can still be a problem, in which case we recommend a reduction in dialogue if live sound cannot be clearly recorded.

Casting and locations were generally more appropriate than in previous years. Particularly impressive was the extensive use of older people to play parts in that age range.

Candidates should ensure that they:

- produce a practice video drama prior to attempting the HSC Video Drama entry;
- show the video drama to an objective person to ensure the meaning is clear, especially if incorporating a high degree of symbolism;
- remove the in-camera time and date display;
- set the sound level in recording and post-production so that it can be easily heard and is consistent across all scenes, as sound quality is just as important as visual quality;
- present the best possible sound and picture quality. The tape (new) 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;
- identify the soundtrack in the credits;
- put down a control track on the new video before editing onto it;
- edit the final video drama onto the beginning of a new tape and rewind the tape to the beginning before submitting;
- 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 of the video drama;
- submit a video drama that is driven by dramatic or comic narrative which does not just use one song as the sound track;
- consider access to casting talent related to the character descriptions in the screen script. For example, if the story includes an older person who cannot be cast appropriately, reconsider the concept and characters of the story;
- invent their own story and style commensurate with a minimal budget, rather than recreating what is seen on the movies or television;
- resist placing the name of the candidate or any reference to the school in the credits.

Stronger Candidates

- established the mood in opening shots and relied on a limited cast, usually two or three people;
- portrayed a character-driven story;
- demonstrated a strong understanding of video language to develop the dramatic action;
- utilised their wide knowledge and experience of film and television drama to frame innovative, unobtrusive shots that supported the action and where necessary varied the shots to create meaning;
- achieved satire and comedy in the script, filming and post-production processes when appropriate to the genre of the work;
- edited their stories tightly to create pace. They developed and released tension in the drama to engage the viewer;
- enhanced the dramatic meaning of the story with a carefully considered soundtrack;
- understood the importance of sound and picture quality to engage the viewer.

Weaker Candidates

- attempted to tell a story too advanced for their video-making ability;
- portrayed strength in one or two areas of story, characters, setting, camerawork, editing or choice of sound, but would be let down in the other areas;
- produced a video that lacked coherence in its storytelling;
- presented stereotypical characters;
- showed a lack of familiarity with the editing processes or produced too many effects which did nothing for the action of the drama;
- seemed to have problems with time management, with the project either being filmed in a day or not enough time allocated for the editing process;
- either gave little consideration to what they wanted to say with their video or overstated their point;
- failed to engage the viewer.

The Written Paper

General Comments

It cannot be stressed too highly that the written examination is an assessment of the candidate's understanding of the elements of drama and the aspects of theatricality that turn a text into a performance.

Students need to know the basics, such as characters' names and common drama/theatre terminology.

Students should be encouraged to avoid using of the most obvious quotes. They should use quotes that are relevant to the point which they are making.

Where film versions are available of set texts, candidates need to ensure that they are referring to the play script and not the film version.

Section I – Drama and Theatre in Australian Societies and Cultures

General Comments

Too often, candidates answered the questions as text-based responses and failed to address those key elements of the exam questions that focused on the topics as performance. Almost all questions contained such elements. For example:

- Question 1 – '... discuss the presentation of female characters and their impact on other characters and the audience' and 'theatrical entertainment'
- Question 2 – 'writers, directors, performers' and 'a young audience untrained in theatre conventions' and 'present young characters and content and theatrical techniques'
- Question 4 – 'revolutionary Australian theatre ... new rough style' and 'plays of the new wave ... spaces ... performed ... theatre workers and audiences, dramatic forms and performance styles'
- Question 6 – 'visionary characters', and 'the theatre of Louis Nowra'
- Question 7 – 'different theatrical forms' and 'theatre that is different from the theatre men create' and 'use forms and styles'

The questions in Section 1 gave the candidates ample opportunity to display their knowledge of the topic and apply this knowledge to the specific option attempted. Responses are growing in complexity and length each year.

Question 1 – Contemporary Aboriginal Theatre

EITHER

- (a) *"Contemporary Aboriginal theatre presents female characters who are wise, affectionate, compassionate and full of knowledge."*

Using this statement as a starting point, discuss the presentation of female characters, and their impact on other characters and the audience.

In your answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

OR

- (b) *"Storytelling has always been a part of our Aboriginal heritage, not just for entertainment."*

JUSTINE SAUNDERS, Aboriginal actor

Discuss Aboriginal theatre as a modern form of storytelling which combines theatrical entertainment with recording important aspects of Aboriginal cultures.

In your answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

General Comments

More candidates responded to Option (b) than Option (a).

- (a) Option (a) was not attempted by many candidates. Those who did respond to this option had difficulty discussing the impact of the female characters on other characters.
- (b) Generally, this option elicited better responses than Option (a), although at times these responses lacked detail.

A significant number of candidates are still attempting this topic.

Overall, candidates displayed a very good understanding of topic and texts. Candidates had evidently studied in depth and demonstrated that all texts had been studied in different combinations.

Stronger Candidates

- could deal with the texts from different perspectives: historical and cultural heritage, and as a contemporary voice in Australian Theatre;
- understood the function of characters and storytelling as theatrical entertainment with its impact on an audience.

Weaker Candidates

- often attempted to answer the question without developing the response in detail;
- could only identify characters and retell the stories from the texts;
- responses were generalised and/or repetitive.

Question 1 (b)

Above Average response

When Justine Saunders says that ‘storytelling has always been a part of our Aboriginal heritage, not just for entertainment’ she is referring to the fact that the story has always been used in Aboriginal culture to communicate morals, share the spiritual dreaming and to pass on vast knowledge about the earth and the animals. Contemporary writers such as Bennett and Davis write plays to achieve these goals but also to communicate themes of racism, assimilation and reconciliation to a white audience. Davis writes that he believes in the power of the story as a political tool as well as an entertainment.

Both Bennett and Davis use the modern play context to tell their stories, mixing white forms of theatre with traditional forms such as the corroboree. Both plays utilize the white mans plot of a beginning, middle and ending, so to do so they utilize the white mans theatre language and technologies such as lighting and sound, together with the radiance and power of their songs and dances this all-embracing theatre can appeal to a large audience.

In Davis play ‘No Sugar’ Davis makes use of his native language, the Nyoongah speech. The fact that this language is often used when speaking of or singing songs shows that story telling (through these mediums) is indeed part of the Aboriginal heritage which precedes white forms of theatre by 1000’s of years.

In No Sugar Jimmy sings the crab song in Nyoongah tongue, this song with its lively beat is very entertaining theatrically but it also serves to record important aspects of Aboriginal culture. The song speaks of how to catch food and live off the land it is a song that Jimmy’s grandfather sang to him and that he now sings to the Aboriginal audience to pass on the knowledge and give them hope for some kind of culture identity and continuity – living with the land and being part of the great web of creation is a deep and important part of the culture.

In Bennett's story 'funerals and circuses' Jessie a young Aboriginal girl speaks of her mother's dreaming place, this mention of the 'dreaming' (the Aboriginals belief in ancestral continuity and a connection with all beings) is important as it reminds Aboriginals to keep on dreaming and believing and for the youngsters to not forget their ancestors.

Rose's song is one of 'funerals and circuses' most entertaining moment. Rose an Aboriginal elder stands on a fence above the audience and town back lit and shimmering. The image alludes to spirituality strength for Rose being above the town of daily racism and violence suggests that Aboriginals spirituality can rise above this. The story she sings is full of hope 'children stop crying' is the translated title of the song. In the theatre the moment is chillingly entertaining as the moment contrasts strongly with the movement and robust energy of the scene beforehand and the preceding scene. Rose is a lone figure on stage her voice cuts through the dark and modern technical theatre enhancers such as music (referred to by Bennett as a [spiritual sound]) and lighting are used to enhance the moment even further.

The corroboree in 'No Sugar' with its tribal prestige, energy and dramatic power takes over the stage creating pride in the Aboriginal audience and awe in the white. The Dance tells stories from different areas in Australia that refer to hunting and the spirit world. The Dance communicates the theatrical prestige that is part of Aboriginal heritage and that it is still being danced today backs up Billy's comment 'it is still your country'.

Davis says that the actors are entertaining because 'they are acting out their own lives', 'Aboriginals are always acting' he says. This makes the plays both authentic and realistic and thus a sweet political tool to create a change in the way the modern Aboriginal sees himself and whites view him. 'We are the oldest race alive' Davis says, 'that asks for some respect'.

'Funerals and circuses' does in fact use the Aboriginals real life experience to create and tell the story which revolves around a white and black marriage in a town seething with racism. The play was created by a session of improvisations around this plot and what both the Aboriginals and whites have come up with is this as close to 'real' theatre (theatre from the heart) as one can come. In this play Bennett let modern Australians with their theatre forms and Aboriginals with their heritage work in close collaboration thus fusing both cultures thus it combines theatrical entertainment and Aboriginal culture.

As well as the dances and songs Davis records facts of history such as the forced upheaval of 80 to 100 natives to Moore River settlement, he also deals with documented massacres one of which Billy tells in the Aboriginal storytelling style which makes it even more touching and moving 'kill 'em everybody, men's, women's, little yumbah' he says in his colloquial style.

Aboriginal playwrights tell their story through traditional song and dance, the plays are theatrical entertaining but also didactic and educating. They draw on aspects of Aboriginal culture and modern theatre conventions.

Question 2 – Theatre in Education

EITHER

(a) *How do writers, directors and performers working in Theatre in Education take into account a young audience, untrained in theatre conventions?*

In your answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

OR

(b) *Plays for Theatre in Education typically present young characters with lessons to learn.*

Discuss this statement, referring to both the content and the theatrical techniques of TWO of the plays set for study.

