



2013

Drama GA 2: Solo performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, students demonstrated a strong understanding of, and skill with, the use of non-naturalistic, rather than naturalistic, performance techniques in the 2013 Drama solo performance examination. Many moved away from naturalistic scripting, instead choosing inventive and appropriate use of pre-recorded soundscapes, highly physical expression through carefully choreographed movement, and the creative transformation of well-chosen objects.

Teachers should allow appropriate planning and preparation time for students to explore options before they begin to develop their solo.

Work at the highest level showed little reliance on a character(s) describing the action.

Teachers and students need to pay closer attention to the appropriateness of additional information when addressing ‘aspects of’ within the performance style. ‘Aspects of’ are selected to support students in the delivery of the prescribed theatrical convention and/or dramatic element.

Many secondary characters were represented at the expense of the central or primary character. When constructing the solo performance, it is important to remember that the named character in the Prescribed Structure must clearly be the central character, and must occupy more of the solo performance time than any other character.

In their performance, students need to communicate information about their character that is outlined in the stem of the performance focus as well as addressing the three dot points. Information in the performance focus can include background and emotional insights, where and when the character/performance is located, who else is/was there. Many performances made scant references to information from the stem and only addressed the dot points.

This year some students chose to include information from sources other than those listed as the prescribed stimulus. This is risky. Other sources can present contradictory and/or incorrect information. This is particularly noticeable when the prescribed stimulus is a novel and students gravitate towards a film interpretation. The prescribed stimulus must be referenced throughout the performance.

Many performances presented the theatrical convention of stillness and silence as two separate things. For the purposes of the solo performance, stillness and silence need to happen at the same time in order to address the requirements of the examination.

Work at the highest level demonstrated considerable research and judicious editing to allow appropriate considerations of all aspects of the prescribed structure in the performance. While there is no requirement to evenly divide time across the sections of the structure or guidelines about how to incorporate specific types of information, it is important to remember that each aspect of the structure needs to be addressed adequately. Some performances seemed to address dot point 3 almost as an afterthought.

While it is acceptable not to use assessors as audience, directing focus at walls, particularly side walls, can mean that vocal and facial expression are lost to assessors.



SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The characters

The Master of Suspense: Alfred Hitchcock

High-scoring performances communicated understanding of Hitchcock as a person not just a character type. Students showed him being critical of the young director's work, but not of his person – berating rather than insulting. Work at this level thoughtfully selected and cleverly manipulated some of Hitchcock's film techniques, demonstrating how he established suspense, particularly through the use of stillness and silence.

Low-scoring performances presented the young director as an upstart or caricature. Work at this level showed minimal understanding of the 1954 film *Rear Window* and tended to explore violence or comedy in current television soap operas, avoiding any reference to suspense.

The Shrew: Katherina (Kate)

High-scoring performances had a real connection with Shakespearean language, were comfortable with its rhythms and able to clearly communicate meaning. Work at this level was adept at expressing the playful way Kate turned Petruccio's demands against him and skilfully shifted between the young and the older Kate. Stagecraft, particularly costume, was effectively employed.

Low-scoring performances were superficial in their exploration of the vastly different gender roles of bygone days, choosing to play Katherina as a 21st century mother. Work at this level tended to present a plea to legitimise same-sex marriage rather than addressing the task, which was to explore how gender roles have changed over 400 years.

The Hired Help: Manuel or Polly

High-scoring performances demonstrated a good understanding of how, while farce needs to be energetic almost to the point of being manic, the energy has to be carefully controlled. Work at this level went beyond simply copying silly walks and pratfalls, carefully rationed Manuel's use of 'qué?', and found great comedy in Polly's long-suffering acceptance of Basil's incoherent management of customers and unexpected problems.

Low-scoring performances contained a predominance of uncontrolled physicality that rendered much of the performance incomprehensible. Work at this level also failed to establish a reflection on the forgotten art of good manners in contemporary society.

