



Established 1904

**The Leinster School of Music & Drama**  
**Speech & Drama Theory Handbook**

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# The Leinster School of Music & Drama

## Speech & Drama Theory Handbook

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## The LSMD Speech & Drama Theory Handbook

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide teachers and candidates with some assistance on the theory requirements of The Leinster School of Music and Drama Grade Syllabus. The LSMD do not see this Handbook as being a comprehensive or all-inclusive theory book. We recommend that teachers and candidates look at additional resources for the topics discussed in this handbook and expand their understanding of the theory. The LSMD Speech and Drama theory requirements in the curriculum have been thoughtfully linked with performance tasks, in order to push candidates to comprehend the principles they have been taught and to put these into practice in their performance.

The examiner wants to see that the candidate has a clear understanding of the requested theory and where possible uses their own interpretations and not known off by heart. The examiner will discuss theory with the candidates, and they will be looking for candidates to demonstrate this comprehension in their responses and when necessary, to clarify the theory using examples from the pieces they have performed.

## GRADE 1

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### **What are the Organs of Speech?**

The Organs of Speech are:- The Tongue, The Teeth, The Lips, The Hard Palate, The Soft Palate and The Lower Jaw.

### **What is the meaning of Good Speech?**

The meaning of good speech is speaking out clearly so that we can be heard and understood. We should employ a steady pace and should pronounce our words correctly and try to speak with expression in our voice and on our faces.

## GRADE 2

### **Name the five Vowel Signs: - A, E, I, O, U**

For each of the vowel signs there are several vowel sounds.

For example consider the vowel sign 'A' and how different it sounds in the following words – what, lady, any, at – each sign sounds very different.

A vowel is a part of speech that has free movement through the mouth and is made by the tongue and lips. You can see this in the mirror – if you look at yourself and sound out A,E,I,O,U.

### **Why are Vowels Important?**

Vowels are important because they give language it's music. They help with the carrying power of speech.

Imagine the sounds carrying –

AAAAAAAAAA; EEEEEEEEE; IIIIIIIIII; OOOOOOOO; UUUUUUUUUU

If some one calls your name from far away it is always the vowels that they elongate to ensure you hear them.

### **What is Pause in Speech?**

A pause is a temporary stop or break in speech.

### **Why do we Pause?**

We pause for many reasons, here are some examples - for Grade 2 you only need to know 2.

#### **1. Breath**

It's not possible to breathe and speak at the same time, therefore we must pause in order to take a breath.

#### **2. Punctuation**

This is all the symbols used in writing for example, full stops, commas, quotation marks, exclamation marks etc. These symbols indicate where we should pause.

#### **3. Effect**

A pause for effect is used to make a word or a group of words stand out.

#### **4. Change of Character**

This helps to show who is speaking and gives us time to change our voice

#### **5. Emotion**

Any strong feeling such as sadness, anger or happiness. If we speak and cry or speak and laugh at the same time the listener might not be able to understand you.

#### **6. Getting the Audience's Attention**

Silence can be a very effective way of gaining a listeners attention.

#### **7. Allowing an Audience to react**

A well-timed pause can give an audience time to digest something that has been said. It allows them time to laugh without masking the information that follows.

#### **8. Stress**

Here pause is used to make a word stand out from the main sentence.

#### **9. Timing**

This refers mainly to comedy and could be described as knowing how long or short a pause should be. The length of a pause can often help make a line of script very funny.

## GRADE 3

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### **What is the Meaning of Good Communication?**

When communicating it is important that we project our voices to ensure that we can be heard, this is important whether we are speaking publicly or privately. Nothing should impede the flow of speech or interrupt the fluency of the speaker. Good posture will help to ensure that a speaker has sufficient breath. The speaker should stand with their feet at hip width apart, with no tension in the knee, shoulders should be in a neutral position and the chin should be held up. The listener should not have to strain in any way to hear the speaker

### **What is a phrase?**

A phrase can be described simply as a group of words that make sense.

Phrases may vary in length from a single word to a passage of several lines.

**Eg: Stop! Don't do that!** – *There are two phrases here. 'Stop!' and 'Don't do that!'*  
*As they both make sense in their own right.*

The best way to describe a sentence is to say that it is a group of words, that usually contains a subject and a verb, which expresses a complete idea.

### **What is the difference between a phrase and a sentence?**

The main difference is that a sentence usually contains a subject and a verb and a phrase does not.

