

<p>Written examination General comments</p>

This year six schools were involved in the examination, answering questions from Medea, Much Ado About Nothing, Rhinoceros, Purapurawhetū, She Stoops to Conquer and Wednesday to Come.

The continuing popularity of studying New Zealand Drama was reflected in schools' study and performance of Renee's Wednesday to Come and Purapurawhetū by Briar Grace-Smith. However a true range of texts have been studied this year which is pleasing to see.

A range of abilities was demonstrated in the examination.

Candidates should be very clear early on about the 'Overall Production Concept' (OPC) and should aim to develop this in detail. The Overall Production Concept is the concept for performance that the candidate chooses for their interpretation. It is not necessarily the original concept for the production.

Where a play has a specific theatre form eg. Medea is identified as Classical Tragedy – Greek, the candidate must choose to set the play either within this context (the form, setting, era) or develop a new context for their performance. It is this context which becomes the starting point for the Overall Production Concept. The setting of the play, costuming, design and interpretation are embodied within the Overall Production Concept. Candidates who took this approach, and were consistent with it throughout their answer were generally able to access marks towards the higher end of the mark scheme.

However, candidates should not give options or try to mix eras in their OPC. Where confusion might occur is to set a defined Overall Production Concept within a time era and then add another era on top of that time setting for a specific scene. It is possible to be aware of the social, historical, and cultural impact of the play whilst focussing on one production concept.

Effective answers used short but relevant quotations from the play extract to justify their interpretations. It is important to reference the text in order to achieve a through line when answering questions – this is particularly important in analysis of character interpretation in order that the candidate might build their response as they move through the scene with an analytical performance approach.

Good choice of text, rather than huge quotations, is recommended due to the time constraints of the examination. Also a quotation needs to be relevant to the point being made – not just lines that the candidate happens to remember.

Seeing the play in performance, or staging the play and therefore understanding the staging possibilities enabled candidates to access the higher end of the mark scheme. Staging a play in a specific place enabled candidates to discuss the use of space with real insight. However it is advisable to discuss the theatre space and shape and support this diagrammatically where possible. Candidates who were more plot driven in their answers, suggesting only limited

ideas for staging (either acting or direction), could only achieve marks at the lower end of the mark scheme. Candidates who lacked coherence jumping from one idea to the next with no real line of development – whether character, director or design questions could also only achieve at the lower end of the mark scheme.

Candidates should use correct terminology to be specific about their production intentions. It was clear that students had learnt movement about the stage in relationship to the way Drama specialists partition the stage. The stage was for the most part discussed from the actor's point of view. It is important for the candidates to discuss this in relationship to the "through line" of the text in order for the movement or direction to make sense.

Some of the wording of the questions was found to be tricky by candidates and as a result a couple of questions were answered in a more theoretical rather than practical way. This was unfortunate as theoretical viewpoint was not asked for in these questions. How the actor was thinking and feeling – with little practical interpretation or how they could imagine the difficulties of performance without addressing these in a practical way was detrimental to their responses. In the questions relating to 'acting', candidates who either imagined themselves in the role, or who had actually taken part in a production gave the most effective answers. However these candidates also must remember to reference the text to back up their points.

Candidates were generally more positive about their decisions in relationship to acting and design however suggesting either/or was still a pitfall that some fell into. Occasional weaknesses in recounting of plot instead of answering the question were evident. It was clear these candidates knew the text very well but unfortunately did not translate this into response about performance or direction. This examination is about practical interpretation and in order to achieve higher marks the candidates must do this in their answers.

A number of papers were weakened by the candidates having one strong answer where they clearly engaged with the text in performance but failed to answer the second question with as much depth or understanding. Interesting responses gave imaginative ideas placing the pieces of theatre within a 21st century context and clearly had thought about the performance possibilities and in the audience response to this

The use of clearly annotated diagrams as well as the use of colour was helpful in understanding the design concepts. The examiner was concerned about design questions which discussed set design and costume design without including sketches of these in the answer with full labelling. This was a weakness in these answers and meant students scored lower marks as a result of this exclusion.

Comments on specific questions
Question 1 CLASSICAL TRAGEDY

Medea by Euripedes

Question 1 (a)

The question required candidates to interpret the role of Medea from an actor's viewpoint in the final part of the play just after she has killed her children. Candidates were required to outline how they would want the audience to respond to the role and how they would go about achieving these aims. Detailing with apposite information from the OPC would assist the actor's interpretation of the role and a short textual outline would be helpful to the clarity of the answer. This is a complex question because Medea is experiencing complex and somewhat conflicting emotions at this part of the play and it was important for candidates to recognise this conflict and respond to this in their analysis of how to play this role.