General Comments

- (a) Many candidates lumped ‘writers, directors and performers’ together and were unable to differentiate the ways each group took an ‘untrained audience’ into account.
- (b) Candidates did not discuss ‘young characters with lessons to learn’. Very often content and technique discussion was unbalanced, with candidates discussing mainly content and few theatrical techniques.

Strong Candidates

- responded to all aspects of the questions;
- demonstrated clear understanding of theatre techniques and conventions;
- demonstrated thorough knowledge of both plays;
- clearly contrasted the role of writer, director, performer and audience.

Weaker Candidates

- prepared answers which appeared to be an expanded list of points;
- did not deal with the question or misunderstood ‘characters with lessons to learn’ as actors or audience needing to be educated;
- retold the plot with no reference to the question;
- misunderstood theatre conventions;
- wrote prepared answers on ‘issues and themes’;
- wrote detailed histories about the development of TIE.

Question 2(a)

Above Average response

Writers, directors and performers working in Theatre in Education (TIE) take into account a young audience, untrained in theatre conventions. They do this primarily, by placing their audience in a familiar non-threatening environment – this is done through character stereotypes and familiar language. Part of TIE’s roles is to introduce young people to one of the first theatrical experiences. This is done by the intermingling of little ‘tastes’ of the production elements of adults’ theatre. These production elements include mime, music, song and dance. Both this familiar environment and introduction to theatre is clearly presented in ‘Fossils’ by Manual Aston and ‘The Small Poppies’ by David Holman.

In both ‘Fossils’ and ‘The Small Poppies’, the playwrights use dramatic structures like: character stereotypes, language, and familiar scenarios and themes to break the barrier between the actors and the audience. This helps children to identify with the characters presented and introduces them to the actor/audience relationship.

In ‘fossils’, three ‘normal’ teenagers are present. Julie with her ‘Aussie’ parents – Dad who is always fixing things and Mum with a crossword in hand. Michelle’s parents are ‘yuppies’, her father constantly has a ‘mobile phone grafted to his ear’ and her mother obsessing over her ‘Italian calfskin filofax’. The characters are all stereotypes, they are stereotypes to allow this young, untrained audience to identify with one of the characters. Even Franky’s Mum, who is an Italian widow is a stereotype, she is over protective, always worrying about his teeth and his vitamins.

As David Holman says, the idea behind TIE is not to ‘sandblast’ young audiences with ideas or points of view but rather to present them with ideas that can slowly percolate. The directors and actors should strive to stimulate these young minds rather than tell them what to think. Thus, the audience is made to realise that the theatre is just a different way of presenting ideas or issues.

Like 'Fossils', 'The Small Poppies' also has familiar characters that this 6–8 year old audience can identify with. Clint, is a young 'Aussie' kid who plays with his imaginary dog called 'Digger'. Lep is a Cambodian girl presented as a stereotypic 'ethnic' girl. David Holman highlights her isolation through the language barrier. Also like 'Fossils', these stereotypes all used to get this young audience to identify with what is being presented.

Another main component in presenting this young unexperienced audience with a non-threatening environment is the themes and issues they raise.

In 'The Small Poppies', David Holman raises issues like, the traumatic change for five-year olds to 'big school', divorce, racism and the effects of adult relationships on children. These issues are issues that are common to this young audience (even if they haven't experienced them, it is more than likely that they know someone who has). In 'Fossils' issues common to teenagers are raised like, judging upon appearances, prejudice and the age gap between parents ('fossils') and their children. These issues raised in both plays, are relevant to their respective audiences. This, is just like adult's theatre where the audience is presented with issues like war, prostitution and death. The writers, directors and performers make a point of presenting their young audiences with only issues that they can handle and identify with.

Another dramatic structure employed by TIE playwrights is the use of episodic and short scenes. These break up the plays into small 'digestible' pieces and reduce boredom in the audience. This is clearly seen in 'Fossils' and 'The Small Poppies' and takes into account the young audience's short attention span and need for variation.

Both Manuel Aston and David Holman employ many theatrical techniques to guide these young audiences through their plays. These include, mime, music, song, dance, sets and staging. All of these named dramatic elements are found in 'adult's' theatre and therefore, the writers, directors and performers are giving their audiences an introduction to this 'ancient ritual'. The Toe Truck Company (a NSW TIE company) said that 'the theatrical experience is an essential part of education', both 'Fossils' and 'The Small Poppies' give their respective audiences an introduction to this experience with these theatrical techniques.

Mime is used in both plays. It demonstrates a form of escapism into the imaginary world. In 'Fossils', Dominic creates a world where he is best friends with Johnny to avoid the harsh reality. Similarly, Clint plays cricket with 'Digger' to avoid his own solitude. Mime is also used as a different way of presenting things in plays. It shows these audiences who are unacquainted with theatre that a spade is not always a spade. In fact it shows the audience that an actor does not need a mobile phone to have a mobile phone – it can be just a man holding thin air close to his ear and talking into it. This use of mime adds another level to this new theatrical experience. Both plays also use music and dance – again to give another dimension and add variation to the production.

In 'The Small Poppies', David Holman uses familiar songs like 'I went to a Chinese restaurant' and jokes that the audience recognises. This helps the audience comprehend that the adults on stage are being kids like them. Similar to the use of mime, TIE plays do not usually have extensive sets and lighting. The plays primarily rely on HUMAN resources, the acting, vocal and movement skills of the actors. Often, as seen in 'Fossils' and 'The Small Poppies', stage space is used to denote a change of scene. In 'Fossils', the three households are shown merely through a different area of the stage.

The direct addressal is also a very important part of 'Fossils'. It shows the 12–14 year old audience that the characters also intermingle with the audience, thus breaking the barrier and forming a relationship.

Often TIE plays demand audience participation, this involves the audience further in the plays.

It is evident that both 'Fossils' and 'The Small Poppies' give the audience an introduction to theatre and an appreciation of theatre. They do this by taking into account their young audiences who are untrained in theatrical conventions.

Question 3 – Theatre in Contemporary Australian Society

EITHER

- (a) *“There is no point having a theatre company that produces great art if no one ever goes.”*

Discuss this statement, referring to theatre as an artistic and/or popular medium in contemporary Australian society.

In your discussion, refer to examples from the work of companies and/or organisations you have studied.

OR

- (b) *“Theatre is a collaborative art form but that does not mean that the best way to support it is by setting up companies and organisations. The focus should always be on the individual artists.”*

Discuss this statement, referring to examples from the work of companies and/or organisations you have studied.

General Comments

A very small number of candidates attempted this question.

It is important that candidates and their teachers refer back to syllabus rubric.

Candidates must study at least two companies/organisations need to be studied.

Candidates must ensure all their information is up to date.

Candidates need to analyse the role of theatre companies in Contemporary Australian Society.

Strong Candidates

- understood how repertoire reflects a theatre company’s mission;
- directly addresses the question and attempted to define the key terms of the question dealing with ‘great art’ and ‘artistic and/or popular medium’;
- understood the dynamic relationship between theatre companies, audience and individual artists.

Weaker Candidates

- recounted facts and information without reference to the question;
- referred to only one theatre company.

Question 4 – The New Wave in Australian Theatre 1969–1974

EITHER

- (a) *The New Wave was just a bunch of blokes being naughty and mucking up, really. They thought they were creating a revolutionary, new Australian theatre, but it was just the same old men’s stuff in a new, rough style.*

Discuss this statement, referring to TWO of the plays set for study and to the theatrical conditions in which they were produced.

OR

- (b) *How did the plays of the New Wave, and the spaces in which they were performed, create new problems for both theatre workers and audiences. In your answer, refer to the dramatic forms and performance styles of TWO of the plays set for study.*

General Comments

- (a) Candidates coped well with the concept of ‘revolutionary’ and ‘rough style’ using detailed references to the texts and the period. Some candidates had difficulty discussing theatrical conditions.
- (b) ‘New problems’, ‘dramatic forms’, ‘performance styles’ were phrases candidates had difficulty with. Candidates answering (b) knew their theatre spaces better than the texts.

Stronger Candidates

- were able to address the multifaceted nature of the questions;
- were able to discuss the revolutionary nature of new Australian theatre through the perspective of the New Wave plays coming as they did from the context of the great change in Australian society;
- were able to demonstrate an understanding of the new techniques and approaches to the creation and production of plays and the theatrical conditions in which these plays were performed.

Weaker Candidates

- focused on the sensational aspects of New Wave without understanding the social and historical context or the intellectual movements which led to new wave;
- had simplistic views and superficial understanding of what the plays were about.

Question 4(b)

Above Average response

The ‘New Wave’ movement between 1965–1975, began in Sydney and Melbourne, however, developed separately. It attempted to find an Australian identity, in which Australian audiences could recognise immediately. Within the plays, ‘Don’s Party’ by David Williamson and ‘The Floating World’ by John Romeril, the new theatrical conventions, dramatic forms and performance styles, were developed by the theatre workers of the Pram Factory and the La Mama theatre. These were developed as well by audiences, who demanded themselves to be represented on stage, which in turn, created new problems, new ideas and new people on stage.

La Mama began in 1967, funded by Betty Burstall, who explained her objectives in 1969 as thus: ‘La Mama is essentially a playwrights theatre, a place where new ways of expression can be tried out; a place where you can actually see and hear what people are thinking and feeling’.

Barry Oakley, who was to be another of the new Melbourne playwrights, says that the methods Betty Burstall had been aiming for included: Firstly, ‘a bareness in economy, in direction and performance; Secondly, a new, more flexible and spontaneous relationship between director, writer and actor; and thirdly, a new relationship between audience and actors. The footlight gap between stage and audience was to be bridged’. This way as soon as the audience are seated, they are automatically forced by actors to involve themselves within the performance, which is one of the new theatrical features of the ‘New Wave’ period, developed by the La Mama theatre.

