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DRAMA

<p>Paper 0411/01</p>

<p>Written Paper</p>

General comments

Administration

The number of entries rose again slightly for this session. Centres are to be commended for the efficiency with which they handled the administrative burden as most examination papers were received in good time. It is greatly appreciated when Centres submit scripts on paper with a right hand margin, tag tied at the corner. This facilitates easy manipulation of and access to the script during the marking process.

The examination

Overall performance of the candidates: Centres have provided clear evidence that they are much more comfortable with the written paper than heretofore. The quality of responses has increased and candidates are apparently much better equipped to deal with the discussion of technique and process inherent in the questions set. There was evidence of much valuable work in terms of both textual study and response to stimuli. In general, candidates seemed to involve themselves enthusiastically with the performance stimulus and the outcome was often engaging. *Close to the Bone* seems to have been a popular choice and candidates have related well to the issues contained therein. Many candidates showed that they had formed firm ideas about the way the piece should be presented and talked confidently about character and staging. The large number of stereotyped answers of previous sessions have all but gone and evidence of breadth of understanding emerged from all but a few Centres. Some very sound preparation work has enhanced the sense of period and cultural background underpinning the answers, giving the discussion a sense of roundness which is especially gratifying.

As a target for future sessions, Centres may wish to address the issue of the way candidates are equipped to write about the devising process. Whilst the responses to the textual study are greatly improved, there is still much scope for candidates to develop exploratory skills around the way technique is used to achieve effect. There needs to be a much better understanding of dramatic structures and how performers communicate text to the audience. Similarly, candidates need to be more confident when handling terms such as *pace*, *contrast*, *mood*, etc. Many candidates seem rather vague in this respect and are lost when they are required to explain how these elements fit into the process of devising and performing.

The application of appropriate terminology, especially in technical process, is improving. There are still a few Centres however which need to progress beyond allowing their candidates to suggest 'black light' as a means to create a dark ambience, for example. In technical theatre terms 'black light' refers to *ultraviolet* lighting and as such would not achieve the effect the candidates wish to convey.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Questions 1-5: *Close to the Bone*

Question 1

Most candidates were able to spot the clue in the text where Naomi says to Robbie 'You look terrific' and took this as a lead to suggest a smarter than usual appearance for Robbie's character. The vast majority of costume suggestions were appropriate and earned maximum marks. A few failed to do so because the costume suggestion was far too modern and did not take the period of the play into account.

Question 2

In most cases candidates responded well to this question, demonstrating insight and understanding both in terms of the relationship between Robbie and the girls and the motives behind it. Many candidates linked their answers methodically to the text and charted a development in terms of the application of acting technique. A few answers were too short and in only cursorily addressing these issues failed to gain maximum marks.

Question 3

There were many variants proffered in terms of the personality of the Mission Manager. Most candidates were able to cite his aggressiveness and his lasciviousness but a few misread the character, crediting him with a cheery disposition.

Question 4

Most responses to this question perceived youthful energy as being central to a director's demands of Bettina and Karina. This led on to practical suggestions of how the actors could use the text, the space and each other to develop the audience's understanding of their situation. Where candidates failed to unlock the full range of marks it was again as a result of extreme brevity.

Question 5

This question asks for a *set design* appropriate to scene seven. Nearly every candidate realised that the fact that the scene takes place at night is central to the lighting plot. There was also an understanding that some kind of spatial separation is necessary between the Naomi/Robbie and Enid/Harry alliances to set up the tension for the final confrontation. On the whole, this question was much more effectively handled than similar ones in the past and this is most encouraging. There is still the occasional tendency to talk in terms of 'red light' to emphasise any scene containing conflict or anger, however. Red light is seldom used on its own in the theatre and Centres are encouraged to broaden their understanding of and approach to lighting as a means of creating mood and atmosphere.

Questions 6-8: *Devised Work*

Question 6

The majority of candidates had no problem relating the plot of their piece. Most still find dramatic structure a difficult concept to grasp, however. A chronological review of scene content cannot be awarded full marks. To achieve this, candidates need to convey a sense of development, linkage or narrative through conscious application of structuring devices. A few candidates did refer to cyclical and linear structures and received credit accordingly.