Long plot outlines or, in fact, totally plot driven answers were not helpful in answering this question.

Strong answers provided firm acting advice for the role of Medea with reference to the text and took on the role for themselves. These candidates were very clear about how they would move in the space, interact with other characters on the stage, and used effective textual referencing to support their acting interpretation. Using this through line is so important and anchors the answer to a natural progression within the text. Candidates who were specific about the use of body, voice, movement and space giving clear information as to gesture and facial expression with clear understanding as to why they had made these decisions were more successful. Remember that actors use all of these techniques to play a role and therefore each must be considered in a response.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were required to outline set design to support the overall production concept of the play with close reference to the text. An explanation of how these ideas would help to communicate the themes of the play to the audience was also needed. An understanding of where the play stands within its historical context was important to then take the answer to a personal interpretation which the strong candidates discussed with their OPC. This should clearly and definitely inform the set design which needs to be explained in full in relationship to how it impacts on the performance intention, interpretation of themes and how the audience will understand the interpretation.

Candidates needed to be aware of the time in which the play is going to be set. This means that the OPC should be described in detail so that the design decisions are based on this concept. It was also very important for candidates to understand the context of the play but this should not have been the main focus of the answer. Some candidates tried to answer the question using two different interpretations. This was unhelpful and did not effectively communicate the themes of the play.

Question 1 (c)

This question required candidates to explain how, as a director, you would stage the play of Medea – focusing on two specific scenes to convey the central themes in the play. This question focused on staging from a director's point of view. It was important for candidates to clearly identify the themes of the play and then relate these to their interpretation – re both set design, production technology and acting style chosen. Strong answers responded to this

well and had very clear ideas of how they were going to stage the specific scenes – including actor interaction and use of the stage. It would have been helpful if candidates had outlined their OPC and justified directorial decisions in line with this together with direct textual referencing. Referencing should be as brief as possible, and needs to support the directorial commands for the actors and the design choices for the staging. Good answers focused on their intentions as a director with effective reference to the text.

Question 2 MEDIAEVAL MYSTERY OR MORALITY PLAYS

***Everyman* Anonymous**

Question 2 (a)

The question required candidates to explain the aspects of Everyman's character that they wished to communicate in performance concentrating specifically on use of body and voice. Stronger responses were able to explain their interpretation and Overall Production Concept which would of course influence the way an actor performed on stage. Those who were able to do this and reference their answers clearly responded well to this question.

This was an acting question and required candidates to answer using details of body, voice, movement, and space. As an acting question using a through line through the text is useful and stops the jumping from one idea to another – which causes a response to be less coherent. Personal experience of a live performance of the play was extremely beneficial to the candidates who chose to answer this question.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were asked to outline the costume design and set in relationship to the traditional and contemporary influences. This is a complex question and asks for candidates to discuss their Overall Production Concept and weigh this up with the traditional interpretation. Clearly there is some understanding that candidates would bring a modern understanding to this traditional play. Good answers were able to balance the explanation about set and costume and give equal response to both. Clearly this is difficult to do well and with a clear understanding of both.

The question enabled candidates to be imaginative with their design ideas, and candidates with experience of this production gave good responses. Understanding the allegorical nature of the characters is clearly the key to the production concept as well as considering contemporary analysis of the text in performance, and will influence the costume design and set design in order to communicate the meanings to an audience.

Question 2 (c)

The question required candidates to answer as a director to discuss performance interaction on stage between two characters – Death and one of the allegorical characters within the play. This was a directorial question which required candidates to outline their OPC for staging and actors' performance objectives within the production.

The candidate must understand the space in which the actors are working and the performance intention of the chosen extract which details the characters' interaction. The question requires understanding of how to write about character interpretation using performance techniques – physicality, vocal interpretation, and use of movement and gesture would have been the best way to approach this question. The candidate must reference the text considering the through-line of the performance within the extract so that the movement and interaction on stage is clear. This requires a strong director's voice in the answer as well as a clear understanding of communication to the audience.

Question 3 ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN DRAMA

***Much Ado About Nothing* Shakespeare**

Question 3 (a)

In this question the candidate is required to answer the question from the position of an Actor. An understanding of interpretation influences the way the actor plays the role so a short explanation of the OPC and synopsis of the extract is indicative of a strong answer. The answer then requires close and appropriate reference to the text analysing the dramatic interpretation of the actor – relating the physical, vocal and positional choices that clearly communicate the performance intention.

The main problem with this answer for some candidates was the use of the text to assist the answer. It is most helpful to analyse performance in order of the specific scenes and how a performer moves from Act 1 to Act 2.

Weaker answers were repetitive and jumped backwards and forwards between the two acts and therefore were a little bit confused.