### **What is phrasing?**

Phrasing is the dividing of sentences into groups of words – these groups are usually marked by punctuation.

### **Why is phrasing important?**

Phrasing is important to make the meaning clear. Good phrase delivery depends on good breath control.

### **What are the Rules for Reading Aloud?**

*From the following list you need to know two.*

1. Stand up straight and hold the book away from your face.
2. Remember to announce your title and author's name
3. Speak clearly with expression in your voice and on your face.
4. Aim to convey the mood of the passage
5. Pay attention to rate, pace, and phrasing
6. Eye contact - look for opportunities to communicate - to look at your examiner.

## GRADE 4

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### **What is a consonant?**

A consonant is any letter of the alphabet excluding the five vowels.

### **How is a consonant made/formed?**

A consonant is made/formed by the meeting or near meeting of two of the organs of speech. You will remember the organs of speech from Grade 1 – the tongue, the teeth, the lips, hard palate and soft palate.

Below are three examples of consonants and what organs of speech are used to form them –

M – Your two lips meet

F - Your teeth and lower lip meet

T - Your tongue and hard palate meet

Remember as with vowels, we always think of the consonant sounds and not the signs

### **Why are consonants important in speech?**

Consonants are important because they make our speech crisp and clear.

### **What is emphasis?**

Emphasis means giving special importance to a word or phrase to make it stand out. We emphasise in many ways, but for Grade III you only need to know two.

**A.** We emphasise by stressing the word – ie putting extra weight on the word to be emphasised – Eg: You ALWAYS say that.

**B.** We emphasise by pausing before, after, or before and after the word –

I know it was ... Mary who did it.

I know it was Mary .... who did it.

I know it was ... Mary ... who did it.

Emphasis can also be achieved by using gesture, change of pace, and or change of pitch.

## GRADE 5

### What is Rate and Pace in speech?

Rate is the overall speed at which we speak and Pace is the variety within it.

For normal conversation, we use a medium rate of speaking.

- *When the mood of the story is exciting we use a fast rate of speaking.*
- *When the mood of the story is sad or mysterious we use a slow rate of speaking.*

### What is Pitch?

Pitch is the height or depth of the voice

We generally say pitch may be High, Medium or Low

**Low** – Sadness, mystery – there was a very strange sound

**Medium** – Ordinary Conversation - I was walking down the road

**High** – Excitement or action. – I won, I won... I just can't believe it

### What is Rhythm?

Rhythm is the beat.

In poetry, it is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Rhythm gives music and emotion to poetry.

A poem can have a regular rhythm or irregular rhythm

*Jack and Jill went up the hill*

The underlined words are the stressed words.

Look for an example from your own poem to use in the exam.

### Pause in Prose

**Prose is any written matter other than poetry, e.g: comics, magazines, the newspaper, books, plays.**

There are several types of pause used in prose – breath; punctuation; change of character; entrance and exit of a character; to allow the audience to react; for effect.

For Grade 5 you need know the following –

#### Pause for Breath:

You can't speak without breath. Good breath control is very important when delivering prose.

#### Pause for Punctuation:

You can't speak without breath. Good breath control is very important when delivering prose.

#### Emphatic Pause:

This pause is used to give special importance to a word or a phrase and can be achieved by pausing just before or after the word(s)

#### Dramatic Pause:

This pause is used to highlight a dramatic or exciting moment. It is achieved by leaving a beat or two of silence with no dialogue or background sound. Usually done to heighten the anticipation before something is 'revealed'. It can also follow the reveal.... it's just that shocking!!!



## GRADE 6

### What is Mime?

Mime is a silent art form that involves acting or communicating using only movements, gestures, and facial expressions, therefore, the person or actor who performs mime is also called a mime.

Mime and Pantomime is a form of silent performance art of the theatre which makes the use of suggestions, gestures and actions to communicate a narrative. It is an art form that communicates via implying actions. Mime is extremely significant in the modern-day art of drama. For an instance, it helps in bringing out the talent of expressions and body movements essential for drama.

Marceau described mime as 'the art of silence'.

### Occupational Mime

Miming everyday tasks. The function is to convey "business." It can involve operating a machine or cooking a sandwich. It can be naturalistic, but to make it into a performance, you need theatrical knowledge. The employment of the "Click" and stylised movements might provide this mime more believability. The "Click" is the emphasised muscular energy that begins and ends each action. Characters can play a part but shouldn't take over the story.