‘Don’s Party’, by David Williamson was originally produced in 1971, by the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory in Melbourne. It was known to be aggressively theatrical and in the best Aristophanic tradition, social, political and magnificently obscene through the characters, situations and settings, which all represented to time and feelings of the audience.

‘Don’s Party’ dramatically represents a time when people were searching to find and connect with their Australian culture. The play is theatrically uninteresting, in that it makes no attempt to explore the theatrical medium.

'Don's Party' of course is not a political play. It is one political comment made implicitly, that people like Don and his friends tend to regard a political contest very much like a sporting event. An occasion for cheers when the right team wins and glum silent if it doesn't. This may seem as an uncharacteristically literal-minded understanding of what a 'political' play might be.

MAL: 'The liberals are going to get it in the arse. Did you see the latest gallup poll?'

SIMON: 'I take it you'll be barracking for Labor tonight?'

Williamson has continually been quoted as saying that for the males in the play, the election has very much the same significance as a football match. That they are simple barracking for their team, and their normal lives will be unaffected regardless of the outcome.

The naturalistic style of 'Don's Party' is shown in the language and the eleven characters of the play. It contains a group of young, professional, university educated couples at a dinner party hosted by Don and Kath for the 1969 federal election. The dialogue is relentlessly clever, crude and funny which opens up to certain characteristics of the 'New Wave' movement.

The way in which David Williamson presents his characters, in a truly Australian stereotype, with the birth of the use of 'ockerisms' within this play, are examples of the new dramatic forms that emerged. The character of Cooley for example, 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 new arrogant, cheeky, obscene stereotype is basically what audiences responded to in their demand to visualise themselves represented on stage.

It is through the new dramatic forms and theatrical conventions – performance styles, that attracted new Australian audiences that suited the climate of the time. With the high-jinks, humour, comedy, gimmicking, irony, and the all time delight in the pure 'larrikin' rough theatre style, is what gave 'Don's Party' the high-five and immediate success.

A performance aspect which encouraged actors and audience to merge together during this movement, was through the imaginative stage designs. Before 1965–1975 the traditional Boxed-shaped Stages were of use for performances, however during the 'New Wave' movement, the thrust stage and the theatre in the round became of greater use. This was to offer audience involvement, which obviously made them feel less distant emotionally, than the traditional Boxed-shaped stages made them feel towards actors. David Williamson himself echoed this in 1974, 'For dramatist, the emergence of the fringed theatres provided such an opportunity'.

All the opportunities that arose, were contributed by certain Universities, the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory in Melbourne, and opened way by La Mama.

Another play, 'The Floating World' by John Romeril, was developed during the 'New Wave' period, that presented audiences with new problems, dramatic forms and performance styles.

'The Floating World' was originally performed in 1974 by the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory in Melbourne. It is a savage play, savage not at the enormities it names, but at our past and still present failure to admit to them. A long History of Xenophobia. Romeril examines this sense, and carefully puts the case, that the undefined, 'They' who bug a man like Les, 'They', the cause of all his unhappiness, as expatiated upon, at the local pub – The British, the bosses – the family – the Japanese.

The success of 'The Floating World' is due to Romeril's rank acceptance of our long shameful history of xenophobia, and his judgement that he can surprise his audience into a frank acceptance of it too.

'We can have a white Australia, we can have a Black Australia, but a Mongrel Australia is impossible', said by Arthur Carwell in 1949, within The Sun Herald, on December 6, 1998. 'Polls in 1996, found old prejudices alive and kicking and One Nation Party is credited.

Romeril's performance style within 'The Floating World', a work filled with doubling patterns, plotting choices, characterisations, ensemble in scene and stage directions that describe the parameters of a work environment and economic situations. The style within the play is cumulative and enveloping – which placed audiences and actors on a deck of a ship, enclosing them within a green cage, behind which lurked the jungle — green figures of McLeod and the Japanese Army Officer.

As the new theatrical techniques and dramatic forms arose during the 'New Wave' period, Romeril tried whenever he could to place both his actors and audience on the same space.

As a result of merging the actors with the audience, Romeril dramatically forces the audiences to share the responsibility of Les' psychosis.

While its narrative is concerned with the voyage of the ex-prisoner at war, Les Harding, and his wife Irene Harding from Melbourne to Japan on a 'Women's Weekly' Cherry Blossom, 'The Floating World' is in effect, an eccentric Tivoli variety Bill; a salute to the different facets of Australian Entertainment. It is through these facets that Les' social and political environment can be seen. Once their functions are acknowledged, their content becomes negotiable.

Some characteristics of the 'New Wave' movement that audiences or readers would have noticed within this play included: Firstly, asking the audience to imagine half a dozen settings within one setting, as seen in Scene 3, which takes us to the last absurdity. The waiter enters dressed as a Japanese Army officer to symbolize Les' Floating World, in which actors around him do not notice. They see the Japanese Army Officer (captain of the dippy Birds) as a waiter. Secondly, asking actors to assume different characterisations within one play. For example the character of McLeod, tends to be Mr Williams every now and again. And thirdly, using words rhythmically, richly, evocatively and beyond the 'natural' conceptions of dialogue.

LES: 'Dear mates, mongrels and assorted filth of my acquaintance.

Here I am on a good ship Venus ... dot ... dot ... dot ...

The Cabin's boys name is Jimmy Wong,

He has a most enormous dong.

Twice around the deck, once around his neck,

And on his foot for a thong.'

Irene Harding, within the play, is of no help to her mentally distressed husband for she too is a victim, a victim of a spiritless, lonely marriage it has given her. Her world is defined in terms of possessions, such as suitcases and tourist brochures. Such obsessions make her blind to the real world.

Les' madness is Australia's madness, and a logical extension of the xenophobia the Bulletin and the Labor Party provided drive for us to change. The play is not all tragic and serious, but it is for the most part, extremely funny. It is written in a filmic way, with fast cuts from one scene to the next and directed at a very speedy pace, which is basically one of the new performing styles which emerged during this time.

What the play really deals with is the important result World War II had on its victims, and as a corollary, how Australia views its racial issues, and especially Japan. It is one of the virtues of the play, that the background of imperialism is never really stated or forced, yet rather implied by the ubiquitous 'dippy birds'.

Within these two plays, Dons Party by David Williamson and The Floating World by John Romeril, the new theatrical performance styles, dramatic forms emerged, the Pram Factory in Melbourne and the La Mama theatre, attempting to present new problems, new ideas, and new problems on stage.

Question 5 – Australian Puppet Theatre

EITHER

- (a) *Actors are limited by the shape and possibilities of the human body. Puppets can be and do almost anything.*

Discuss how puppet theatre can go beyond the limitations of the natural human body. In your answer, use examples from the work of companies you have studied.

OR

- (b) *In puppet theatre the animator, whether visible or not, is as important as the puppet.*

Referring to the photograph and this statement, discuss the relationship between puppet, puppeteer and audience. In your answer, use examples from the work of companies you have studied.

General Comments

A very small number of candidates attempted this question.

Stronger Candidates

- had a rigorous and detailed understanding of the theatrical underpinnings of puppetry;
- could clearly analyse the questions regarding puppets and significant relationships (eg audience/puppeteer);
- displayed a broad knowledge of live puppet experience in Australia.

Weaker Candidates

- lacked vigour and became repetitive, ignoring the question instructions;
- failed to go beyond merely experiencing live puppet performance to analysing these experiences.

Question 6 – Louis Nowra

EITHER

- (a) *“I know somehow I was not in sync with the world around me and I floated away from it, like a balloon cut free from its moorings.”*

Louis Nowra

Using this statement as a starting point, discuss the ways in which Louis Nowra’s visionary characters relate to the everyday world in which they find themselves.

In your answer, refer to TWO of the following characters:

- *Bethshe in ‘The Golden Age’*
- *Lewis in ‘Summer of the Aliens’*
- *Nona in ‘Radiance’*
- *Juana in ‘Visions’.*

OR

- (b) *Everything that happens in a Nowra play, however personal and intimate it might seem to the characters concerned, has broader implications in the wide world in which they are trapped.*

How does the theatre of Louis Nowra use the experiences and actions of individual characters to explore broad social, political and philosophical ideas?

In your answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

General Comments

- (a) Responses were generally good. Some failed to link the statement with the characters, which hindered them.
- (b) Responses were also good. The word ‘theatre’ was avoided and ‘social’, ‘political’ and ‘philosophical’ were often lumped together. Student’s responses were better when they also factored in the concept of ‘broader implications’.

Many responses to Nowra are highly articulate and display great competency in their knowledge of the texts.

More candidates responded to the (b) option giving a broader range of responses and covering in detail the theatrical nature of the topic.

Stronger Candidates

- could grasp the depth and concepts of the plays and their characters;
- understood how these characters and their place in the wider world and as the semiotics of the plays as theatre;
- could place the characters in context to their intimate and personal situations yet reflect on bigger concepts.

Weaker Candidates

- retold stories and plots;
- lacked detail in their response to the question;
- had prepared responses and did not address the specific questions asked.

Question 6(a)

Above Average response

As a playwright from the second wave of Australian writers in the 1970s, Louis Nowra was set apart from the first wave by his ideas. He shifted from the traditional ‘Occa’ colloquialisms that pervaded the first wave of Australian playwrights, to create characters who were both unique in their problems but at the same time symbolic of deeper problems of the world. ‘I knew somehow that I was not in sync with the world around me’ – Nowra, and this is reflected in the characters who populate his visionary plays. In ‘Summer of the Aliens’ Lewis must find ways to deal with the confusing adult situations around him. In ‘The Golden Age’ Betsheb is required to readjust her whole being in order to deal with the new world she finds herself in. Both must now relate to the everyday world in which they find themselves.

