

# Assessment Report

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## New Zealand Scholarship Drama 2022

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### Standard 93304

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#### Part A: Commentary

There has been an increase in candidates using scripts from Aotearoa in their Part I performances over the last three years which has meant more content reflective of this place and suggests more candidates are being exposed to New Zealand playwrighting traditions across the country.

This year there were also candidates identifying as Māori and Pasifika who applied processes and forms from their own performance traditions to support their Part I performances and frame their Part II devising process and they spoke confidently and consciously to this in their introductions. This shows a growing confidence in these candidates understanding that the frame of drama as a school subject need not be limited to the Western canon in relation to story but also storytelling.

The Panel Leader commented that there were "some very sophisticated performances and theatre-making demonstrated by the outstanding candidates, but not the highest level of critical analysis across all parts of the exam that has been seen in previous years".



## **Notes on this year's performance across the specific parts of the examination.**

### **Prepared Introductions**

For the Part I text-based performance, many successful candidates discussed:

- a sense of the world of the playwright and the world of the play
- the importance of the extract or scene to the play as a whole
- their character's journey and role in the story within the piece
- specific preparatory techniques and processes used to explore and present informed by dramatic theorists / practitioners

For the Part II self-devised performance, many of the successful 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
- specific techniques they used to prepare and refine their piece informed by dramatic theorists / practitioners

Less successful candidates used their introductions to try and share all the research they had done with not enough thought to what was most important to share in relation to the way they had approached the performance task. This means they got carried away with explaining historical context or psychology of character or crisis point of story – all important foundational material – but often missed how they had then approached the task of embodying this research in performance.

They sometimes named particular theorists, such as Stanislavski or Brecht, but did not consistently communicate a deep understanding of their ideas in practice. Often this resulted in listing terms as they introduced their work such as 'magic if', 'past experience' 'alienation' 'narration' for example, rather than communicating how they had built off those theories and methods to prepare their performance for Part I or to construct and present their piece for Part II.

More successful candidates used their introductions to reveal what they knew about an applied theory or practice by the way they talked about how they had used it to respond to the dramatic task within each part of the exam.

They were not using the introduction to simply summarise and explain a theorist's or practitioner's ideas. They were discussing how they were attempting to apply the theory to a creative problem they were trying to solve in their dramatic work. This understanding then needed to be demonstrated in performance to achieve a high mark.

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.

## **Part I**

Candidates were tasked with interpreting, through performance, an extract from an established playwright in Part I. The most successful candidates understood how dramatic components are applied to lift this interpretation beyond simply a practised speech and this was expressed through a range of extracts from Greek classics to Māori contemporary plays.

Successful candidates embodied character through specific physical and vocal choices and were able to show shifts in tension and stakes and status through the way they responded to imagined relationships around them. These were not only character relationships but also spatial relationships and importantly their relationship to an audience's experience of their character's journey.

They understood and applied relevant theories and / or practices that addressed the problem of presence in performance.

Less successful candidates chose theorists and / or practitioners that were dealing in aspects of drama that were not specifically helping them with how to integrate dramatic techniques in the service of interpreting text.

Candidates sometimes made choices that were very far from their age or range or experience which made the job of realising the text in performance harder.

## **Part II**

Some of the strongest self-devised performances this year were built out of personal connection to contemporary political themes. Candidates explored different ways of generating dramatic material and forms, and structuring composition supported by relevant practitioners and / or theorists often utilising juxtaposition, rhythm, placement, repetition of motif, and sustained image to craft imaginative journeys for their audience.

Less successful candidates tended to use Part II to express 'feelings' without enough understanding of how dramatic composition works to allow an audience to journey with them through the subject they are exploring.

### **Part III**

More candidates this year seemed conscious of using the 'impromptu task' as an opportunity to show a contrasting performance style to their offers in Part I and Part II.

The task required them to apply appropriate dramatic components to the problem of restricted time, space and technologies in response to a dramatic prompt.

The prompt this year gave the candidates a clear platform from which to create a scenario using three distinct characters and was open enough to allow for different variations of 'event'. The spectrum of responses given offered an opportunity to mark them away from prepared tasks and to assess their ability to apply dramatic components under time pressure.

The most successful candidates understood that the specific choices they made as they moved between characters and endowed space acted as the basis of the performance. They were able to map out a storytelling frame that clearly established a scenario that made place and character relationships clear, then complicated this set up with a problem or development and found some way to resolve or close the dramatic episode.

