



**2013**

**Theatre Studies GA 2: Performance examination**

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

This report relates to the 2013 VCE Theatre Studies GA2 Performance examination. From 2014, the name and structure of the GA2 assessment for Theatre Studies will change. The examination will be known as the GA2 Stagecraft examination. Specifications and advice about the Stagecraft examination are available from the VCAA website. Comments in this report are, in general, also applicable to the Stagecraft examination.

The monologue examination typically contains 12 or 13 choices, with some of them derived from the same play. Along with new choices, the examination will include monologues from previous years. In 2013, some monologues were reproduced in their entirety, while others were 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 were provided with the examination material published in April. In 2013, it appeared 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 were pre-recorded or replayed on audio devices were not deemed to be a performance.

Recontextualisation of the monologue (that is, changing details such as the original time and/or setting to another context) is permissible for this task. However, it appeared that some students made recontextualisation choices that substantially altered the intended meanings of their monologue interpretation and this adversely affected 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 interpretation.

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, sound, 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 the furniture 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. Students are not to place objects on the assessors' table(s) or use it in any way as part of their performance. 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.

The examination material published in April 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. 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. 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, associated scene and the play as a whole
- a high level of direct research (for example, researching the play or playwright) or indirect research (for example, researching associated themes or ideas) and preparation
- a strong and consistent directorial vision
- a strong correlation 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 nonverbal 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, theatrical tension and timing.

Weaker performances were generally characterised by

- 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 text and literal meaning, 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 theatrical tension and timing.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The first assessment criterion is quantitative rather than qualitative – it assesses 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 appeared that, in most cases, memorisation of lines and contextual choices were the primary contributing factors. 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), choose and apply stagecraft other than acting and create an appropriate context for the performance. It is expected that students will deliver all of the lines of the monologue at the time of the assessment. The pre-recording and replaying of lines on audio devices was not deemed to be a performance.

Students should note that all of the assessment criteria have equal weighting and that they should ensure their performance meets each criterion. It was evident that some students paid scant attention to the use and application of theatrical style(s) and were unaware, or not fully aware, of the implied time, place and persons within the monologue and associated scene. The combination of ‘focus’ and ‘space’ appears to cause 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.

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Some students presented their monologue with very little evidence of the application of stagecraft other than acting, dramaturgy and direction. While the choice of stagecraft such as costumes, make-up, set items and props should be judicious, it was evident that some students made poor stagecraft decisions and/or applied little stagecraft, and this affected their performance adversely. It was expected that all students would use some stagecraft other than acting, direction and dramaturgy in their performance, including costume, make-up, props, set and sound.

Many 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 allocated time limit.

## The 2013 monologues

The popularity of the monologues is indicated in the table below.

Number	Monologue chosen	% of students
1	Chorus	3.2
2	Sabina (Miss Somerset)	11.0
3	Mbongeni	2.7
4	Beatrice Ethel Appleton	14.6
5	Aunty Avaricia	5.7
6	Jim	7.1
7	Amanda	8.8
8	Lloyd	6.0
9	Phoebe	5.3
10	Nyukhin	10.8
11	Sylvie	17.5
12	Tamburlaine	3.1
13	Zenocrate	4.1

### Play: *King Oedipus*

#### Monologue: Chorus

In higher-level performances

- recontextualisation, if applied, was appropriate to the scene and the wider play
- the language of the monologue was effectively performed
- there was highly effective use of costume, props and make-up
- there was smooth transition between the two sections of the monologue.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- inappropriate recontextualisation choices
- lack of stagecraft and/or stagecraft choices that did not match the overall interpretation
- static presentation with a lack of movement and an over-reliance on vocal expression.

### Play: 'The Skin of Our Teeth'

#### Monologue: Sabina (Miss Somerset)

In higher-level performances

- stagecraft was used well and added to the comedy of the scene
- there was highly effective use of stage business and well-timed use of visual humour
- the shift from the character of Sabina to Miss Somerset was handled well and presented with effective comic timing.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- lack of research into the subplots in the monologue
- lack of subtlety in the interpretation

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- contextual choices that did not take into account the wider world of the play.

**Play: *Woza Albert!***

**Monologue: Mbongeni**

Higher-level performances were characterised by

- effective use of physical theatre and poor theatre conventions
- strong use of voice and characterisation
- smooth transition between the two sections of the monologue
- well-conceived and well-executed interpretative choices.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- lack of research into the wider world of the monologue
- lack of movement in the interpretation, with an over-reliance on recitation
- contextual choices that did not take into account the wider world of the play.

