



2012

Theatre Studies GA 2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The monologue examination typically contains 12 or 13 choices. As noted in previous assessment reports, along with new choices, the examination will include monologues from previous years. Some monologues are reproduced in their entirety, while others may be formed by cutting and pasting passages to form the monologues, thus allowing students to address the challenge of shifts in time, persons and places that this requires.

Since 2010, the VCAA has set a single prescribed version of each monologue for this examination. This is the only version of the monologue that is examinable. Upon request to the VCAA, a PDF of the complete set of prescribed monologues will be sent to schools. Details of how to make this request can be found in the examination paper. It is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that the monologues studied by their students are the officially sanctioned versions. In 2012, it appears that overwhelmingly students presented the prescribed version. However, a small number of students performed lines that were deleted from the prescribed version. The delivery of deleted passages is not examinable. It is expected that students will deliver all of the prescribed lines of the monologue at the time of the assessment. Lines that are prerecorded or replayed on audio devices are not deemed to be a performance.

Recontextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the original time and/or setting to another appropriate context) is permissible for this task. However, it appears that some students are making recontextualisation choices that substantially alter the intended meaning of the monologue and this can adversely affect their performance. Any recontextualisation of the monologue should take into account the scene in which the monologue is embedded, the greater world of the play and the playwright's intentions.

When performing, the use of accent may be an aid to establishing context but its use is not mandated. However, often the application of accent, when consistently applied, can enhance a performance.

Students are not required to adhere to the stage directions in the prescribed monologue. However, it is advised that students experiment with the use of the stage directions as part of their preparation for the performance.

The monologue task requires the student to think creatively, expressively, imaginatively and theatrically. Students should make judicious choices regarding how the use of design elements, such as set items, props, costume(s) and make-up, will enhance their performance. Design elements should imply the setting, the monologue and the wider world of the play rather than reconstruct it in its entirety. The individual student being examined is solely responsible for bringing all stagecraft items in and out of the assessment room without assistance and this should occur within the allotted time. Students should be aware that venues are hired spaces, and that there will be one table and two chairs supplied in each examination room. The furniture that is supplied is not to be stood upon. Under no circumstances should the furniture or the floor be damaged. When in doubt or if there are particular requirements, students should bring their own furniture. The assessors' table(s) is for assessment purposes. Students are not to place objects on the assessors' table(s) or use it in any way as part of their performance.

It should be noted that students are allocated a room in which to perform. Students should plan their performance so that it can be adapted to a range of spaces. Teachers should note that it is not appropriate to ask for a room change on behalf of their students on the day of the examination. Any such requests, should they be necessary, should be made to the VCAA prior to the examination.

The examination paper contains conditions regarding objects and substances that students are not permitted to use in their performance. While it appears that the majority of students are following the guidelines, some students are not aware of them. Students will not be permitted to perform with weapons or imitation weapons. The use of breaking glass, stage blood, other liquids or anything that may damage carpet or furniture is often not necessary, can be hazardous and is generally not advised. Liquids are not forbidden, but there is a high expectation that the use of liquids will be limited, highly controlled and very well rehearsed. Students must not use any objects or substances in the performance that may cause injury to themselves or others.

Each assessment room has a single power point for the use of electrical equipment, such as audio devices. However, it is the responsibility of the student to plan for the use of such equipment beforehand, including considering whether to bring batteries and/or an extension cord depending on where in the room the power point is situated. Students are also advised to check the sound level of audio equipment before commencing the performance and, if applicable, to be familiar with the remote control devices for the equipment. All equipment should be tested and tagged. Students may



bring a laptop, MP3 player, tablet or other such portable electronic device into the examination room to use in the performance. However, it is advised that the student explains how the device will be used in the Statement of Intention. Recording functions on audio equipment must be disabled during the examination.

Areas of strength and weakness

Stronger performances were generally characterised by

- a thorough knowledge of the monologue, the associated scene and the play as a whole
- a high level of direct or indirect research and preparation
- a strong and consistent directorial vision
- a strong correlation evident between the interpretation of the monologue and its contexts, including those within the scene and the greater play
- a high level of understanding of subtext and the intended meanings of the playwright
- consistent and creative application of theatrical style(s)
- mastery of the language as appropriate to the monologue and the greater world of the play
- a clear awareness of implied time, place and person(s)
- accomplished performance skills, including the use of verbal and non-verbal expressive skills
- well-chosen and effectively applied stagecraft other than acting, dramaturgy and direction
- highly evident and effective use of focus and space
- an understanding of and an ability to manipulate dramatic tension and timing.

