



SD865 Practical Examination

In most centres the work was well prepared.

There are, however, continuing problems. It is of critical importance that students are counselled to select a **level of syllabus appropriate to their skills** at this stage. Some students clearly did not possess the requisite skills for SD865 and should not have been presented for assessment at this level.

A major issue for the assessment panels (in this and SD875) is that it appears there has been **insufficient skills development in the voice work** undertaken earlier in the year. Often there was evidence of very poor articulation and a tendency for candidates to be far too rapid in the delivery of their prose and poetry selections. A matter of real concern is that the skills pertaining to the presentation of the **specific form** of either poetry or prose have often not been sufficiently addressed.

There were particular problems with the presentation of "1st person" prose, poetry and/or monologue where there was no discernable difference in the presentation of each piece.

It is inexplicable that candidates should be allowed to choose monologues (in both SD865 and SD875) which **demand a particular accent** (e.g. Southern American, Irish) and then proceed to disregard this fundamental factor that should contribute to the establishment of the milieu of the piece. Equally, students should be discouraged from choosing poetry or prose pieces and then excising every second stanza or paragraph! It makes complete nonsense of the writer's intention. Pronunciation of proper names remains an issue- some were so wildly divergent as to lead to the suspicion that the student's material had not been heard by the teacher prior to presentation for assessment!

There are some centres where attention needs to be paid to the **demands of ensemble playing**. In spite of constant reminders in assessment reports and at moderation, **duologues are creeping back!** The guidelines are quite specific and must be adhered to. Teachers are reminded that it is not permissible for the third participant to be a totally mute performer or confined to bed in a comatose state!

In some cases there was insufficient attention paid to basic stagecraft whereby performers remained "anchored" to a chair or settee for the entire play. Teachers and candidates are reminded that a prompt- when required- should be taken in such a way as not to interrupt the flow of the piece or the play. Constant repetition of the injunction, "Prompt!" becomes tedious in the extreme.

There were occasional problems with panel identification of the particular candidate. Teachers are requested to ensure that the **correct name of the student** as recorded by the TQA when entered for assessment is that which appears on the material presented to the examination panel- shortened forms of the name should be avoided. Equally, candidate numbers must be checked for **accuracy**.

Written Examination

The overall standard was quite sound with answers being presented in greater depth and detail than in other years. It was pleasing to note that the length of each essay had increased and that students had made an attempt to spend equal time on both sections.

Section A

There was, for the most part, a genuine attempt by candidates to blend all 3 productions viewed rather than resort to writing 3 separate essays. Examiners were of the opinion that that the entire section was well addressed across all 4 questions.

Students are reminded that they should **identify the productions** to which they are referring in the opening paragraph and to ensure that they correctly name and spell each production. Titles should be underlined for both emphasis and clarity. There needs to be closer attention to detail in some instances: students would often name the production and the characters but not specify the actors- or vice versa. Such basic details should be revised prior to the examination.

When answering questions pertaining to technical elements students must be able to correctly apply the appropriate terminology. The use of terms such as “side walls” or “flaps” does not indicate that the candidate has much grasp of the fundamentals of theatrical terminology.

Section B

This was well handled by the majority of candidates and gave evidence of an extraordinary range of productions performed by students throughout the state during the year.

Most answers were to questions 4, 5 or 6- with few responses to question 7.

The paper encouraged students to write in detail about the process of their performances, but in the case of question 5, “*challenges*” provided an opportunity for a “whinge session” about students who were not committed etc. rather than about dramatic and technical problems encountered. Students should be discouraged from writing about personality clashes with others, uncommitted class members, and lack of facilities. The concentration should be on dramatic structure, form and technology.

“*Style*” and “*structure*” presented problems for students as they launched merrily into a discussion of technical elements without referring back to the issues of style and structure.

In general students should:

- be encouraged to consider the best choice of question for discussion of their particular production
- clearly identify production/s in the opening paragraph
- ensure that the correct question number is entered on the front of the booklet- some were missing
- take care with issues of spelling - 'PROformance' and/or 'PREformance'!
- concentrate on essay structure- e.g. ensure that there is an introduction and that production titles are underlined for easy identification
- consider *balance* of the essay when more than one aspect of the question is to be addressed

SD 875 Performance

A pleasing feature of the assessment of this syllabus was that, for the most part, journals were more comprehensive and better presented than in previous years. Some were lamentably “thin” and there was often a high degree of correspondence between this and the candidate’s performance work.

Teachers and students are reminded that **monologues must be from published plays**. They are **not** to be culled from the internet, stand-up comedy routines or the student’s own written material. **Adherence to the**

time limit for the presentation of monologues is mandatory. Some were well in excess of 10 minutes! The guidelines are quite specific and **must** be observed.

Issues raised in SD865 relating to inadequate skills work in voice, pronunciation of proper nouns and the use of accent were again highlighted by the assessment panels.

Plays were generally well chosen and time limits observed. There were some instances of over-indulgence where candidates were more likely to be **disadvantaged** by the play going on too long. Less is often more!

In centres where the work was demonstrably inadequate, performers were not secure, there was uneven distribution of roles, little character interaction, large portions of the script missed out, and an unacceptable number of prompts.

Teachers are reminded that panel members do need to be able to **see the performers**. Occasionally the stage was far too dimly lit- this was not simply an issue of “creation of atmosphere”.

Often there was a lack of awareness of the importance of both movement and stillness.

Generally, attention had been given to appropriate blocking and to the dramatically effective utilisation of the performance space.

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