Less successful candidates leaned too heavily on exposition and dialogue – 'saying' the story instead of showing it – and ignored the opportunity to create transitional performance language as they moved between characters, time, and space.

### **Reflection after Part III**

The most successful candidates used their reflection time to focus on HOW and WHY they made choices, in relation to dramatic principles and towards creating dramatic interest.

Being able to speak to what they would do differently next time gave them a chance to share what they knew about the mechanics of performance and how dramatic components are utilised to build dramatic interest for an audience.

Some exceptional candidates were able to keep composing and making during this reflection time as opposed to other candidates who got stuck trying to give the camera the right answer by presenting that what they have just performed was 'good'.

Some candidates wasted reflection time reading out loud the Part III task instructions as part of their reflection.

### **A note on range**

Candidates who are conscious of using each part of the exam to demonstrate their ability to work across a range of contrasting dramatic contexts and forms, and who can match these choices with appropriate theoretical and practical supports, give themselves the best chance of doing well in this exam.

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## **Part B: Report on Performance**

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

- displayed an independent and explorative approach to the tasks set and introduced to camera and performed with authority
- displayed a sophisticated and assured integration of theory or exceptional ability to integrate a comprehensive range of techniques and understanding across the pre-prepared tasks set in Parts I and II and through the Part III Impromptu task which required them to respond to a dramatic prompt under time pressure
- demonstrated coherence, which could be evidenced across a range of areas, for example, embodiment of techniques, realisation of ideas, and deliberate plotting of a journey within performances
- selected from their research and preparation to deliver concise introductions to camera demonstrating a well-embedded understanding of their practice and dramatic components.

- frequently demonstrated a wide range of appropriate applied theory through the variety of their choices in the different parts of the exam, aligning different methods and theories to consciously create contrasting performances across different contexts
- performed pieces which showed their ability to create sophisticated compositions in which they had solved problems of transitioning between moments, ideas, or characters by utilising dramatic metaphor, motif and juxtaposition through the use of space, body, and text
- understood the importance of specificity in performance choices and this was clearly evidenced through their embodied performances
- demonstrated that they are conscious of their part in creating the audience's experience and could select appropriate techniques and craft skills to meet this.

Candidates who were awarded **Scholarship** commonly:

- demonstrated a range of performance techniques with frequent authority across the three parts of the exam
- demonstrated an awareness of the preparatory processes and techniques they used and could successfully show and apply their learning through the set tasks of the exam
- demonstrated some integration of dramatic tools and principles, such as showing a conscious use of placement in the space, or conscious use of rhythm and pace, or consciously image-making physically
- understood the implications of the original genre and performance style inherent in their Part I extract and used this as a platform to create a convincing performance
- articulated their ideas clearly and referred to theorists and practitioners that they had researched as they put those ideas into practice within their performances
- demonstrated an application of relevant theory to their chosen text for Part I and applied relevant methods for creating and performing in Part II, but did not consistently communicate or demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of these ideas in practice
- may have shown some lack of sophistication or perception in one aspect (communication of thinking, embodiment of techniques, realisation of ideas),

but over-all demonstrated sound skill and understanding.

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

- demonstrated a limited range and understanding of drama components in performance, or were not able to demonstrate and apply their understanding through the set tasks
- demonstrated some authority in the skills that they were applying, but might not have demonstrated a broad range of skills
- struggled to create a journey through their performances and tended to present performance in a similar way across all three parts of the exam
- were less conscious of preparatory processes they could have used to build their performances or did not communicate their understanding of this on the day
- did not clearly articulate a theorist's or practitioner's methods and ideas despite having researched them in preparation for their performances
- revealed some misunderstanding of the processes referred to in their introductions
- applied theories, ideas, and processes to Part I texts that are not appropriate for the genre of play they had selected
- struggled to select relevant theorists' or practitioners' ideas or acting techniques to support their Part II devised work or did not apply these effectively
- appeared to have devised a performance piece 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 practices
- used Part II to express 'feelings' without enough understanding of how dramatic composition works to allow an audience to journey with them through the subject they were exploring
- were unable to successfully apply appropriate dramatic components to the impromptu task in Part III
- spoke about what they would show, but then did not show this in their performances

- learned their introductions by heart, but then muddled their words and ended up revealing a lack of comprehension.
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## [Subject page](#)

### Previous years' reports

 [2021](#)

 [2020](#)

 [2019](#)

 [2018](#)

 [2017](#)

 [2016](#)