Weaker performances were generally characterised by

- an incomplete, limited or poor knowledge of the monologue
- a poor perception of the world of the character within the context of the scene and the play as a whole
- little direct or indirect evidence of research or preparation
- little evidence of a consolidated directorial vision
- poor or inappropriate contextual choices
- concentration on the literal meaning of the text, with minimal reference to subtext, context or the intended meanings of the playwright
- limited use and application of theatrical style(s)
- poor understanding and/or application of the language of the monologue
- limited physicalisation of the character
- peripheral or irrelevant application of props, set items, costume or make-up
- a lack of awareness of implied time, place or person(s)
- limited manipulation of the performance space
- a poor understanding of and inability to manipulate the focus of the audience and the performer
- a poor understanding of and inability to manipulate dramatic tension and timing.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The first assessment criterion determines whether the student met the requirements of the task, rather than considering how well the monologue was performed. Where students did not meet the requirements of Criterion 1, it appears that memorisation of lines and contextual choices were primary contributing factors in most cases. To achieve full marks for Criterion 1, as well as memorising the lines of the script and enacting the text, students were required to make directorial choices, select and apply a theatrical style(s), select and apply stagecraft other than acting, and create an appropriate context for the performance.

Students should note that all of the assessment criteria have equal weighting and they should ensure that their performance meets each criterion. It was evident that some students paid scant attention to the use and application of theatrical style(s) (Criterion 4) and were unaware or not fully aware of the implied time, place and persons within the monologue and associated scene (Criterion 2). The combination of 'focus' and 'space' in Criterion 7 appears to have caused confusion for some students. Focus relates to the ability of a performer to portray and maintain a characterisation, plus the ability to focus an audience on aspects of a performance. One way of focusing the audience's attention is by manipulating the performance space. While the choice of stagecraft, such as costumes, make-up, set items and props, should be judicious, it is expected that all students will use some stagecraft other than acting, direction and dramaturgy in their performance, including one or more of costume, make-up, props, set, sound and multimedia.

It was noted that an increasing number of students added stage business and action before the delivery of the spoken lines of their monologue or continued with action and business after they concluded the verbal delivery of the



prescribed text. Such choices are to be encouraged as these can assist students with establishing and maintaining a context. However, it should be noted that it is not within the conventions of this task to add any lines of dialogue to the performance, nor should lines be deleted from the prescribed text or substituted with other lines. All monologues must be performed within the seven-minute time limit.

The 2012 monologues

In 2012, Monologue 12 was the most popular choice and Monologue 13 was the least popular. The popularity of the monologues is indicated in the table below.

Number	Monologue chosen	% of students
1	Lady Bracknell	9.1
2	Hannay	7.6
3	Hanna	11.4
4	Barney	4.7
5	Joan	7.3
6	Shirley	8.7
7	Scapin	5.9
8	Louie	5.1
9	Bella	11.6
10	Inspector	3.7
11	Woman	9.9
12	The Creature	13.0
13	Speaker of the Prologue and Speaker of the Epilogue	2.0

Play: *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Monologue: Lady Bracknell

Stronger performances tended to convey an understanding of the style of the playscript, the age, status and physicality of the character, the pronunciation of key words, and the effective use of implied person and place. In lower-level performances, there were poor or ill-informed contextual choices and little understanding of the world of the play, including the interrelationships of the characters.

Play: *The 39 Steps*

Monologue: Hannay

Higher-level performances were characterised by an effective use of sound (often pre-recorded). The delivery was well timed vocally and physically to enhance the comedic style of the playscript. There was also an excellent use of implied person and place. Higher-level performances convincingly conveyed what was at stake for the character and his social class. Lower-level performances showed very little understanding of the world of the play and/or the immediate context of the monologue. There was little variety in the delivery of the monologue.

Play: *The Rain*

Monologue: Hanna

Stronger performances conveyed a clear sense of the character, her story and the other people that she was recreating. There was also a strong use of symbol and mood. The language of the script was conveyed through an effective use of tone, rhythm and mood. Weaker performances displayed a lack of understanding of the subtleties inherent in the playscript and conveyed little sense of who the character was and what had happened to her. There was an overuse of props in the performance.