Mr Moon

High-scoring performances demonstrated sophisticated choices in the use of symbol and stagecraft to establish both the character of Mr Moon and the fun park itself. The development of a sense of place was best portrayed by students who had closely studied the stimulus and were therefore able to link the locality of St Kilda to the changing nature of Luna Park's attractions. Performances at this level were highly effective in their use of pathos.

Low-scoring performances tended to present a catalogue of the various rides and stalls without paying sufficient attention to the imminent loss of the park, which was at the core of the performance focus. Work at this level contained little or no research and very little editing.

The Warrior Woman: Hua Mulan

High-scoring performances effectively demonstrated the concept of a woman pretending to be a man and were able to use voice, movement and gesture to differentiate those moments when Mulan was 'herself', and when she was in character. Work at this level clearly showed her fear of being unmasked as well as her determination to bring honour to her family. The use of symbol and costume were highlights of the best performances.

Low-scoring performances relied too heavily on the martial arts aspects, often overplaying this to the extent that the required details in the prescribed structure were missing. Some costume choices were problematic, clearly hindering movement and character transformations.

The Wartime Entertainer

High-scoring performances clearly established an indigenous voice throughout the work and didn't overplay the 'poor me' card, choosing to portray experiences as universal rather than individual. Students enthusiastically and sensitively addressed issues such as the struggles of indigenous women and the violence and chaos of the war in Vietnam, as well



as demonstrating the power of music to influence change. Work at this level used song effectively, paying particular attention to the careful selection and very tight editing of the different numbers presented.

Low-scoring performances often reproduced far too much material from the film, resulting in a largely naturalistic performance style and indicating a lack of research. Work at this level was often weighed down by a clumsy overuse of song.

Meggie Folchart

High-scoring performances were able to navigate the potential traps associated with a story about reading aloud by creating performances that acknowledged Meggie's power but focused on the doing, rather than the telling. Work at this level explored a wide range of characters while maintaining prime focus on Meggie, and effectively differentiated between 'then' and 'now'.

Low-scoring performances merely reproduced episodes from the novel and, in some cases, the film, and were unclear about the complexity of the two worlds and the characters within them. Work at this level tended to be top heavy with narration, lacked variety in the depiction of characters, and used stagecraft in a very literal and naturalistic way.

The Sporting Hero: Dave Sorenson

High-scoring performances enthusiastically embraced the satire that typifies John Clarke's style and, recognising that sporting commentary needs no explanation, simply shared the secrets of farnarkeling without further information. Work at this level also demonstrated excellent choices in the use of space and level, as well as the use of finely controlled physical energy.

Low-scoring performances failed to demonstrate the stimulus or capture any sense of the language. Work at this level seemed to miss the point of the mythical game, as well as Clarke's humour, and often made lazy costume choices; for example, a singlet with tracksuit pants or shorts. These added nothing to our understanding of the character and seemed out of place at the International Sporting Hall of Fame event.

The Celebrity Chef: Fanny Cradock

High-scoring performances successfully captured Fanny's over-the-top style and her outrageous self-confidence through excellent use of caricature. Students effectively demonstrated her egotism and contempt of the BBC bean counters while appropriately integrating social and political comment. Work at this level presented a Fanny who was aware of her own weaknesses and satirised her overall foolishness with a fond eye.

Low-scoring performances lacked research and failed to understand the complex nature of the person or the times in which she lived. When addressing dot point 3, work at this level seemed to focus on a particular celebrity chef in order to be able to swear a lot.

The Detective

High-scoring performances effectively established mood by portraying the Detective as an anti-hero, exploring physical and psychological features of film noir. Work at this level made sense of the range of locations and the minor characters, and successfully linked the Maltese Falcon to the Somerton Man case. Students made excellent stagecraft choices, particularly regarding the use of costume and soundscapes.

Low-scoring performances spent far too much time on plot development. Work at this level was less able to differentiate between characters, time and place, and often failed to make any connection with the search for the Maltese Falcon.