### Character Mime

Portraying a character type. This mime is driven by a particular character who is involved in a variety of scenarios and conflicts. To establish and maintain a character, sensitivity and bodily awareness are essential. Great mime artists have developed distinctive characters that their audiences have come to know and love. In the mime tradition, Bip by Marcel Marceau, Tramp by Charlie Chaplin, and most recently Mr. Bean by Rowan Atkinson have all achieved legendary status.

### Abstract Mime

Telling a story through a thought or emotion. Without using occupational mime, this style of mime expresses feelings and moods. Instead of a story, the title may refer to a topic or issue, such as "loss" or "Marcel Marceau's Life Cycle." In abstract mime, the mask or a white face is frequently utilized to emphasise the body movement.

### What is Rhyme?

Candidates should be familiar with Masculine, Feminine and Eye Rhyme and give examples from their chosen poems where possible.

A pause is a temporary break or stop of the voice. There are many reasons to pause in speech, to take a breath, for punctuation, for sense, for emphasis, to allow the listener to digest the information and so on. It is important to use the pause to its full capacity and to 'feel' pause when you use it.

There are several types of pauses used in verse, some are only found in verse.

### Suspensive Pause

This is found only in verse and is used where the sense of one line runs into the next.

This type of line is called a run-on line or an enjambed line.

The pause is used to indicate that the end of a line of verse has been reached, but no new breath should be taken as the sense of the line is carried on unbroken. The 'pause' is just a slight dwelling on the last word or syllable. Let's look for some examples in your own poem....

### What happens here?

We make the last word in the first line, a little bit longer than normal by dwelling on the sound. The pause indicates that we know the end of the line has been reached but that the sense continues into the next line of poetry and therefore we cannot break the sense. Think of it as a spoken pause

**Caesural Pause**

This pause is also only found in verse. It can also be known as the sense pause. It is the natural break in the voice found in longer lines of poetry. It is often found within the line of poetry and can be marked by punctuation but not always. When you must choose the caesural pause, it is very important to be mindful of the phrasing and the sense of the line of poetry.

**End of Line Pause**

Is a pause at the end of a line of poetry where the sense is complete – usually, but not always, marked by punctuation.

**Rhyme**

Is the agreement of sound, the repetition of syllables typical at the end of lines. We organise those end rhymes into patterns or schemes, called Rhyming Schemes.

Masculine Rhyme	Has One Syllable	E.g. meet/seat/fleet
Feminine Rhyme	Has Two Syllables	E.g. better/letter/wetter
Eye Rhyme	Are words that look alike but do not sound alike	E.g. cough/bough and love/prove
End Rhyme	Occurs at the end of lines of poetry.	

## GRADE 7

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### **The method of breathing for speaking**

*Breath control, posture, and relaxation.*

When we are at rest, we breath in slowly and exhale quickly. When we are breathing for public speaking and we need our words to be heard, we want to inhale quickly and exhale slowly as we deliver our words.

### **The Mechanics of Breathing**

Our lungs are enclosed in a conical cage formed by the ribs, which increase progressively in size from top to bottom. The base of this cone is formed by the diaphragm. When air is drawn into the lungs the size of the chest is increased.

When the muscles which move the ribs contract, they draw the whole cage in an upward and outward direction (if you place your hands on your ribs and inhale you will feel this happening). This is the movement you want to encourage, any tendency to lift the rib cage vertically as a whole must be resisted and no raising of the shoulders. Such movements result in shallow breathing and control of volume and tone becomes impossible.

### **Development of Breath Control**

Breath control means delaying the rate of exhalation. The correct form of breathing is known as intercostal diaphragmatic breathing, or rib reserve breathing, or full chest breathing. When we breath like this we are filling the chest cavity with air, allowing the ribs to lift and separate and the diaphragm is engaged, to prevent losing air from the lungs at speed. The diaphragm is then contracted to replenish the breath supply, and again is allowed to rise to expel a quantity of breath. Breath is alternately inhaled and exhaled by the diaphragm which contracts and relaxes rhythmically. No speaker who develops rib-reserve is ever in the position of speaking on the tail end of the breath, so that audibility, as far as the breath is responsible, is ensured. Support is given to the note, so that steady, even pitch is easily maintained, and the danger of vibrato diminished. It is a powerful aid in tone building.