Question 3 (b)

Candidates were required to outline their set and costume ideas creating an appropriate mood and style for the play. Candidates who responded to this question needed to address the OPC which influences the play as a whole as well as focusing on the specific set design in relationship to communicating with the 21st century audience and examining how the OPC would be reflected on the stage in the creation of these two spaces. Some stronger ideas had two specific spaces and they maintained these without numerous set changes. Use of levels and specific stage areas enabled a clear response in these answers. Candidates who successfully answered this question had a strong design concept for set and were able to detail the mood that they hoped to create with this concept – clearly showing a link between the inside and outside areas.

Those candidates who had a clear idea of the stage for which they were designing were more effective in their response to this question.

Question 3 (c)

This question required candidates to direct the characters within the Scene and how the scene would be staged for performance. Clearly this is a complex question and candidates have to consider their Overall Production Concept and how the actors are to use the space to communicate the relationships within the performance.

Candidates needed to detail their OPC for the play which would influence the way in which they interpreted the main roles in this scene and how the different gatherings use the space on stage to show both the positive and negative relationships in this scene. It is a masked ball and therefore the director must decide whether to mask the characters and the candidate should discuss this in detail in terms of showing groupings or sympathies within the cast. Stronger answers recognised the need for this – and the need to reference this with the text – analysing the scene with a throughline – which enables a clear understanding of the scene and the impact it has in the play.

Question 4 COMEDY OF MANNERS

She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were required to explain how they would use their vocal and physical skills and the performance space itself to express the contrast between Tony Lumpkin and George Hastings and Charles Marlow

Candidates who answered this question had a good understanding of the text and the relationship between Hastings and Marlow and the difference between them and Lumpkin. Effective referencing of the text was useful to the candidates in their answers, detailing the use of body, voice, movement, and space.

An understanding of the performance space and the OPC gave an extra edge to some candidates' answers. And clearly how the actors moved within this space was important to the understanding of how the contrast is developed within the play.

An explanation of the interaction between Hastings and Marlow and the way Lumpkin tries to undermine the gentlemen is important to this answer

Stronger candidates had clear intentions in mind and were able to communicate these intentions within their answers.

Question 4 (b)

This answer required candidates to have a clear understanding of lighting and make up ideas which will help the understanding of setting, time period, location and the style of the play. Candidates needed to address the Overall Production Concept and most chose to set the play within the era of the original performance. This question requires an imaginative response to lighting and how each specific setting can be detailed through lighting choices. Detailing makeup design would also support these choices – for example dingy lighting for the pub might be accompanied by some performers within the scene having makeup which show the effects of a lifestyle lacking in exposure to light and with a hint of grime attached to the visage – which of course would be contrasted within the scenes showing the wealthier characters and settings.

This question was a complex one and required a detailed understanding of the text, a detailed confidence of design in terms of lighting and makeup and how these fit in to the overall production. This question was generally not answered equally well in both aspects - makeup and lighting and clearly this was reflected in some lower marks for this question.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were asked to describe how they would direct the role of Kate Hardcastle for the whole performance and how this would be adjusted for the times when she was pretending to be a barmaid in the Alehouse. The role of the director should be defined in the candidates question to establish how they would want the audience to respond to the role and how the actor must develop her physical and vocal performance to play the two very different roles – but still keep the sense of the role.

Candidates needed to introduce their response to the question with a clear explanation of their OPC and a couple of sentences to summarise the events of the play and Miss Hardcastle's impact in the play. This is a period costume drama but that does not mean that the

performance cannot be set within a more 'modern' or 'political' framework. This would be a directorial decision and the influence this would have on the performance interpretation must be addressed in this answer. Answers needed to be clear about Miss Hardcastle's movement around the stage and details about the performance space would also have been useful in response to this question. And how she would perform differently in the different stage settings. As a director, detailing dramatic techniques for the actor to use in interpreting this role is also important.

Question 5 EPIC THEATRE

Rhinoceros Eugene Ionesco

(a) This question is an acting question and requires the candidate to have a clear understanding of how the actor performs within the setting and interpretation as developed through a strong Overall Production Concept. This is Epic theatre however Ionesco has chosen an absurdist idea to make a political comment about the strength of the individual within society and the result of the choices individuals make. This is important and should be detailed in the response and the actor interpretation should make some reference to the impact the performance is intended to have on the audience.

The response needed a clear referencing of the text in Act 3, a strong through line for the performance and a clear idea as to how Daisy uses her physical and vocal projection to communicate character. Some input on costume and how the actor wears the costume might assist the candidate when talking about movement and also communicate something about the character. Strong character analysis in performance is the key to this response.

(b) This question is a design question. Candidates needed to establish a strong Overall Production Concept which clearly illustrated the setting of the play and the impact of the design on the play's interpretation.