Question 7

Narrative featured very significantly in candidates' failure to maximise credit. Typically, answers consisted of about half a page, which was a narrative account of the end of the scene followed by a single sentence stating in simplistic terms what they wanted the audience to feel. Answers lacked a viable discussion about how dramatic impact was achieved and ignored the crafting of material towards the realisation of dramatic goals.

Question 8

This question sought to explore the creation of drama within the context of the *Celebrating the anniversary* stimulus. Many responses were essentially narrative and failed to explore the process of how ideas became performance reality. Candidates were unsteady in their understanding of the term 'style'. A few were able to refer to obvious stylistic traits such as mime, for example, and a few, to their credit, referred to physical theatre but without really presenting a clear picture as to how this style was employed and what critical influence the use of the style exerted on the performance.

Section B

Questions 9-11: *Close to the Bone*

Question 9

The question requires candidates to explore the use of space in harmony with text. As in previous years there was some degree of confusion between staging and set dressing.

Sketches and diagrams were encouraged and many candidates produced effective visual evidence in this way, including detailed step-by-step blocking instructions for the actors. A few candidates betrayed a fundamental lack of understanding about how actors interact with sets. For example, whole rooms appear on stage, complete with walls, thereby demonstrating a lack of understanding about sightlines and proxemic relationships. Nevertheless, this question was generally answered with more skill and application than in previous years.

Question 10

This question was well answered by a high proportion of candidates. Most candidates were able to recognise that Naomi moves over the course of the action from acceptance of the oppression of the Mission Manager to assertiveness over Harry Boulder. Stronger candidates were able to pinpoint moments where she is alternately powerless or powerful in relation to other key characters. They were able to suggest body language and vocal qualities to demonstrate her different positions as mother, sister and employee.

Question 11

Candidates were able to spot the main similarities between Harry Boulder and the Mission Manager in terms of their physical bearing and overall type but the differences proved more difficult. Here the question seeks for evidence of Harry's weakness in respect of his wife and his basic easiness and geniality compared to the Mission Manager's harshly stereotypical depiction of power and abuse. A few strong candidates scored well in this question.

Questions 12-14: *Devised Work – Production***Question 12**

There were some good answers here, albeit with a predominance of narrative throughout. Weaker candidates were unable to identify four appropriate specific features of their work in support of their answer. Structure was largely ignored but mood was discussed effectively.

Question 13

Some candidates did very well, presenting a mature discussion about how they achieved contrast through variety of pace. The weakest candidates could at best go through their performance scene by scene and say whether each was 'fast' or 'slow'.

Question 14

Again there were some who gave a detailed explanation of how the intentions of the performance were realised, combining technique to create atmosphere. Those who were unable to operate at this level made do with simplistic discussion based on 'happy', 'sad' or 'neutral' moods.

<p>Paper 0411/02</p>

<p>Coursework</p>

General comments

Numbers of candidate entries rose slightly from 2004 and the syllabus continues to be well received by Centres in a variety of countries, irrespective of the varying dramatic traditions of each country. This wealth of cultural diversity was well represented by the various coursework submissions in the 2005 session and Moderators were delighted with the way in which drama work had been planned so as to capture the cultural situation in which it had been conceived.

It was pleasing to note that Moderators were unanimous in confirming that the academic understanding and practical standards of the work had been well maintained and that the overall standard was akin to that of the previous three years of the IGCSE Syllabus. Performance standards were appropriately high and Moderators reported with pleasure the number of candidates who had clearly worked hard to shape, rehearse and perform work that was challenging and, in turn, rewarding.

The best work showed a real creative flair and a genuine understanding of stagecraft with particular strengths in stage discipline and focus. It was also typified by a strong sense of the performer-audience relationship. There were, however, still some pieces (albeit a minority) that clearly did not have an audience present and Centres are reminded of the need for an audience to view the drama that is produced in order for candidates to gauge the effect of their practical work on a live audience.