### **Relaxation and Posture**

When developing good breath control it is also necessary to work on relaxation, as the two go hand in hand in the quest for a good speaking voice. Nothing is as harmful to the ease of tone as the tensing of muscles. Extreme cases of tension lead to loss of tone, tone quality and indeed the voice itself.

The conditions under which an actor or speaker practises their art are filled with tension. Performers must develop ways to combat this. Relaxation is one way to cope with the situation. We feel better when relaxed and as a result less inclined to worry.

When we go to speak in any public setting it is important to consider your posture. We should stand straight, resisting the temptation to draw our shoulders back. Our feet should be a hip width apart. There should be a little give in our knees, to ensure that there is no tension being held there. Our arms should be as relaxed as the situation will allow.

Performers use all manner of warm up and relaxation exercises to help them to develop skills that will allow them to cope in a high-pressure environment but give the impression that they are unaffected by nerves or tension.

All these minor adjustments will assist a performer in keeping control over their breath and thus producing a speaking voice that is firm, free, full, forward and flowing.

**Inflection**

*Simple upward and downward inflection.*

Inflection is the upward and downward glide of the voice within the pitch. Varying your tone throughout the speech – raising your voice slightly to indicate a question, lowering it to end a declarative sentence, speaking louder to indicate excitement or softer to express sadness – will help keep your audience awake and alert!

**Upward inflection** is when a speaker ends a sentence with a rising intonation as if the sentence is a question. The rising intonation can occur one or more syllables after the last accented syllable toward the end of the sentence.

**Downward inflection** is when lower tones are used, often at the end of a sentence, to provide a sense of certainty. This inflection can be used when stating facts or setting an appointment.

**The Ballad**

*The speaking of a Ballad.*

The Ballad is one of the oldest forms of literature. There are so many different types of ballad that giving one strict definition to fit all the variations would be nearly impossible. The simplest way to think of a ballad is as a song or poem that tells a story and has a bouncy rhythm and rhyme scheme. Traditional ballads are written in a meter called common meter. Many ballads have a refrain (a line or stanza that repeats throughout the poem), much like the chorus of modern day songs.

When speaking a ballad the story is of most importance. The theme and tone of the ballad should be respected for creating the mood and eye contact should be used to communicate the story as effectively as possible.

## GRADE 8

At Grade 8 we look once again at Vowels (Grade 2) and Consonants (Grade 4). As in these previous grades we are concentrating on the sounds, how they are formed and their importance in speech.

A vowel sound is produced in the larynx by the breath flow vibrating on the vocal chords (vowels are always vocalised). The sound we hear is largely formed by the shaping of our lips and the position of the tongue and jaw. There is a free flow of breath through the mouth and the sound is spoken through the freely open mouth. The sound is not interrupted by any other speech organs the tongue the teeth the lips the hard and soft palate.

### Monophthong

A **Monophthong** is one complete and unaltered sound, which means the shape does not alter as we say it.

There are seven **short** single vowels, and it is much easier to remember them in a sentence –

‘That Book is not much better’.

There are five **long** monophthong vowels, here is another sentence to help you remember them –

‘We do far more work!’

### Diphthongs

A **Diphthongs** is a vowel sound formed by two single vowels joined together spoken without interruption. The sounds flow into each other on are said in the same space of time as one single sound vowel

The shape changes as you speak with the stress on the first vowel sound as it glides into the second sound. Here is another sentence to help you remember them

‘Mice don’t make loud noises’

### Triphthong

A **Triphthong** is a vowel sound formed by two single vowel sounds followed by an ‘r’. All triphthongs are murmur. In this case we have to change the shape of our mouth twice in order to make the sound. Here is another sentence to help you remember some-

‘The Lawyer saw the pure flower on fire’

### The Neutral Vowel

Is the vague and indefinite sound in words. It stops speech from becoming pedantic by allowing the speaker to skim over the sound, creating a more natural speech flow. It is found at the start, within words, and at the end.

Beautiful, China, Mother, Above

### Consonants

A consonant is an element of speech which is formed by the touching or almost touching of two of the organs of speech.