As a teenage boy in the housing estates of Australia, Lewis has no male role model to turn to. His father Eric is a man who never stays in one place long, and his uncle is a characteristic womaniser. Lewis lives in a bleak, dry world surrounded by women who harbour their own problems. So to relate to his world and the way people behave Lewis looks to the skies. By believing in Aliens and spaceships and giving himself hope of their existence, he manages to make excuses for the cruel and inexplicable behaviours of the world around him. By believing that Aliens have the power to control humans, Lewis can excuse his father’s behaviour, his mother’s hurt, his sister’s treatment of Brian, Stan’s treatment of Dulcie and create some sense out of it. Symbolically Lewis’ confusion is depicted in the early scenes which are set in the paddocks called the ‘cross roads’. This symbolises the point Lewis is at in life, and against the overwhelming backdrop of the harsh natural environment it seems as though Lewis will be crushed by the forces of the confusing and confronting adult world. So Lewis chooses to turn away from reality, or at least hold it at bay, by dealing with Aliens instead.

The Cuban missile crisis (constantly reminded on the radio) is also a manifestation of the inconsistencies of the human world. Another reason for Lewis to believe that somewhere there is another world, without these problems to deal with. Such a way of relating to the everyday world and an explanation for it is also seen through Mrs Irvin and her highly religious attitude, and Dulcie with her Angels. All three characters look to the skies for understanding, and this serves to highlight Lewis' resistance to reality. However, Lewis does come to realise, through the promptings of his wiser older self (the narrator) that Aliens are not the answer. The answer is not to hide from the developments, but to face them squarely. Throughout the epic structure of the play, individual self contained scenes depict this transition for Lewis. The three most relevant are Act II sc.11 at the R.S.L club, the night he and Dulcie make love in the paddocks, and the final scene depicting the paddock fire. All three act as a purification for Lewis, so that finally Lewis has progressed from looking for Aliens as an escape from reality, to the vision of uncle Richards Japanese woman as an escape, and finally to facing the truth. The night that Dulcie and Lewis break into the R.S.L club as the visual irony of destructive angels, there is a huge thunderstorm that symbolises Lewis breaking out of this obsession and moving on.

The dramatic technique of the storm physicalises this transition. The next step is the dramatic technique of narrator directing the child character Lewis as he looks back. By originally forcing Lewis to confront Dulcie's sexual abuse and then again forcing him to confront his own feelings for her Nowra uses the Brechtian distancing device of a narrator to direct the action and to help Lewis relate to the world he is in. The play is presented as one huge memory that has built the narrator, the person of today who can bend time and go back to help Lewis the child relate to his everyday world. Finally the narrator acknowledges to the audience that he and the child Lewis merge through dealing with reality. Visually and symbolically this is staged through the paddock fire, which (much like the storm) cleanses, heralds as new beginning, a regrowth after the purge, a chance to change for Lewis – symbolically some plants in Australia only germinate when burnt by fire. The play comes full circle with the closing fire, but Lewis has come to terms with reality by no longer resisting it.

In contrast to this, Betsheb of 'The Golden Age' does not resist her new reality and need for change as Lewis does. Nowra is required for strong female characters who stand alone. Relating to her new world relying on understanding rather than denial. Conversely she adapts to it as best she can straight away. As the keeper of this knowledge after Ayre, Betsheb understands that the only hope for her people is to develop and embrace her new society. So Betsheb attaches herself emotionally to Francis, she aims to hold Ayres place as teacher and leader once Ayre is gone. Betsheb watches, listens and tries desperately to learn and keep her tribe together. The flaw here is that the society she is trying to penetrate is not so adaptable and tries to remain distanced from this new tribe. Once again set around a backdrop of war and an overwhelming natural environment, (the island and wilds of Tasmania symbolic of the untamed mind of Betsheb).

This play deals with a character who surrenders to change and the need to move on, but through no fault of her own is blocked by the treatment she receives. The course of this play and the way the characters will develop is set from scene one. The dramatic techniques of a play within a play, here show the transience and fragility of mankind (the rest of the tribe) and the historical setting of the war years points out mans fear of the unknown or the unexplained, our destruction resulting from ignorance. This unforgiving nature is what Betsheb comes up against as her people die and she sacrifices herself to learn the new ways of the new people she is living with. Deprived of her loved ones and the natural environment which sustains her, she eventually fails to relate successfully to her new world.

So it may be seen that Lewis relates to his world by first resisting reality and then making the transition, while Betsheb goes to try and relate willingly and is nearly destroyed by her desire to understand. Her survival is escape, Lewis' is forcing himself to face the problem.

Question 7 – Australian Women’s Theatre

EITHER

- (a) “... it is possible for women to support each other and begin to escape from their socially-conditioned selves, to search for a different sense of self.”

TAIT AND SCHAFER

Using this statement as a starting point, discuss how TWO of the plays set for study employ different theatrical forms to explore the relationships between women.

OR

- (b) “Women create theatre that is different from the theatre men create because they experience the world differently.”

Discuss how plays by women writers use forms and styles in a distinctive way to reflect women’s experience.

In you answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

General Comments

There were an equal number of responses to (a) and (b) questions.

Whilst all texts were studied over the candidature more candidates responded to ‘The Chapel Perilous’ and ‘Running Up a Dress’.

Candidates’ knowledge of text was clearly demonstrated. At times, candidates did not explore these texts in the context of the overall topic of Australian Women’s Theatre.

In Option (b), many candidates struggled with the concept of ‘women’s experience’.

Stronger Candidates

- understood texts as examples of Australian Women’s Theatre;
- demonstrated understanding of the distinctive theatrical forms and styles used by these woman playwrights;
- could relate the text and characters journeys to the specific question asked.

Weaker Candidates

- were unable to place the plays in their theatrical context;
- often digressed to re-telling events;
- only listed and explained theatrical devices with little reference to the question;
- candidates who discussed ‘Murrays’ did so from more an Aboriginal perspective rather than a woman’s perspective.

Question 7(b)

Above Average response

Both Tes Lyssiotis’ ‘The Forty Lounge Café’ and Dorothy Hewett’s ‘The Chapel Perilous’ are plays that seek a departure from ‘the theatre men create’. Through their exploration of their female leads and the forms and styles which are unique to female playwrights.

Dorothy Hewett’s *The Chapel Perilous* is a wild departure from ‘the theatre men create’, yet at its core it is a play that has been most heavily influenced by male playwrights of the last 3 centuries.

The Chapel Perilous seeks to distinguish itself by borrowing from a multitude of theatre styles, and it is through this synthesis of old and new that Hewett achieves a distinctive style, distinctive not only as Hewett, but as a Contemporary Australian Female Playwright. The Chapel Perilous forges itself through a mix of ancient theatre traditions and the challenging of accepted social ideals. Chief among these ancient 'forms and styles' is the use of the Chorus. The Chorus is used to glorious effect in *The Chapel Perilous*. It is the crystallisation of the experience, a summation of events and a second glance, an audience's perspective on the events that unfold. The Chorus not only serves to reinforce the power of the Chapel Perilous, it allows it to be reinterpreted. For example, in the first courtroom scene the chorus capture and express the audience's feelings in 'Call poor bloody Sally Banner', and whilst this is the Chorus 'Borrowed' from the ancient Greek plays, it is reborn in a new context, as a voice of the oppressed central character Sally Banner. Here the old style is forged as new, with the uniquely feminist perspective added to the ancient Greek symbol.

The Chorus also, unlike in Greek times, provides a source of light relief and prevents the central narrative from becoming 'bogged down'. For instance, when Sally attempts to commit suicide, the Chorus make light of it with a poem 'Poor Sally, she never made it, not even suicide, she'd never know it, but she was a minor poet, until the day she died'. This echoes and creates connections with their previous 'Poor Sally, she never made it, no matter how hard she tried'. Through this, the chorus alert us to the significance of events, and give us a new perspective. This is again a unique 'form ... women writers use'.

The Chapel Perilous also seeks to create a new 'form ... [or] ... style' in its portrayal of its female lead, Sally Banner. The uniquely feminist experience is conveyed to us through Sally. It illustrates how women 'experience the world differently' and is reflected through her actions. It is Sally's sacred quest to 'answer to my [her] blood direct' she 'believe[s] in the blood and the flesh as being wiser than the intellect'. Sally lives by this credo, this formula for happiness. She is willing to sacrifice her immediate satisfaction or fulfilment in order to stay true to this formula. Sally's quest to answer to her blood direct leads her through the most terrible of ordeals, the abortion of her unborn child, even her attempted suicide were attempts to 'answer to her blood direct', a cry to strip away the intellectual limitations of life. However, Sally ultimately comes to realise that 'I wasted my substance'. It is in this abrupt turnaround that *The Chapel Perilous* becomes 'distinctive'. Ultimately, despite her noble quest, Sally acknowledges that her attempt to 'experience the world differently' to 'milk every last drop' from her life has led to her forsaking her true love, that of poetry. Finally, she feels she did not live up to her own expectations. Far from seeing herself as a failure, Sally believes this is a chance for rebirth, an acknowledgement that her old ways were ultimately unfulfilling, her refusal to acknowledge the social institutions she was brought up with ('She would not bow!'), and a chance to spend the rest of her life writing. It is in this finally, that Hewett reveals to us how 'Women Create theatre that is different from men'.