Administration

The most significant aspect of the administration continues to be the selection of the moderation sample. This needs to be planned from the start of the course in order to ensure that the final tape has an appropriate spread of marks. A small number of Centres had not pre-selected their sample and Centres are reminded that the video sample must be identified and recorded in advance of the VHS video tape being sent to the CIE Moderator. This sample must include a sample of work covering the entire mark range (and *must* include the highest and lowest candidates' marks) in order to ensure that the sample is not bunched in a particular mark range or skewed towards a particular point in the mark range.

Forms and commentaries

In general, the paperwork associated with the candidates' submissions caused fewer problems than in previous years. The majority of Centres were fully aware of the need to complete a Working Mark Sheet for each piece and then to summarise these on the Final Record sheet for each candidate. These forms are included in the syllabus for each year and are also available on the CIE website.

The majority of Centres correctly grouped the completed forms by *candidate* rather than by piece and it would be helpful if all Centres adopted this practice since it enables the Moderator to see quickly and easily how the candidates in the sample have performed. Moderators recorded their gratitude that the majority of forms were extremely detailed and made meticulous reference as to where marks had been awarded.

Video recordings

There were fewer problems with videos arriving broken or in a state where they were unplayable. Only a handful of Centres failed to produce a VHS version of the tape and these Centres are reminded that VHS is the only format guaranteed to be accepted by CIE. In cases where other formats are used, CIE reserves the right to return the work to Centres.

Presentation of the material on the video was rather more variable. In the majority of cases, candidates faced the camera holding a placard displaying their name and candidate number. The announcement of name and number was followed by a still frame which was titled also showing name and number. The best practice was felt to be where the candidate stepped forward upon announcing themselves since this took away the need for Moderators to attempt to spot who in a line-up was speaking!

The greatest practical problem faced by Moderators was therefore the number of instances where candidates could not be easily recognised from the video. In some cases there was no running order for the video recording, leaving Moderators to piece together details from the teacher's comments on the Working Mark Sheets; in other instances, candidates did not introduce themselves clearly or their announcement was cut off the video; a few Centres did not identify whether the pieces were devised or repertoire and, whilst this should have been obvious from the performance, there were instances where this was not apparent.

There was less of a tendency for candidates to attempt to perform *for* video rather than for an *audience*. Moderators have expressed concern for the last three years that a number of candidates treated the assessment as if it were a media performance rather than a live performance. There were a few such examples this session and they were typified by an approach that relied on three aspects not characteristic of drama for the stage: firstly, over-elaborate sets (or no set at all at the opposite extreme); secondly, close-ups on facial expressions that would be unlikely to be noticed in a larger theatre space; thirdly, an over-reliance on static performances which, in some cases, were little more than talking heads.

Devised pieces

*Centres are reminded that the dramatic stimuli set for work on Paper 1 must **not** be used as the basis of the practical submission in Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to award marks to Coursework which duplicates a task set for the written paper.*

There was a good range of pieces that covered the various nominations in the 2005 Syllabus. The best work demonstrated a thorough engagement with a number of theatrical devices such as freeze frames, overlapping dialogue and Physical Theatre techniques. This was generally very successful in creating imaginative dramatic work which had a clear audience intention. This was frequently allied to imaginative use of the stage space. There were some excellent examples of storytelling as a theatrical form in this session. These often employed traditional storytelling skills, interwoven with appropriate local dialect, gestures and expression to create pieces immediately relevant to their local audience but which also had a more universal appeal.

However, some of the group devised work was extremely predictable, with too many plays focusing on the superficialities of teenage angst or drugs. There was also an extraordinary – and disconcerting – number of very tedious terrorist plays which centred on kidnaps and attacks and included improbable implements intended to represent guns being brandished in a thoroughly unconvincing manner. A significant number of individual pieces relied on a lot of uncontrolled teenage angst; these were often totally unoriginal and completely predictable.

A further problem with some of the weaker devised pieces was their length. This inevitably derived from a lack of structuring of material which, in extreme cases, looked more like improvisation than devised work.

