

## Assessment Report

# New Zealand Scholarship Drama 2021

## Standard 93304

### Part A: Commentary

#### General

It was impressive to see so many candidates who sat the examination demonstrating thorough preparation, clear understanding of the tasks, and the skills required to achieve the Part III 'impromptu' task.

Out of the 164 candidates who took the examination, 109 scored 12 and over (out of a possible 24 points) showing a good level of ability and knowledge demonstrated across 66% of candidates. The cut-off mark for Scholarship this year was 15, and 56 candidates were awarded Scholarship. Six candidates scored 22 and above, and these were awarded Outstanding Scholarship. The total Drama cohort across the country was 1,876.

#### Part I

There was a good range of texts used in the text-based performance. The choice that this exam offers clearly allows candidates to select work that makes sense to them in relation to their age, convictions, and perspectives.

Successful candidates took care to select a text which contrasted in genre with their devised work for Part II of the examination.

Some candidates created monologues by pulling together speeches from different scenes throughout a play. The higher-scoring candidates had shaped their work to create a journey or 'build' for their character. The most effective performances considered how to transition between extracts meaningfully.

It is not recommended to select a two-role dialogue in Part I and play both parts. It makes it hard for the candidate to follow an arc or journey for both characters across a scene. Subtleties and pauses were often missed, which weakened the performance or the transitioning back and forth between the characters became distracting.

#### Part II

For their devised pieces, candidates can refer to the practice of contemporary practitioners, referencing work they have seen by established companies. These first-hand experiences (or digital recordings of performances) suggest a better relationship to the devising task. This is clear in the more successful introductions.

Candidates who could communicate an understanding of both the methods used by their chosen practitioners and the theoretical ideas behind their practice scored well in critical analysis. If they could also successfully demonstrate this in their performed piece, they scored well in applied theory. By comparison, candidates who referred to work they had enjoyed but perhaps not studied in depth often attempted to 'copy the style' of the performance or the subject matter, rather than building their devised work from sound foundations.

In the best examples of devised work, candidates had considered and effectively brought to life a wide variety of



and opinions to a theme that was important to them, and therefore created a more complex and interesting journey.

Successful candidates had created performances that evoked feelings in the audience rather than assuming that the audience's job is to witness the performer 'feeling it' for themselves.

Candidates wanting to explore physical theatre often had more success using Laban, Le Coq, Berkoff, Beckett, or even Comedia as starting points. Although Antonin Artaud has been recommended in the past, many candidates this year seemed overly focused on the 'existential angst' of his work, which resulted in them getting lost in one-sided pieces, overwhelmed by their feelings and caught in 'telling, not showing'.

Outstanding candidates this year selected from material they had created to compose a piece that had detail and specificity but was not fragmented or over-fussy. The work often had subtlety, nuance, playfulness, layering of ideas, complexity, variation in rhythm and pace, simple well-used motif, and well-selected and executed gesture that added meaning.

### **Prepared Introductions**

Successful candidates were able to provide useful context for their chosen pieces in simple and succinct ways. Some candidates named elements and ideas that are common in performance preparatory work and derived from particular theorists (like Stanislavski, or Brecht for example), but then went on to show a lack of deep understanding. These candidates commonly listed words such as 'magic if', 'past experience', 'alienation', and 'narration' rather than communicating how they had built off these theories and methods to prepare their performance for Part I or to construct and present their piece for Part II.

For the text-based performance, many candidates discussed:

- a sense of the world of the playwright and the world of the play
- important pointers regarding the extract or scene
- their character's journey and role in the story of the piece
- preparatory techniques and processes used to explore and present.

For the self-devised piece, many candidates were able to explain:

- their purpose for selecting particular material to explore
- processes used to devise and refine their piece
- key influences on their piece and the relevance of these research choices in relation to their subject matter
- the techniques they used to prepare and refine their piece for performance.

The simplest and clearest introductions were not learned word-for-word or spoken rapidly in order to include every detail of work undertaken. Instead, they came across as thoughtful, selective and considered. For some of the most effective introductions, candidates often approached the camera to introduce their work, or set up their space as they explained what they were about to show us.

### **Part III**

Candidates responded very well to the Part III 'impromptu' task this year, and created a more varied range of scenarios and characters than has been typical over the past few years.