For use of the Altar, the amplifier and the masks is also integral to the 'forms and styles' of *The Chapel Perilous*. Hewett takes the masks, often used as a means of hiding people, and the amplifier, associated with public address, and warps them until they are a form distinctive to Hewett and female playwrights. Hewett performs an inversion, with the amplifier allowing us to hear the 'private' voices of the characters we meet. Whilst the Headmistress publically speaks of her 'great achievements' she reveals through her 'private voice' the amplified voice that 'I feel incapable of evaluating this'. In closing the Chapel Perilous, we find that 'I've [Sally has] come full circle'. Sally returns to her old school chapel, a symbol of Authority and rigidity that she loathed, donates a stained glass window of herself (again displaying unique audacity in bequeathing the window to the church whilst she is still alive), she acknowledges that her stubborn refusal to bend was fruitless, and finally, she bows.

The final bow should not be seen as a failure, or a weakness, for Sally is not bowing on request. She bows for herself, and acknowledgement that 'I wasted my substance', that her quest to 'answer to my blood direct', the ruined marriage, the death of her children (born and unborn) was not a waste,

but a life experience that she regrets. Sally's bow should be seen as a sign of strength, not weakness. In Conclusion, the Chapel Perilous is a play that is not necessarily feminist, although it portrays a strong female lead, but uses different forms and styles in a distinctive way to reflect women's experience.

Tes Lysiottis's Forty Lounge Café illustrates to us how women 'experience the world differently', and this is reflected in the forms and styles. The Forty Lounge Café can only be described as an 'experiential' play. It does not have a strong linear narrative, but instead uses a dramatic convention pioneered by women, that of 'linear disruption', a form of non-linearity where events happen not in linear order, but as a logical progression of emotions. This form is unique to female playwrights, and Lyssiotis uses it to provide us with an experience unlike any male playwright.

The Forty Lounge Café is built around Eleftheria, and rather than following her course through life from birth to death, we are presented with a montage of snap shots, a brief glimpse at aspects of her life. This style provides us with a sense of 'experiencing' the play rather than sitting through it. Through its short scenes and rapid changing of time and place, Forty Lounge Café becomes unique, it shows us how 'women ... experience the world differently'.

Forty Lounge Café is also unique in its dramatic form in that the central male Characters (Theo and Vasili (Bill)), never appear on stage. It is a testimony to Tes Lyssotis' skill that we learn of the male characters purely through other's reactions to them. For example, we learn that Vasili, Eleftheria's husband, is kind and loving to his Daughter (Toula), and yet somehow distant, in that he does not come to see her ballet performances. He is oft mentioned, but never revealed. In fact, there are never at any time any male characters on stage.

The Bi-Lingual experience is also essential to The Forty Lounge Café. The use of interspersed conversations in Greek give the play an intimate feeling, as if we were watching a series of events taking place in a real setting. In addition, the use of Greek serves to highlight Eleftheria's sense of alienation. Eleftheria feels that she is culturally 'lost'. Transplanted from her home to a new Country. She cannot cope with the language 'I will cut my tongue out'. Eleftheria also feels alienated from her own daughter. Her daughter states 'you know I can't read Greek', which only serves to highlight the cultural displacement Eleftheria feels, and to add to this she seems distant from her daughter, who remarks 'I bet you'd look if I was a chip'.

Symbols are used extensively throughout The Forty Lounge Café. Both the Icon of the Black Madonna and the Glory box allow us an insight in to the way Eleftheria, and all women 'experience the world differently'. The Icon of the black Madonna is a source of deep spirituality, as well as being a 'guiding light' for Eleftheria. It acts as a link to her past culture, as well as a focus point for her present life. These symbols come to represent the only certainty in Eleftheria's life.

Finally, Forty Lounge Café closes with a strong message that is not necessarily feminist, but certainly uniquely female. The heavy symbolism of Eleftheria putting on her dead husband's clothes, assuming the typically male role of 'breadwinner', moves us deeply. We see Eleftheria floundering, trying to find her way. She is torn between her responsibilities to her daughter, and the necessity to return to Greece and claim what is hers. Finally, The Forty Lounge Café is a uniquely female play that uses forms and styles in a distinct way to reflect women's experiences.

In conclusion, both Dorothy Hewett's The Chapel Perilous and Tes Lysiottis's Forty Lounge Café serve to highlight how 'women experience the world differently' and how they adapt existing theatre styles, and where none exist create their own in a 'distinctive way to reflect Women's experiences'.

Section II – Drama and Theatre in Societies and Cultures Other Than Australian

Question 8 – Shakespeare in Performance

EITHER

(a) *Discuss the ways female characters are presented in Shakespeare's plays. What challenges do these characters present to modern directors and actors of Shakespeare's work?*

In your answer, refer to TWO of the plays set for study.

OR

(b) *The beauty and complexity of Shakespeare's language, both verse and prose, have to be sacrificed in modern productions so that audiences can understand the plays.*

Discuss the statement, referring to TWO of the plays set for study.

General Comments

This is still a popular topic. It seems evident from responses that many candidates have seen productions or read about productions but have not had the opportunity to engage with the text in experiential workshops.

Some candidates did not appreciate that Shakespearean language offers cue and clues for emotional reactions. These candidates may have viewed performances but not articulated the language themselves.

Stronger Candidates

- (a) understood the female characters in depth, their interrelationships and their role in its meaning. These candidates discussed the challenges the characters presented to modern directors and actors in terms of social values and beliefs and how they resolved these challenges.
- (b) challenged the assumption that modern audiences cannot understand the language of the plays. These candidates saw how it was possible to 'cut' the plays without sacrificing the language and they demonstrated this. They discussed both verse and prose, using examples that showed the beauty of the language. They also discussed the use of various elements of production that can be used to enhance the meaning of the text.

In both (a) and (b), candidates gave evidence of having dealt experientially with the texts.

Weaker Candidates

- made sweeping generalisations about various aspects of the plays, knew little detail about the specifics and could not relate them to the question asked;
- showed knowledge of themes and characters only, or retold the plot.

Question 8(b)

Above Average response

The beauty and complexity in Shakespeare's plays does not need to be sacrificed in modern productions so that audiences may understand the play. To the contrary, many of the most successful Shakespearean revivals have used full scripts and still had full houses. By examining productions of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (hereafter AMND) and 'Romeo and Juliet' (hereafter RandJ) it is evident that the success of these productions is in the complete verse itself!

The first break away from Victorianism was Harley Granville-Barker's production of *AMND*. His play dispensed with orotund delivery and absolute naturalistic style for a more contemporary feel. In his abandonment of Victorianism, Barker felt it necessary to keep the full script, only omitting four lines. (Victorian productions often omitted most of the script, and Barker disapproved). By restyling the production rather than sacrificing the script was how Barker managed to create a highly acclaimed production.

Opening on February sixth, 1914 in the Savoy theatre, London, Barker redirected Shakespearean productions forever. He moved the action to the front of the stage, a new convention, and the main source of light came from white torpedo lamps (from the dress circle).

Barker symbolised the magic and instability of the wood and fairies by using curtains as three of his four backdrops. This two dimensional setting eventually gave way to a three dimensional last setting – Theus's palace. It had a back door, open to reveal red light, and pillars of white, ringed with black and silver. This setting mirrored the text in that it symbolised that the characters were over the mystery, magical trickery and instability of the wood.

Barker was fond of symmetry and arranged the choreography so that it mirrored the symmetry in Shakespeare's text. He made the movements of the fairies symmetrical and the stances of the characters symmetrical, to dignify mortal and fairy courts and to solemnise the fairy ceremonies. By sacrificing the text who would have been able to envisage such a production as Barker's?

Barker studied the text carefully to concentrate more on the characters than their environment (a new convention of his time). He desired the four lovers to act in an ensemble and create character differentiation rather than caricature which was what directors did previously. By keeping the text whole, he made the characters' movements and actions further the plot and therefore managed to create a fully rounded, emotionally vital and fresh production. Barker even made Bottom the weaver use the text for the creation of humour instead of slapstick. By keeping the text whole, Barker created wholesomely human characters out of the mechanicals, not just slapstick 'shells' of characters. Even Peter Quince had doubts about his own play in this production.

Peter Brook's 1970 production of *AMND* similarly kept a full text. This allowed him and his designer Sally Jacobs to explore contemporary ideas of costume and magic. Brook dispensed with all stylised ideas and created a set which looked like a white box. His ideas of magic in the production were revolutionary as he wanted something that did not involve theatrical trickery. Brook recalled a 1962 production by Tony Richardson where the ropes holding the 'flying fairies' were visible in the stage lights. Brook decided that since he could not find a theatrical technique to satisfy his desire for natural magic, he turned to his performers. Their athleticism became the magic, and Brook trained them in acrobatics.

After clothing them in Jacob's costumes – baggy jumpsuits akin to those of Chinese acrobats, the magic of the body emerged. The suits hid much of the performer's bodily movement so that what they performed looked like a magic trick. This was incorporated into the full text, and 'physical dexterity became the magic'.

Brook reshaped the production so that magic was always in play. Fairies sat on trapezes swinging above the mortals, showing that fairies and magic did not just disappear once their lines were over. They also sat on a catwalk above the stage, watching the action.

In this it is evident that you do not need to sacrifice the text for modern audiences, only reshape the production and its elements to allow modern audiences to engage and understand.

In the Glen Street Theatre's 1999 John Bell production of 'Romeo and Juliet', a new twist was put upon the text. Instead of sacrificing it, they played up a political issue instead. The Capulet's were white and the Montagues were Aboriginal in this production set in Central Australia.

The feud was shown as being race related and the bad relations and feuds between parties took on a racial slant. This allowed the text to be kept but for audiences to still understand, as in the aftermath of Pauline Hanson, the issue was pertinent.