With this in mind we arrive at the following classification:-

#### Sustained Vocal (voiced)

Z (Zeal), V (Vane), ZH (Azure), DH (Then), W (Witch), L, M, N, R, Y, NG

**Sustained aspirate (unvoiced)**

S (Seal), F (Fane), SH (Assure), TH (Thin), WH (Which)

The last six vocal consonants have no corresponding aspirates. H is not strictly a consonant at all, seeing that there is no contact or even approximation of any two articulative organs. But it is usually included in a list of consonantal sounds, and therefore it must be regarded here as a sustained aspirate consonant.

**Explosive vocal**

B (Bat), D (Dent), G (Gale)

**Explosive aspirate**

P (Pat), T (Tent), K (Kale)

S, Z, SH, ZH, W, WH and Y are instances of approximation rather than full contact of the articulative organs employed.

It is usual, further, to classify consonants according to the articulative organs employed.

**LABIALS**

P, B, M. (Bi-labials), full contact of both lips.

W, WH. (Approximation only.)

**LABIO-DENTAL**

F, V. contact of lips and teeth

**LINGUA-DENTAL**

TH, DH, S, Z.. contact of tongue and teeth

**LINGUA-PALATAL**

L, N, T, D, R, SH, ZH, Y. contact of the tongue and hard palate

**LINGUA-GUTTURAL**

G, K, NG. contact of tongue and soft palate

H in this classification is regarded as an Oral (or mouth) consonant.

There are still three minor classifications of consonants to be noticed.

**Improvisation**

In drama terms improvisation is the playing of dramatic scenes without written dialogue and with minimal or no predetermined dramatic activity.

All improvisation is spontaneous to a degree, in that it's not scripted. In certain styles of improvisation there has been no discussion or planning about what the scene may contain. The actors act and react to one another in role and 'see what happens'.

Improvising is also a wonderful way of sharpening acting skills. Being completely in the moment and open to what is happening improves listening and responding onstage, builds rapport, sharpens the wits and improves confidence as a performer.

**What are the types of improvisation in drama?**

Five Distinctive Approaches to Improvisation

- Basic Performance Improvisation.
- Devised Theatre.
- Applied Theatre
- Drama in the Classroom (Creative Drama)
- Improvisation as Scripted Theatre Rehearsal

**What is the difference between spontaneous and rehearsed improvisation?**

Actors have experimented with creating spontaneous work and the best bits have been kept and tidied up to create a piece of work which, although improvised, is planned and polished.



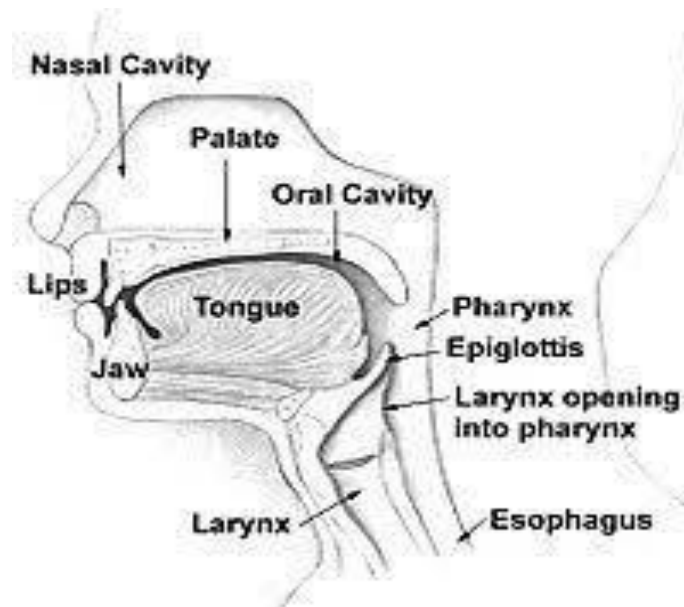
## GRADE 9

### Resonance

*What are the main resonators?*

Resonance is the extra amplification of the initial sound or note which is made as our vocalised breath is impelled against the vocal cords. When we want to make sound, the breath strikes against the vocal cords in the larynx. The cords come together and are made to vibrate. These sounds are then resonated in the chest, the pharynx (the hollow space above the larynx) in the mouth and nose, the bones of the face and hollow spaces in the head (sinuses).

A 'resonant' voice means a pleasing tone to the ear and to achieve that we must think about making full use of the resonators. Good tone depends on a balance between the resonances in the pharynx, mouth, and nose.