Play: *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*

Monologue: Barney

Higher-level work was characterised by an excellent use of the naturalistic style. In such performances, there was a strong sense of implied person as well as the setting of the monologue and the overall world of the play. There was an excellent understanding of the interrelationships between the characters. Lower-level performances did not convey the subtleties in the playscript and/or of Barney's relationship with the other characters. Weaker work was often characterised by poor or ill-informed contextual choices, which conflicted with the intended meaning of the playscript.

**Play: *Saint Joan*****Monologue: Joan**

Stronger performances effectively implied the other persons present and conveyed an understanding of Joan's relationship to each of them. Such performances effectively conveyed the immediate context of the monologue, the character's journey and the turning points in the playscript. Weaker performances tended to show little understanding of the context of the monologue. Often, the immediate context of the monologue was not created or conveyed.

Play: *Shirley Valentine***Monologue: Shirley**

Higher-level performances effectively recreated the experiences to which Shirley referred. There was a highly effective use of both comic and dramatic timing, which conveyed empathy for the character. Stronger performances also captured the age of the character, her social class and what was at stake for her. Often, accent was used effectively. Lower-level performances tended to miss or ignore the subtleties of the character and the events that she was recalling. Accent was poorly used or used inconsistently. Contextual choices worked against the intended meaning of the monologue.

Play: *That Scoundrel Scapin***Monologue: Scapin**

Stronger performances were often characterised by well-executed comic timing, use of conventions of the commedia dell'arte theatrical style, including a highly effective use of both verbal and non-verbal expressive skills. Such performances made a clear and effective distinction between the different characters that Scapin was pretending to portray. Lower-level performances often displayed little sense of the implied audience and/or an understanding of the context of the monologue within the wider world of the play. The interrelationship between Scapin and the other character in the scene was unclear or inconsistently depicted.

Play: *Lost in Yonkers***Monologue: Louie****OR****Monologue: Bella**

Higher-level performances effectively captured the sense of place, the specific accent of the character and the relationship of the character to the other character in the scene. There was an excellent understanding of the characteristics of the character and the events to which he/she was referring. In lower-level performances, students tended to use accent poorly or inconsistently. There was little understanding of the context of the scene, including the interrelationship between the characters and the wider world of the play. Such performances did not convey the subtext in the monologue.

Play: *Cahoot's Macbeth***Monologue: Inspector**

Stronger performances effectively conveyed a sense of place, and implied people and the wider contexts of the scene and play. These performances captured both the humour and the sense of menace in the playscript. There was an imaginative use of stage business and physicality. Lower-level performances were often characterised by little understanding of the context of the monologue. Implied place, time and people were poorly conveyed.

Play: *A Woman Alone***Monologue: Woman**

Stronger performances conveyed the comical aspects that are inherent in the playscript. There was a highly effective use of the acting space. Such performances strongly conveyed a sense of the other characters that the 'Woman' was addressing and her relationship to them. There was a sophisticated application of stagecraft. Lower-level performances were often characterised by a lack of humour and/or a lack of variety in the delivery of the lines. The context depicted was unclear or worked against the intended meaning of the playscript.

Play: *Frankenstein*, based on the novel by Mary Shelley**Monologue: The Creature**

Stronger performances were characterised by a highly effective use of stagecraft, such as make-up, costume(s), props and sound. There was a strongly conveyed sense of what was at stake for the character and his relationship to the other character in the scene. The performance was informed by an excellent understanding of the wider world of the play and the character's place within it. Lower-level performances were often characterised by little understanding of the contexts of the playscript. The performances lacked subtlety and expressive skills were poorly applied, especially the use of voice and gesture.

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Play: *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

Monologue: **Speaker of the Prologue and Speaker of the Epilogue**

Stronger performances conveyed a highly informed sense of the function of the 'Speaker' and his/her connection to the Prologue and the Epilogue. Such performances conveyed an excellent sense of what occurs in the play between the two parts of the monologue (the Prologue and the Epilogue). Lower-level performances were often characterised by poor contextual choices, which demonstrated a limited understanding of the intended meaning of the playscript. There was poor delivery of the language of the playscript and little understanding of the implied actor-audience relationship.