Repertoire pieces

*Centres are reminded that the play extract set for work on Paper 1 must **not** be used as the basis of the practical submission in Paper 2. CIE reserves the right to refuse to award marks to Coursework which duplicates a task set for the written paper.*

The quality of individual text-based pieces was generally better than that of devised pieces. Most candidates responded well to the demands of working with text and worked enthusiastically with it. A good number of candidates went to considerable lengths to achieve high performance values. This was evident in the approach taken to staging, props and costume and, on occasion, lighting. This reflects the emphasis in the syllabus on Drama being more than simply acting: candidates should be aware of the roles of actor, director and technician in approaching their practical work, just as they are required to do in the work for Paper 1.

In spite of this, the choice of text did not always help candidates to perform to their best. This was for a number of reasons which can be summarised as follows:

- Some texts chosen were in styles or genres far removed from candidates' own experience and very distant from their own experience of language. In this context the decision to perform a monologue from Shakespeare should be undertaken only after serious consideration of whether the candidate's ability in English is sufficient to allow them to assimilate the complexities of language required.
- The choice of some British dramatists relied on comedy of manners and conventions that did not always readily translate into a new situation. Whilst there were a number of very successful performances of pieces by Oscar Wilde, a number of performances of extracts from Ayckbourn were less successful as they (understandably) demonstrated little understanding of the social and cultural situation in which the plays were written.
- A few candidates still chose to perform 'text-based' pieces that were really poems, novels or screenplays for films. These tended to be self-penalising as they (screenplays in particular) tended to replicate the film rather than breathing new life into the text. The use of text-based material other than stage plays is forbidden by the syllabus and this prohibition was specifically reiterated in last year's Principal Examiner's report. The syllabus is assessing Drama and not English Literature or Media Studies. The appropriate vehicle for demonstrating appropriate skills is, unsurprisingly, plays written for the theatre.

The weakest text-based performances were very fragmented and involved significant amounts of clumsy scene-changing, blackouts and over-long delays for set and costume design. There were occasional examples of declamatory, somewhat old-fashioned, acting which appeared stilted and awkward. On the other hand, this was not always the result of the material chosen since the (many!) performances of extracts from Oscar Wilde's plays were often well able to engage farce techniques to create witty and light performances.

As in previous years, Centres may find it helpful to have an indication of the texts used during this session as the basis of text-based work. The following list is not exhaustive but represents some of the most popular – and best-handled – texts. There is no significance regarding whether a play is included under 'individual' or 'group' – this simply reflects the usage of that text in the current session. This should also be compared with lists included in previous years' Principal Examiner reports to gain a broader picture.

Examples of works from which Individual Pieces were taken

Ayckbourn	<i>A Talk in the Park</i>
	<i>Mother Figure</i>
Chekhov	<i>Uncle Vanya</i>
Grenfell	<i>Flowers</i>
Lingard	<i>Across the Barricades</i>
Potter	<i>Death in the Sun</i>
Strindberg	<i>Miss Julie</i>
	<i>The Thunderstorm</i>
Wilde	<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>

Examples of works from which Group Pieces were taken

Ayckbourn	<i>Between Mouthfuls</i>
	<i>Mother Figure</i>
Bell	<i>Wolf Lullaby</i>
Brecht	<i>Caucasian Chalk Circle</i>
	<i>The Good Person of Szechwan</i>
Crimp	<i>Attempts on her Life</i>
Delaney	<i>A Taste of Honey</i>
Friel	<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i>
Godber	<i>Bouncers</i>
	<i>Teechers</i>
Lorca	<i>Blood Wedding</i>
Macdonald	<i>After Juliet</i>
Miller	<i>All My Sons</i>
	<i>A View from the Bridge</i>
	<i>The Crucible</i>
Milne	<i>The Man in the Bowler Hat</i>
O'Neill	<i>Long Day's Journey into Night</i>
Pinter	<i>The Caretaker</i>
Ruganda	<i>Black Mamba</i>
Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i>
	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
Sophocles	<i>Antigone</i>
Steel	<i>Like a Virgin</i>
Strindberg	<i>Miss Julie</i>
Wertenbaker	<i>Love of the Nightingale</i>
Wilde	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>

Centres may additionally find it helpful to visit the Teacher Support area of the CIE website to obtain appropriate schemes of work for this syllabus. A new Coursework Training Handbook and DVD is also in preparation.