### Tone

*Tone Amount and Tone Quality*

Tone is a good vocal quality or timbre. Technically we achieve a good tone to our voice when tension is eliminated from our bodies, our posture is relaxed, we have good head, neck and spine alignment, and the voice has good breath support. Therefore, the resonating spaces in our body are fully open and the vibrating surfaces are free to direct the sounds and to give each sound its full value.

Beauty and sound, often known as tone quality and tone amount. The term "tone colour" refers to the amount and quality of our tones. Change of tone actually refers to a change in tone colour. Tone colour is created by focusing on the mood or emotion of the passage while thinking about it, then bringing that emotion into your voice.

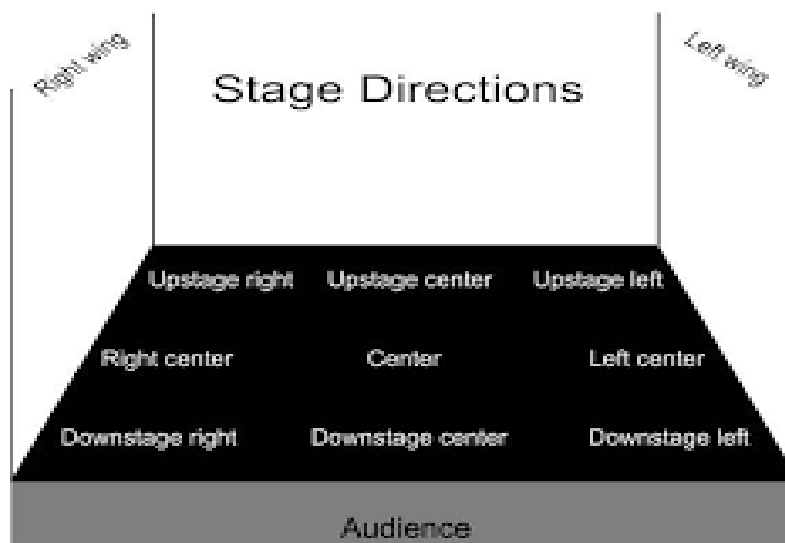
### Stage Directions

*Stage Left and Right; Centre Stage; Up and Down Stage*

An actor should understand stage areas i.e., downstage = towards the audience; upstage = the stage towards the back.

He must know right and left of the stage. An imaginary line is drawn through the centre of the stage and all areas on an actor's right are stage right and all to the left are the actor's stage left. The strongest area from which to play a part is usually right/left of centre, slightly downstage.

An actor must never block another actor by deliberately standing in front of them; also, an actor must never upstage another actor by drawing people's attention away to look at them instead.



### What is a Lyric?

A lyric is a musical poem, which was originally (long ago) spoken to the accompaniment of the lyre. That is why, even now, the words of any song are called lyrics.

The lyric is a short, subjective poem which expresses the poet's feelings on a particular subject or emotion. In most lyrics, the arrangement of sounds provides the musicality and often the sound is more important than the sense. This is the key difference between a lyric and a narrative poem which, of course, tells a story.

In all lyric speaking, the speaker must put him/herself in the role of the 'instrument interpreting the thoughts of the poet' rather than imposing his/ her personality on the piece. The musicality of the words and delicacy of thought must be observed. No lyric should be dramatized.

## GRADE 10

### The Sonnet

*The structure and speaking of a sonnet.*

A sonnet is a poetic form which originated in Italy; the Sicilian poet Giacomo Da Lentini is credited with its invention. The term sonnet derives from the Italian word sonetto. By the thirteenth century it signified a poem of fourteen lines that follows a strict rhyme scheme and specific structure. The 14 lines are divided into 8 lines octet and sestet – 6 lines and the rhyming pattern is

Abba abba  
Cd cd cd or  
Cde cde cde

The 8 lines explored one theme in a poetic way, because it's a lyrical poem the language was flowing and musical, usually expressing deep emotion or love for a person/place/thing. And the 6 lines generally approached the theme from a different perspective. Sometimes but not always the story was resolved.

Conventions associated with the sonnet have evolved over its history. Writers of sonnets are sometimes called "sonneteers", although the term can be used derisively. One of the best-known sonnet writers is William Shakespeare, who wrote 154 of them (not including those that appear in his plays). A Shakespearean, or English, sonnet consists of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter, a pattern in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable five times. The rhyme scheme in a Shakespearean sonnet is a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g; the last two lines are a rhyming couplet. In the Shakespearean sonnet the poem of emotion or love is explored throughout the 3 quatrains and summarised in the rhyming couplet.