The choice of costumes for the production needed to show the links between the characters and how individuals are delineated through the choice of the costumes. As the play develops changes within the costume should indicate the developments within the characterisation and how the "mass" become Rhinoceros because of their desire to be the same. The design must also have a strong understanding of how the actors can transition to become Rhinoceros as the play continues.

(c) This question is a directing question and the candidate clearly needed to have a strong Overall production concept for the performance which would then impact on the interpretation of character and how this character would be performed in Act 2 Sc 2. This is a pivotal scene in which Jean transforms into a Rhinoceros in the scene. The stronger answers used the text to support the interpretation and the set design decisions supported the actors' transition from human to animal – enabling the transformation to take place during the scene. Clever answers supported the actor with a space just off stage which enabled a gradual transformation. These answers also detailed the relationship and interaction between the two characters on stage.

Question 6 NEW ZEALAND THEATRE: THE MAORI VOICE

Purapurawhetū Briar Grace-Smith

Question 6 (a)

This question is an acting question and should be answered with a clear Overall Production Concept established in the opening paragraphs of the answer.

The candidate needed to choose scenes which could clearly show specific elements of the character Hohepa and how the scenes inform the audience of the character. The answer must specifically reference the use of voice, body and movement about the stage in order to establish an understanding of how the role is played in performance.

Those candidates who focused on the actor, specifically on body, voice, movement and space with effective text referencing were the most successful. Candidates who gave design and costume details which influenced the movement of the character within the space offered another level to their answers, and those who noted the interaction between the characters were thorough in their response.

Question 6 (b)

This answer requires the candidate to design costumes for the performance and consider how these choices influence the setting and the themes within the performance. A strong overall production concept needs to be explained because all design decisions need to be coherent within this design. Clear understanding of character relationships with each other and with the setting of the piece reflected stronger answers. Those who understood the way costume design influence the interpretation and impact on audience understanding were stronger.

Those who had performed within the play had a clear idea of the mood and atmosphere of the play and how these were enhanced by design ideas – cut, colour and texture of material were important in the design concepts.

Question 6 (c)

Candidates were required to write as a director and discuss how they would communicate the sense of Spirituality in Purapurawhetū.

Candidates needed to consider the OPC, the stage space, and the performance within the space to enable them to answer with clarity and thoroughness. It was important that they did not get confused by the amount of information that was required by this response. Clearly this requires a response about acting choices, character interactions on stage and an understanding of the design decisions – all of which would communicate the spiritual elements of the play. These are all important as a director however could become rather unmanageable if responded to as one. Addressing each aspect of performance, the design and technology separately would have assisted the candidates' responses to the question. There is much for a director to consider in performance and this answer clearly should encompass this.

Question 7 NEW ZEALAND THEATRE: LOOKING AT OURSELVES

Wednesday to Come Renee

Question 7 (a)

In this question candidates must choose one character of the three to analyse as an actor with close reference to the text, how they would communicate this character to the audience.

In answering this question it was important for candidates to address the role of their chosen character within the play as well as the challenges of the character within the context of the

whole performance including the character's interaction with others on stage. Successful candidates established the strength of the role in the performance and gave examples of the interpretation detailing physicality, vocal choices and movement in the stage space. The clarity of the understanding of the way each character is affected by the arrival of Ben's coffin and how the political rally impacts upon the action on the stage including the OPC and technologies involved in the performance.

Question 7 (b)

The question required candidates to consider set design and costuming to create setting and themes within the play. In order to answer this question effectively candidates needed some prior knowledge of design in terms of set and costume and how these influence a performance and the understanding of the audience. Candidates needed to detail the OPC and the staging of the play supported by costume choices as well as identify specific design ideas within the concept. Clearly, the use of technical terminology within this answer was important. Stronger candidates successfully annotated their answers with detailed and accurately labelled sketches (some also included the use of colour) which supported their answer.

Question 7 (c)

Candidates were asked to answer this question from a director's point of view to consider the staging of the play in relationship to the themes of loss and grief which is shared by the main characters in the play

Effective responses to this question focused on specific events from the point indicated in the play – such as the return of the coffin, Iris' monologue to Ben, the unpacking of the sugar sack. Details of the OPC and the design of the play needed to be considered as well as the performance possibilities concentrating on body, voice, movement, and use of space by the actors. This is problematic because the response could become confused if the candidate tries to answer these without some delineation between the design and the acting intention.

Successful answers considered the setting of the play as well as the performance within the setting concentrating on the impact the performances would have within the space. The theme of loss and grief can be established both with design choices (lighting, set and costume design) as well as the direction of the action within the space. This is an all encompassing question and close reference to the text assisted stronger answers in relationship to the question.