**Play: *Songs for Nobodies***

**Monologue: Beatrice Ethel Appleton**

In higher-level performances

- the student conveyed both the humour and the pathos of the monologue
- transformations between Beatrice and Judy Garland were very effectively presented
- there was effective establishment and maintenance of actor–audience relationship
- research had been completed well.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- lack of research into the world of the play
- over-reliance on stagecraft, especially props
- poor character transformation
- an unclear depiction of Beatrice’s status.

**Play: ‘Babes in the Wood’**

**Monologue: Aunty Avaricia**

Higher-level performances were characterised by

- a high level of research into the political and social contexts of the play
- effective use of comic timing, implied person and implied place
- effective use of actor–audience relationship
- an interpretation that conveyed the satirical aspects of the monologue.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- a lack of clarity conveyed of the character’s role and function
- a lack of research into the political and social contexts of the play
- interpretation choices that conveyed a lack of sophisticated understanding of the contexts of the play.

**Play: *The Glass Menagerie***

**Monologue: Jim**

**OR**

**Monologue: Amanda**

Higher-level performances were characterised by

- highly effective use of accent
- effective research into the world of the play and the contexts of the monologue
- the ability to convey a strong understanding of what was at stake for the character
- the ability to convey implied person and implied place very effectively.

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## Lower-level performances

- missed the subtext of the monologue
- lacked of clarity regarding implied person and implied place
- lacked of subtlety in the depiction of the character
- did not use accent or accents were poorly sustained.

### **Play:** *Lloyd Beckman, Beekeeper*

#### **Monologue:** Lloyd

## Higher-level performances

- effectively conveyed the age of the character
- conveyed both the humour and the pathos of the monologue
- effectively established and maintained an actor–audience relationship
- conveyed the subtext of the monologue.

## In lower-level performances

- characterisation relied on caricature
- interpretation lacked subtlety
- interpretation choices conveyed a lack of sophisticated understanding of the contexts of the play.

### **Play:** *The Entertainer*

#### **Monologue:** Phoebe

## Higher-level performances were characterised by

- highly effective use of accent
- an interpretation that conveyed a strong understanding of the intended meanings and contexts of the play
- effective choices to convey the maturity of the character
- strong use of implied person.

## Lower-level performances were characterised by

- an overly simplistic depiction of Phoebe as being drunk
- an interpretation that lacked an understanding of the intended meanings and contexts of the play
- a lack of clarity in conveying implied person and implied place
- a lack of subtlety in the interpretation.

### **Play:** 'On the Harmfulness of Tobacco'

#### **Monologue:** Nyukhin

## Higher-level performances

- effectively conveyed the world-weariness of the character
- strongly conveyed a sense of implied person, place and time
- conveyed subtleties and shifts within the monologue
- featured well-chosen and applied use of stagecraft to support the performance.

## In lower-level performances

- the pathos of the monologue was not conveyed or was conveyed at a superficial level
- there was poor use of comic and/or dramatic timing
- static performance lacked stage business
- a lack of research into the world of the monologue was evident.

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**Play:** *Ruby Moon*  
**Monologue:** Sylvie

Higher-level performances

- showed highly effective use of stagecraft other than acting and direction to support the performance
- conveyed a strong sense of implied person and implied place
- effectively conveyed the sense of menace in the monologue
- clearly conveyed contextual choices.

In lower-level performances

- characterisation relied on caricature
- the interpretation lacked subtlety
- interpretative choices conveyed a lack of sophisticated understanding of the contexts of the play
- there was an over-reliance on set and props to convey the intended meanings.

**Play:** 'Tamburlaine the Great, Part One'

**Monologue:** Zenocrate

**OR**

**Monologue:** Tamburlaine

In higher-level performances

- the range of emotions in the monologue was effectively conveyed
- use of stagecraft other than acting and direction to support the interpretation was highly effective
- the language of the monologue was performed effectively
- effective research into the world of the play and the contexts of the monologue was evident.

Lower-level performances were characterised by

- static presentation with a lack of movement and an over-reliance on vocal expression
- a lack of research into the wider world of the play, including its intended meanings and contexts
- inappropriate recontextualisation choices
- a lack of stagecraft and/or stagecraft choices did not match the overall interpretation.