Similarly to this, Bogdonor's 1986 production of *RandJ* took on a 'West Side Story' element in that he used bicycle chains, flick knives, choreographed fight scenes and an Alpha Romeo red roadster in the production. By minimally reshaping the text, (only 8 lines) Bogdonor was able to give a modern twist to his Shakespearean revival. At the end of the play after Juliet's death there was a long blackout in which hard rock music was played. When the lights came up, a gold statue of the two lovers was mounted in a square. Cameramen were milling around, when suddenly the Prince enters with Capulet and Montague. The Prince recites the first eight lines of the prologue in past tense, (the only lines changed in the production) while camera's flash. He then forces Montague and Capulet to shake hands. However, when the media leaves, Capulet and Montague depart separately, not united at all. The media, has created the impression of an amicable relationship yet it is not true.

Bogdonor managed to engage an audience with modern clothes and a modern way of thinking when it came to the text. He hardly reshaped it and yet he gained success from his production. This shows that with imagination, you do not have to sacrifice the beauty or complexity of Shakespeare's language for a modern audience. Bogdonor merely put a post modernist view to his *RandJ*, asking the value of images, yet capitulating to their power.

In John Gielgud's 1935 production of *RandJ*, he too left the text intact. Influenced heavily by Barker he instead aimed to create emotion and poetry through a full text instead of by cutting parts of it out. He brought interest to this production by using Motley for his designers. Their minimalist style (slender pillars and open metalwork) allowed a visual austerity that centred the production on the verse. Gielgud played Mercutio and Laurence Olivier played Romeo, but surprisingly after 6 weeks they swapped parts. By keeping the text whole, this swap was made to look increasingly difficult than if cuts were made to the text.

If you examine various productions of Shakespearean plays, it will be evident that you do not need to cut the text to achieve a great play that engages an audience. Barker, Brook, Bogdonor and Gielgud are proof of that, that keeping a text whole only improves the play and its possibilities in terms of direction. By sacrificing the language and its beauty and complexity, you only narrow options and assume the modern audience to be unintelligent. Barker, Brook, Bogdonor and Gielgud did not do this, and in their actions, produced wonderful revivals of Shakespeare's classics, where the audience understood the issues completely.

Question 9 – Theatre of the Absurd

EITHER

- (a) *Compare and contrast the ways the Absurdist plays you have studied use patterns of movement and stillness, exits and entrances, and what is onstage and offstage, to reflect the playwrights' philosophies regarding the futility of life.*

In your answer, refer to 'Waiting for Godot' and at least one of the other plays set for study.

OR

- (b) *In the Theatre of the Absurd the plays do not just talk about the absurdity of life, they act it out on stage.*

Discuss this statement, referring to the characterisation, dramatic forms and conventions of 'Waiting for Godot' and at least one of the other plays set for study.

General Comments

In its first appearance in the course this was a popular topic, with many candidates demonstrating a sound knowledge of the style itself and experience in performance of parts of the scripts. Both questions in this section encouraged a focus on theatrical performance. The part (a) question was not popular, perhaps because it directed candidates to specificities and required them to ‘compare and contrast’.

Stronger Candidates

- discussed the specific aspects required of the question and were able to talk about these ‘in action’ seeing the humour that becomes possible through the action or the menace and control of ‘off stage’ presence;
- used evidence and quotations from the plays to support ideas;
- had a view of the setting and the set that allowed them to tie the action to the language, the dialogue and the philosophies;
- for Part (b), the strongest candidates discussed how the themes were presented through the actions of the characters on the stage, their dialogue (or lack of it), their relationships with each other and the set, the humour and pathos of their predicaments and how they reflect the absurdity of life;
- used practical experience with the plays to lead into informed discussion.

Weaker Candidates

- became ‘bogged down’ with themes and philosophies at the expense of any discussion of characterisation or dramatic forms or techniques.

Question 9(b)

Above Average response

The ‘absurdity of life’ referred to in the question translates basically to an existential outlook on life and society, and this underlying philosophy is a continuing source of interest in the plays by the writers grouped under the term ‘Theatre of the Absurd’, and we can see it expressed in the characters, the structure, and the sheer spectacle of what we see on the stage. These works share a common outlook on life and the human condition. The language of these plays serve different functions, they present and illuminate the ideas of the playwright, they complement the action, and in some cases they are subservient to the action on the stage. This is particularly true of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, and the things characters say have a great impact on our understanding of them. *The Bald Pina Donna* by Eugene Ionesco also presents us with a spectacle of the absurdity of life and the conventions it defies define its unique stylistic qualities of language, character and dramatic form.

Godot’s characters show us the absurdity of the life we live by acting out a struggle we all face and showing us the anguish of *existing*. Didi and Gogo are both waiting for Godot, an unseen, yet ever present entity, who will provide them with security and happiness when he comes. Didi looks yearningly forward to ‘sleeping warm and dry, with food in our stomachs – on straw’. Didi has been seen to represent the Id and Estagon the Ego of a couple which represent one. Indeed they appear to the audience at first as like an old married couple who always talk about leaving each other but come inevitably back to one another. They are an inseparable ‘pseudocouple’ as Beckett himself referred to them as, which he saw as only being possible in an existential world, where the mind looks outside itself for divine direction and truths, and inwards to escape from the anguish of

living. They support each other with their little comic interplays, their ‘calisthenics’ and petulant word games. They use these adages to keep from being ‘restored to the horror of their situation,’ and they are one of the main sources of dramatic tension for the audience, what will two men up against Nothing think of next?:

V: I am happy	E: Let’s go.
E: So am I	V: We can’t
V: So am I	E: Why not
E: We are happy	V: We’re wait for Godot
V: We are happy	E: Ah!

Their repetition (‘like leaves/like ashes/like leaves’) and confusing of words (Pozzo, Bozzo, Godot, even on and off) also serves to affirm the audiences perception that they are in fact two halves of a divides self. Pozzo and Lucky represent the typical master-slave relationship which can be projected onto a number of social phenomena such as invasion and control in WWII and other social evils, but Lucky is also the ‘lucky’ slave, who is lucky to be fed and kept secure. But the characters are literally bound together in an uneasy alliance, waiting for a salvation with is not forthcoming.

The structure of *Godot* is cyclical, and – simplified – involves the Passive ones (Didi and Gogo) waiting, the Active ones (Pozzo and Lucky) passing through. The Passive ones receive the message from the Boy and resume waiting. This pattern is reflected in the second Act, and it affirms Pozzo’s telling line ‘one day like any other day.’ It tells us rather cynically that man is trapped in a maze of self deception, and the one realisation that would save him – that he must be his own Godot – is the one he spends all his time avoiding. The bleak outlook on life here is expressed by both Pozzo and Didi. Pozzo tells us that ‘They give birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more.’ Didi reflects which Gogo sleeps that ‘we have time to grow old.’ Becketts flouting of theatrical convention is clear here. There is no cause and effect. In the second Act the tree simply has some leaves, Pozzo simple *is* blind and Lucky *is* dumb. Pozzo’s earlier support of time is contradicted by his tirade in Act Two (‘Have you not done tormenting me with your accurse time? It’s abominable!).

The spectacle of Godot on stage presents us with a complex interplay of characters. The style is a mixture of vaudeville, circus, and music-hall elements.

V: It’s worse than the pantomime
E: The circus
V: The music-hall
E: The circus

Indeed, Didi and Gogo appear almost like the ‘funny man/straight man’ comic duo, their little scene where they exchange hats is a gag which has been used by such greats as the Marx Brothers in *Duck Soup*. The style comes across ultimately as tragicomic. Even in the end when they are talking about hanging themselves, a most poignant moment, Estragon at the last removes his belt and his trousers crumple to the floor. The serious moments are always tempered by humour.

The characters of *The Bald Prima Donna* reflect Ionesco’s outlook on life and also the existential ideas presented in *Godot*. Ionesco belived that modern society was sick and moving towards complete comformism and banality. His plays are characterised by nightmarish themes and images, notably *Rhinoceros* and *The Lesson*. *The Bald Prima Donna* shares this bleak outlook, yet is also very comical. Ionesco also believed that laughter was the only way to bear existence, and the comic is similarly the person best equipped to reveal these social flaws to us. The Smiths are so absurdly ‘typically English’, with their English home and English atire, that they represent the upper class bougeoisie of the London in an almost satirical way. Their language is made mostly up of niceties

and contradictions. When it is revealed that the recently deceased Bobby Watson had no children, Mrs Smith soon after asks concernedly ‘Who will take care of the children?’ The comedy of this stems primarily from their being perfectly serious about what they are saying. Ionesco presents a world in which communication has been reduced to a series of banal clichés and truisms. The characters have lost the ability to be themselves because they have no identity – the family of Bobby Watsons are indistinguishable from one another, and the Fire Chief is desperately looking for a fire to put out, so he can have some definition as a person. But they are all interchangeable, as they have all conformed to the social constructions of caste and personality, particularly expressed by Mrs Martin and Mr Martin taking on the Smith’s roles at the end. Their language eventually completely deteriorates in the end into incoherent babbling.

The structure of *Bald Prima Donna* is similar to that of *Godot* in that it is a circle. The Absurdist and particularly Ionesco wanted NO limits on theatrical presentation. They therefore denied the conventional story form of beginning, middle and end, there is no great climax or catharsis, to defining denouement where all is revealed. They make no concessions for the audience and we see most clearly in *Bald Prima Donna* that the end is in the beginning and the beginning is in the end. Life, according to the existentialists had no direct past or predetermined destiny – man must accept responsibility himself for his actions – there was no driving force and cause and effect was nullified. How then can one create a coherent plot?