The task allowed quick-thinking candidates to 'play' instinctively. Frequently, the stronger candidates were able to create surprise as well as set the scene quickly and show a range of distinct interesting characters. Those who attempted to set the scene in a way which revealed the situation, place or dramatic dilemma by using elements other than only dialogue often created very successful scenes.

Candidates who used the performance space in the preparation minutes to briefly sketch the physical shape of their piece often used space more effectively in their performance.

Although three characters is a lot to achieve in such a short time. Many of the successful candidates built dramatic tension between two, and then used the third more briefly to add surprise or a twist at the end.

### **Commentary after Part III**

Candidates who were able to comment on what they discovered by doing the exercise showed great awareness of how drama works. Many candidates chose to speak about one or two quick choices they had made to 'drive' their piece. An increasing number of the successful candidates could share a couple of specific ideas about how they might develop or new approaches with the same task if they had further opportunity.

### A note on range

Candidates who chose a variety of genres and characters across the three parts of the exam more easily demonstrated their breadth of understanding and their ability to integrate dramatic tools and principles across multiple contexts.

## Part B: Report on Performance

Candidates who were awarded Scholarship with **Outstanding Performance** commonly:

- selected effectively from their research and preparation, and were concise in their introductions
- understood the importance of specificity, and this was clearly evidenced in their embodied performance
- displayed an independent and explorative approach to the tasks set, often extrapolating from the given brief with authority. They demonstrated a comprehensive range of techniques and understanding across the pre-prepared tasks set in Parts I and II, and the Part III impromptu task which required very quick thinking
- frequently demonstrated a wide range of appropriate applied theory through the variety of their choices in the different parts of the exam
- frequently delivered assured, thoughtful and convincing introductions to camera, demonstrating a well-embedded understanding of their practice
- performed pieces which showed their ability to create sophisticated compositions in which they solved the problem of transitioning between moments, ideas or characters
- understood and could apply the power of metaphor by creating moments of layered composition, allowing for multiple readings
- demonstrated coherence, which could be evidenced across a range of areas – e.g. communication of thinking, embodiment of techniques, realisation of ideas
- displayed a more sophisticated and assured integration of theory or greater ability to integrate techniques than those receiving lower marks.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- demonstrated a range of performance techniques with frequent authority across the parts of the examination
- demonstrated an awareness of the preparatory processes and techniques they used and could successfully demonstrate and apply their learning through the set tasks of the exam
- articulated their ideas clearly and referred to theorists that they had researched as they put those ideas into practice within their performances
- May have shown some lack of sophistication or perception in one aspect (communication of thinking, embodiment of techniques, realisation of ideas), but overall they demonstrated sound skill and understanding.

Candidates who were **not** awarded Scholarship commonly:

- demonstrated a limited range of performance techniques, or
- were less conscious of the preparatory processes they could have used to build from, or did not communicate their understanding of this on the day, or
- were not able to demonstrate and apply their understanding through the set tasks, or
- did not clearly articulate a theorist's or practitioner's methods and ideas, despite having researched them in preparation for their performances, or might have revealed some misunderstanding of the processes referred to in their introductions, or
- applied theories, ideas and processes to Part I texts that are not appropriate for the genre of play they had selected, or
- struggled to select relevant theorists' ideas or acting techniques to support their devised work, or did not apply these effectively, or
- appeared to have created a piece of performance for Part II and then retrospectively mixed ideas from practitioners and theorists to 'meet the criteria' rather than studying the ideas and theories and creating a piece using those

theoretical frameworks or creative practice, or

- spoke about what they would show, but then did not show this in their performances, or
- learned their introductions by heart, but then muddled their words and ended up revealing a lack of comprehens

Of the 108 candidates who were **not** awarded Scholarship, 49% scored between 12 and 14, showing a good standard for the majority of work submitted by candidates. Candidates scoring 13 and 14 may have scored lower on just a few of the examples listed below.

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## **Subject page**

### **Previous years' reports**

[2016 \(PDF, 186KB\)](#)

[2017 \(PDF, 41KB\)](#)

[2018 \(PDF, 91KB\)](#)

[2019 \(PDF, 189KB\)](#)

[2020 \(PDF, 132KB\)](#)