Traditionally, English poets employ iambic pentameter when writing sonnets, but not all English sonnets have the same metrical structure.

The Prologue to Romeo and Juliet is also a sonnet, as is Romeo and Juliet's first exchange in Act One, Scene Five, lines 104–117, beginning with "If I profane with my unworthing hand" (104) and ending with "Then move not while my prayer's effect I take".

In speaking the sonnet there must be no element of drama. The speaker concentrates on the sense, on the emotion and on the colour in each word. Gesture may not be used, and the speaker must never intrude his/her personality on the poem but rather try to see into the poet's head and mind, and reflect this vocally and this is also applicable to all lyrics.

### What is Characterisation?

*Discuss in relation to your preparation and performance.*

It all starts with the play. It seems obvious, but the first place to get insight into your character is by reading the play. Before making any decisions or judgments about your character, read the whole play three times. The first read is a "pleasure read". Just read the play as a whole purely for enjoyment purposes, paying no particular attention to your character. Read the play a second time, this time recording everything that is said about your character, and every detail you can find about the environment and people surrounding your character. Also record everything that the other characters do to affect your character. The third time through, write down everything your character says about others and every change your character makes to the world around them. By this time, the candidate should have a pretty good framework to start from.

In preparing for their performance, the candidate should make out a chart listing relevant details about the character. e.g., fact or fiction, age, comedy or tragedy, type of person, period, or modern setting. They should pick out three main characteristics of the character and concentrate on these in your acting. Movement and facial expression should be in keeping with the character and should appear as part of the scene and not just be tacked on from the outside. This is called motivation. Gestures should be added for emphasis. The part should

be thoroughly learned and rehearsed many times. The Candidate should concentrate on 'getting inside their part'. The scene should have shape. Pace variation is necessary and is often overlooked.

If the play is a period piece a close study of period movement is advised in preparation for this requirement. The movement required for acting any period piece must be worked out with reference to the setting/ environment of the play, the clothes worn at the time, the social standing of the character. The study should include - gesture, posture, manners, use of the fan or other accessories, bows/curtsies and other formalities observed, the shape and weight of costume/ restriction of undergarments, and so on.

### **Theatrical Terminology**

*Upstaging; Masking; Corpsing; Gesture and Striking the Set.*

#### **Upstaging**

Following on from Grade 9 theory, 'stage directions', when an actor moves upstage of another actor, causing them to turn away from the audience s/he is 'upstaging'. In addition, an actor drawing attention to themselves away from the main action (by moving around or over-reacting to onstage events) is upstaging.

#### **Masking**

The act of obscuring a piece of scenery, a face, or body part from the audience so they cannot see it clearly. Masking can be done by hiding the face with a brim of a hat or a gesture using the incorrect arm, crossing it over the body and turning upstage. Props can also mask an actor, obscuring them from view. If an actor realises they are being masked or are masking, they must, whilst remaining in character, try to correct this.

#### **Corpsing**

When an actor breaks character during a scene — by laughing or forgetting their lines, or by causing another cast member to do so. The origin of the term is unknown; it refers to almost literally murdering the scene.

#### **Gesture**

The visual impact of communication is more powerful than the verbal. A gesture may be defined as a thought conceived in the mind shown in the face and eyes and culminating in an action or movement of the body. Gesture must arise from what we are saying and never be imposed, it must come through understanding.

In any form of dramatic activity, gesture is important because it enhances a performance and adds emphasis to its content. In mime or movement to music, where the spoken word is absent, gesture (made with any part of your body) takes on a special importance. In effect, gesture provides the way in which meaning is communicated to the audience.

Technically, gesture needs clarity and articulation – in other words, it must be unambiguous, and have a beginning, middle and end. Because you are communicating with an audience which generally is some distance away, your gestures need to be larger than normal.

#### **Striking the Set**

To remove a piece of stage set when no longer needed. This can mean breaking it down to its stock pieces and returning them to storage. If the set was rented, or is a touring set, striking the set means breaking the set down into pieces that will fit into the van to return them.

#### **History of Theatre**

The history of theatre charts the development of theatre over the past 2,500 years. Candidates must research the period their classical and modern drama selections are set in and be able to hold a discussion with the examiner about this era.

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