In conclusion the absurdity of life is demonstrated to us the ‘Absurdist’ (they were not a movement like Surrealism) in their unconventional presentation. Characters have more metaphysical qualities, the structure reflects the existential view that life has no meaning and is an endless cycle, and this is not just shown to us in the characters dialogue. While it *is* a source of our understanding of the statements being made, it is not the primary source. The existentialism as expressed in what we see of the characters the action and spectacle are what define their messages and ideas to us.

Question 10 – Medieval English Cycle Plays

EITHER

- (a) “*Banners, pennants, processional staging and music emphasise that one of the main features of the Cycle plays was a processional quality, a sense of marvel following on marvel.*”

Discuss this statement, referring to the Cycle plays you have studied.

OR

- (b) *How are the comic and the solemn elements of the Cycle plays interwoven, to create a performance that is both a religious festival and a public entertainment?*

In your answer, refer to the Cycle plays you have studied.

General Comments

This topic was studied by very few candidates. There were no responses to Part (a).

Stronger Candidates

- addressed the concepts of both the comic and solemn elements in the cycle plays well;
- understood and discussed the context of religious festival and public entertainment;
- discussed the plays in performance and thus their theatricality;
- used detail evidence from several plays.

Weaker Candidates

- showed little knowledge of the plays;
- had a simplistic understanding of religious festival or the ‘entertainment’ elements of the performances.

Question 11 – Peter Brook

EITHER

(a) *In Peter Brook’s production of ‘The Mahabharata’, what is the effect of bringing together different, international theatrical traditions to tell the story of one culture?*

In your answer, refer to the multicultural casting, the staging techniques and the storytelling.

OR

(b) *Study the two photographs closely. What elements of Peter Brook’s production style are revealed in them, and how do these elements reflect his overall work as a director?*

General Comments

Both questions in this topic were answered well, indicating a detailed knowledge of the production and of Brook’s style, staging techniques and the play.

Stronger Candidates

- addressed Brook’s technique for bringing together international theatre traditions to tell the story of ‘The Mahabharata’, including the use of the boy and narrator as story telling devices;
- influences on Brook’s theatre and the context in which he worked were used with relevance.

Question 12 – Dario Fo

EITHER

(a) *“Political theatre need not be divorced from humour and entertainment value.”*

Discuss this statement, referring to TWO of the plays set for study.

OR

(b) *Look at the three photographs of Fo acting in his own plays. Using these as a starting point, discuss the use of extreme physical characterisation in his theatre.*

General Comments

This topic is becoming more popular with many candidates demonstrating broad knowledge of Fo’s objectives and practices. By number of responses, it appears that Part (a) was more accessible than Part (b) for candidates.

Despite the fact that the Part (b) question did not direct candidates to refer to the plays studied, most did so. This question, however, was not attempted by many candidates.

Stronger Candidates

- explained the political nature of Fo’s work, demonstrating broad knowledge of his objectives and use of various theatre forms;
- discussed the plays in action indicating their awareness of characterisation, pace (in movement and delivery) visual gags, slapstick, alienation, and disguise in achieving humour and entertainment as well as political comment;
- part (b) linked the ‘extreme physicalisation’ of the characters to pace, action and intent of the plays and gave detailed examples of this ‘extreme physical characterisation’ and linked them to the themes and intent.

Weaker Candidates

- didn't interpret 'political' to include spaces, audiences, locations, ie they could not discuss Fo's universality.

Question 12(b)

Above Average response

Stuart Hood, in the introduction to the text, claims that laughter is one of Fo's most important tenets as it 'opens people's minds and renders them receptive to ideas they might otherwise reject'. Dario Fo makes scathing attacks on many institutions and ideologies in his work. In 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' he attacks corruption within the police force, and in 'Trumpets and Raspberries' he hilariously highlights the ills of capitalism. Fo's plays are unmistakably political, but he claims that they are pieces of theatre, if they were just about politics he'd write an essay instead of a play. Fo utilises many conventions and styles in his work, such as farce, absurdism, slapstick and the tradition of the jongleur or guillare. The essence of Fo's work is that he attacks those in power through ridicule. This is most clearly indicated in 'Birth at the Jongleur' when it says 'When you laugh at the ruler, the ruler goes from being a mountain to a little molehill, and then a nothingness.'

Fo uses humour in his work because otherwise audiences would grow bored at the political sermon being delivered. Even Bertolt Brecht, an extremely political writer, realised that 'a theatre that cannot be laughed in is a theatre to be laughed at'. There is no doubt that Fo uses theatre as a means of making a political statement, this is what makes him controversial, but the success of his plays outside Italy indicate that there is universal appeal in his plays. The immediate political references are often lost, but the humour remains. The humour in Fo's work, operates on multiple levels from fiercely satirical statements, to slapstick routines. In both 'Accidental Death' and 'Trumpets' this can be observed with each contained a kicking sequence. Bertozzo, in 'Accidental Death' also has a phone rapped over his knuckles and a large rubber stamp shoved in his mouth. When Lucia is trying to prevent Antonio from revealing the truth to his wife in 'Trumpets' a kicking sequence ensues with Antonio being kicked by both women.

In many instances the nature of the facts on which Fo bases his plays, 'Accidental Death' in particular, are so grotesque that many things didn't need to be invented. The Maniac terrorises police headquarters, and in a frantic farce of mistaken identity almost drives two policemen to jump out the window, and then sing an anarchist song together. All of which he captures on audio tape. Fo has the audience laughing at events which by their nature should not be humorous. The many disguises and pranks of the Maniac create chaos and as he reveals the corrupt dealing of the police force. Fo claims in the introduction to *Mistero Buffo* that if he limited himself to acting out oppression by tragic means, he would only move his audiences to indignation. 'Inevitably, the message would be lost like water off a duck's back.'

The basis for 'Trumpets and Raspberries' was the gruesome kidnap and murder of ex-Prime Minister Aldo Moro. Fo questions whether Agnelli, head of FIAT, would have been saved if he was kidnapped, because, unlike Moro, he represents real power. The result once more a farce involving mistaken identity, coincidence and split second timing. Fo, arguably, reaches his most hilarious heights when a group of secret agents, disguised as furniture, shuffle around so that they can see Agnelli's letters. In 'Trumpets', Fo makes constant scathing attacks on capitalism, industrialists, the medical profession, and even the judiciary. Throughout the play the examining magistrate is shot in the knees twice, symbolising the fact that in Italy no investigations ever really get off the ground. Humour and satire is often worked into the script in a subtle way, for example when Rosa is asked to put on hospital overshoes she says 'what are you doing? Ah, it's for the polishing. Are you short-staffed? For the doctor in charge of the 'double', everything is an 'experiment', and at one point he actually slips up but corrects himself by saying 'treatment'. When the special edition of

the newspaper comes out, the hatred of industrialists is reflected when it says that ‘fifty-three groups claim responsibility? The stature of Agnelli is revealed through the scandals he knows of, but also because the paper says that the Pope has ‘pipped’ the Prime Minister in offering himself as Agnelli’s replacement. Fo constantly makes political statements and attacks, but his theatre remains hilarious.

One critic wrote that Fo’s plays were ‘slapdash, unstructured pieces’, but the scripts are there to serve the needs of the performer as room is left for improvisation. In ‘Accidental’, the Maniac carries much of the dialogue and there is plenty of space for contemporary or immediate references to be inserted into his speeches. The quasi-logic of many of his speeches, (his explanation for why the ambulance was called five minutes early is as good an example as any) increases the hilarity as the policemen fumble forward trying to find an acceptable resolution. The madness of the Maniac could be compared to that of Hamlet, as he ‘uncovers truths no one dare formulate in the sensible, ‘real’ world’.

Fo is a controversial figure, without being didactic. He uses humour to illustrate oppression and ‘deflate the bladder’ of the wealthy. He abandoned his role as jester of the bourgeoisie to devote himself to theatre. Satire is the product of the people, he says, and it one of the most effective tools for challenging authority. Laura Richards claimed that ‘no one in contemporary theatre has more effectively wedded comedy with savage political comment’. All theatre is political, says Fo, but not all playwrights write such uproarious farces. The performer and playwright in him are inseparable and he uses satire, farce, slapstick, absurdism to make his political statement. The absurd nature of many speeches by the Maniac and indeed throughout ‘Trumpets’ are all the more scathing for their quasi-logic. Stuart Hood claims that Fo’s anger is ‘all the fiercer for being expressed in comic terms’ and with great success he does this. It’s been said that he makes the audience ‘laugh until they cry’, and these tears magnify the folly of what he is satirising. The audience laughs until it hurts, and this entrenches his point or message with them. Instead of laughing, forgetting and moving on, Fo reaches his audience by opening their minds with laughter, and entrenches his ideas with them.

Question 13 – Augusto Boal

EITHER

- (a) *“Everything that actors do, we (non-actors) do throughout our lives. The only difference is that actors are conscious that they are using the language of theatre and are thus better able to turn it to their advantage.”*

Augusto Boal

How does Boal’s theatre practice, including his use of games and exercises, help non-actors use theatre techniques in their struggle against oppression?

OR

- (b) *Boal’s choice of theatre techniques depends on the nature of the group, the occasion and the problem to be addressed.*

Describe and discuss Boal’s work with two different groups, showing how the different needs of each group required different theatre techniques.

General Comments

More candidates answered part (a), which was more content specific than part (b). It appeared that many candidates had studied Boal’s theatrical forms more thoroughly than his games and exercises.

Stronger Candidates

- demonstrated broad understanding of Boal’s games and exercises and their purpose, as well as his use of theatrical forms, actors and ‘spectators’.

Weaker Candidates

- merely explained Image, Forum and Invisible Theatre;
- did not refer to specifics in their responses and were not able to justify their responses.

