AS DRAMA 2014   Markers' Comments

For the AS Drama examination of 2014 a total of 31 candidates selected 9 questions (out of a possible 24) from 5 plays (out of 12.) Of the 9 questions attempted, 5 focussed on Directing, 3 on Acting, and 1 on Set Design. In total, 36 answers on Directing were attempted, 22 on Acting, and 4 on Set Design.

Some anecdotal indicators:

DIRECTING: Median score was low for Q. 3b, directing Wilde (7) but, with only 3 responses, perhaps not significant. Inversely, median for Q. 5b, directing Berkoff (17) is high across 4 responses.

ACTING: Median scores ranged from 12 to 15 across the 3 questions.

SET DESIGN/OPC: Median 12.

School averages (3 schools in total): 23.4, 30.7, and 20.5.

Of the 31 candidates, 9 received a mark under 50%.

In general, responses this year were well-expressed and clearly written with few egregious spelling and factual errors. The one consistent weakness across the entire range lies in the inability of candidates to maintain focus on as question precisely as it is asked. The temptation to include unrelated (but well-drilled) material from other aspects of theatrical analysis or experience sometimes proves too great. This has the unfortunate effect of a double penalty. Not only does the candidate struggle to score marks for irrelevant material, but time is wasted on it that could have been spent on accumulating marks with better (more relevant) ideas and evidence.

A fairly small cohort answered question on Brecht and Berkoff and did fairly well in showing familiarity and hands-on experience with the production and performance challenges of these works. Perhaps because these questions came later in the examination booklet (Qs. 4 and 5) some of the responses were unfinished or very rushed. There was also an indication of what proved to be a widespread aspect of the 2014 responses: the issue of what candidates judge to be comic, comedic, or amusing for an audience. There were many (quite imaginative) ideas for emphasising humour, satire, and comedy in performance that seemed at odds with the texts and possible audiences discussed.

The Shakespearean responses drew high marks, including two 20 point answers that were a joy to read. There seemed to be more good material available for those writing on Shakespeare in terms of rich character interaction, and textual evidence was well –employed. Careful reading of the questions remains paramount – 2 responses mistook Macbeth the character for *Macbeth* the play and so scored fewer marks than they perhaps deserved. And one responder wrote on Act Five, Scene One of *Macbeth* instead of Act One, Scene Five as asked.