Question 13(a)

Above Average response

Augusto Boal’s belief that ‘in discovering theatre, the being became human’ is fundamental to an understanding that ‘everything that actors do, we as non-actors do throughout our lives’. The only difference is that actors are conscious that they are using the language of theatre and are thus better able to turn it to their advantage. In his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal’s aim, inspired by his fundamental belief in humanity’s capacity to change, is to aid non-actors in their struggle against oppression, an aim he achieves through his use of theatre practices, games and exercises. Ultimately, Boal encourages *Theatre of the Oppressed* participants to use various theatre techniques, such as Image, Invisible and Forum theatres and the preparatory ‘gamesercises’ they entail, as a forum in which to recognise the existence of oppression, express the need for alternatives, experiment with several possible interventions and, ideally, extrapolate these new-found solutions in order to become the protagonists of their own lives.

Boal, in his *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, states that ‘theatre is a form of knowledge; we should and can also use it as a means to transform society’. Boal asserts that, by using the language of theatre, and transforming sedentary verbal debate and discussion into theatrical intervention, various oppressions (a constant in all cultures) may be better understood, and thus overcome.

Boal’s games and exercises are based on his assertion that ‘the most important element of theatre is the human body’, thus such inclusions as the Five categories of *The Arsenal of the Theatre of the Oppressed* aim to enhance the physical unity of the individual, renewing our appreciation of the senses and bridging the chasms between them. Numerous other exercises (interactive extra versions) and games (physical monologues) in preparation for the three main categories of practice, Image, Invisible and Forum theatres, share this focus on de-mechanisation, and the development of a greater self awareness (enhanced by artificial pause and self-interogation) and agility (as fostered by the tick-tock sequence) as means by which to enhance an individuals effectiveness in the struggle against oppression.

Image theatre involves the creation of a series of sculptures (or possible images of transition) from the limiting ‘real’ to the ‘ideal’ image, thus aiding non-actors in their struggle on two main levels – that is, both emboldening participants to act and assert their own desires, and, furthermore, exorting them to establish a group consensus (vital in the movement from ‘real’ to ‘ideal’), a consideration necessary in disbanding oppression in real life. The images, constructed wordlessly, allow participants to express views which words may veil or censor, that aiding, through theatrical means, the development of an enhanced self-awareness.

Such approaches limit the extent of what Boal terms ‘cops in the head’, hereby ‘authorisation penetrates even into the individual’s unconscious’, barriers to action in real life which may be effectively dealt with in the theatrical space.

Invisible theatre allows spect-actors to act in the dual meaning of the word (both to perform and to take action) – particularly given that they are not conscious of their own involvement in a theatrical process, ‘using the language of theatre’. Boal cites many instances of the effectiveness of this form

of practice, where issues of oppression have been raised and debated in the public realm, such as the issue of sexual harassment on the Paris metro, and the picnic in the streets of Stockholm protesting against unequal road access for pedestrians – the extent of ‘audience’ involvement in these scenarios highlighting the extent of the oppression, with heated exchange invariably occurring as a result!

Boal’s Forum Theatre is perhaps the practice most directly linked with an extrapolation of a theatrically explored solution into real life. As Boal noted in his 1995 publication, ‘The Rainbow of Desire’, ‘in the conventional theatre we present images of the world for contemplation; in the Theatre of the Oppressed, these images are presented to be destroyed and replaced by others’. Forum theatre aims to help non-actors use theatrical techniques to intervene in a familiar form of oppression and experiment with possible alternative – ultimately, enabling them to rehearse for their future.

The democratic nature of Boal’s Forum theatre whereby, during the re-enactment of a scene depicting oppression, any spect-actor may replace the protagonist at any point they choose, is an empowering experience for non-actors who experience oppression of any kind; this type of empowerment is mirrored in exercises such as ‘breaking the oppression’, whereby the oppressor and oppressed exchange roles (and gain greater insight into opposing perspectives) and ‘opposite circumstances’ (where, in playing a scene of great violence in, for instance, complete calm, the mind that has been mechanised by the security of the script (or the inevitability of daily injustices in real life) is reawakened to the numerous possibilities which exist for alternative action).

Forum theatre employs a ‘Joker’, unattached to any party, who may question whether proposed solutions are ‘magic’ or ‘inadequate’; thus, Boal maintains, using the language of theatre may provide viable, feasible alternatives in the struggle against oppression.

Ultimately, Boal’s theatre techniques may empower the non-actor in their struggle against oppression both through the use of games and exercises which emphasise physicality, and facilitate de-mechanisation; and by direct participation in Image, Invisible and Forum theatres, which enables a dynamisation, rather than the mere catharsis of watching other actors (as opposed to spect-actors). As Boal comments in his Legislative theatre (1998), ‘today we are digging the communal graves in which masses will be buried in the 21st century’, it is thus vital that the oppressed in all cultures may be able to, through theatrical techniques, rehearse for a more positive future, discovering in theatre possible alternatives which may thus be extrapolated into and hopefully change the oppressive realities of daily life.

Question 14 – Commedia dell’arte

EITHER

- (a) *The commedia dell’arte performances were not just light-hearted entertainments. The characters, themes and performance styles also reflected the serious issues of the places and times in which they were performed.*

Discuss this statement with reference to the commedia dell’arte of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

OR

- (b) *The commedia dell’arte performer needed to be a comedian, acrobat, singer, dancer and mime, as well as being quick witted.*

Discuss the need for these skills in the commedia dell’arte performers of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.

General Comments

This was the most popular topic with a balance of candidates attempting each question. Part (a) was better answered than Part (b). Unfortunately, there was still a tendency for candidates to write what they knew about the topic without relating it to the question.

Stronger Candidates

- were able to challenge the statement, explaining ‘the serious issues’ more as social comment or satire and extrapolated this with reference to the social order of the ‘places and times’ and demonstrating how the characters, themes and performance styles reflected them;
- were able to link the issues to comic presentation;
- for Part (b), discussed the ‘need’ for the skills listed and supported this with examples from their own experience as well as the documented evidence;
- related the skills to specific stock characters, their interactions and their place in the overall performance.

Weaker Candidates

- wrote about characters and themes without relating them to the question;
- discussed only generalities without relating them to the style and purpose of comedia.

Question 14(a)

Above Average response

The entertainment value of the commedia dell’arte performances ranked highly with the lower classes during its height of popularity in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The people saw it as light-hearted entertainment that drew on the human foibles and themes present in society but underneath the hugely successful comedic style the more poignant and serious issues were being showcased and satirised as a means of creating greater audience appeal. This is not to say that the comedian action carried the heavy burden of the horrors of society, they simply took aspects of a seemingly unfair and at times unfavourable society and turned them into a hilarious and entertaining form of theatre that could be enjoyed by many.

The characters in commedia were often stereotypical satirical views of groups or certain members of society and time and place that they were performed. Although the commedia characters were not changed or adapted, their relevance can still be seen today as they draw on the foibles on human nature. Pantalone, the greedy old man from Venice has the very peak of the hierachical system. He has money and believed that all could be bought or sold. He exists as the materialistic, greedy merchant style character, he highlights the wrongs of these issues and often becomes the ‘butt’ of many jokes. Commedia attempted to point out the wrongs in society by creating these misinformed ignorant and comedic characters. The lovers were present as a warning to the evils of vanity and self obsession and stupidity. The Zannis were the most unfortunate of all the characters in commedia and were therefore the ones that the audience could the most closely identify with. At the bottom of the hierachical system they were often poverty stricken servants. This was often evident in their masks, especially xxx who has warts, a result from a poor diet. The Zannis also displayed the more comedic master and servant relationship. The stupidity and often gullible nature of the masters (usually Pantalone or II xxx) made them extremely susceptible to the plans and scheming of the Zannis’s whose aim was to always fool their masters and gain the upper hand. The audience response to this was always immense as it showed the servant in a more favourable position and this was appreciated by the audience. The fact that they could see the master in a compromising position made them feel more empowered and slightly better about their current situation. This servant and master relationship was one that was often revisited by the commedia troupes as it gave the opportunity for the inclusion of other audience favourites like the Lazzi.

Lazzi is roughly translated as stage business and is an action that does not further the plot, it simply provides additional entertainment to the audience. One of the most famous Lazzi was that of Pantalone, who on hearing of bad financial news falls on his back and like a beetle cannot get up again. Some performers could become very famous for their interpretation of their character Lazzi.

Like Lazzi, grunaeld was a highly comedic part of commedia dell'arte but it grew out of a need, not a want. It was invented when commedia was banned on stage. The actors could not speak any dialogue through order of the church so something had to be done. That something was grunaeld, a non-coherent series of babble that allowed the performer to operate without actually saying anything. It became a much anticipated and appreciated part of the performance but originated from restrictions of society.

The outdoor stages of commedia dell'arte were not at first chosen venues. The troupes were banned from performing in theatres (all the theatres were closed) so they had to take to stages in the streets, carnivale grounds or anywhere they could find.

The tragedies of life were often played out in a hysterical, satirical manner but always had inextricable links with the society, time and place that the commedia dell'arte performances were taking place. The plays were created for an audience of the lower class as a way of seeing a lot of their lives performed in a more pleasing manner. As they were often unlucky in life, commedia reversed this in the performances and made them the more affluent and successful character.

Although serious issues like poverty, malice, vanity, lust, greed and materialism were the underlying issues in commedia dell'arte, they did not command an exceedingly strong message or detract from the fun, comic style that was so enjoyed by the masses. The simply gave the style a link with reality making it more poignant and keeping it significant to the time and place. These issues contributed to the immense success of commedia dell'arte through its main success comes from its amazingly funny comic style and the talent and wit of the ensemble of performers who brought the characters, themes and more so, the style to life.