

# PROGRAMME EXAMPLES FOR ACTING

## GRADE 8

**ACTING**

At Grade 8 the maximum programme time is 15 minutes for a continuous programme of three contrasting extracts from different plays and 3 minutes for a modification of one of the extracts showing their chosen character in a different context that explores a new interpretation of the piece. The pieces should contrast in style, language, mood or genre. One extract can come from an unpublished play and another performer may be involved in one of the pieces. The examiner will be looking for integrated and confident performance skills, and presentation of material which is intellectually challenging and varied.

## TOP TIPS

- ▶ We ask for a continuous programme at this grade. Although the candidate may need to make small adjustments (e.g. props, simple costume) focus should be sustained when moving between extracts, as though an audience were viewing an entire performance.
- ▶ Ensure ownership through deliberate performance and staging choices that are imaginative, artistic, and support the development of character and narrative.
- ▶ Practice moving between pieces so that the candidate can develop their stamina.
- ▶ Encouraging candidates to read widely - different plays in similar genres, or other plays by chosen authors - will help them develop an in-depth understanding of a writer's style and aid informed choices of interpretation.
- ▶ Ask candidates to do their own research around topics and themes. Assist them by checking the authenticity or suitability of the chosen sources and pieces.
- ▶ Remember that an audience is unlikely to know what happened before the extract starts - encourage the candidates to create imagined environments and think about the character's journey.

All pieces are available in published versions. A variety are also available online or in the [Trinity Anthology](#).

## EXAMPLE PROGRAMME 1

This programme shows the examiner contrasts in period, character and dramatic style.

### WHAT

**Play extract (duologue with another performer)**

*Macbeth* Act I scene 7 Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

First line: 'We will proceed no further in this business'

### WHY

Presenting a duologue gives the candidate an opportunity to investigate not only the character, but also the relationship - the love between the characters and the balance of power. The actors will need to think about staging, and may want to consider the banquet going on in another room and how this affects the way they speak to each other. There is also the challenge of the language and the verse.

<b>Play extract</b> <b>Boys</b> by Ella Hickson, Sophie First line: 'The first night I knew...'	A rites of passage play about the transition to adulthood. An opportunity to investigate Sophie's complicated emotional journey, as she talks about falling in love. An opportunity to play the warmth and sincerity of Sophie, in a naturalistic setting, working on making a personal connection to the text.
<b>Play extract</b> <b>Fen</b> by Caryl Churchill, Val First line: 'There's so much happening....'	Val is an idealist, living in an agricultural community, where women work in the fields. Physicality will be key to building this character, as well as some work on their circumstances to help with interpretation. The character could have an accent, in order to show range and contrast.
<b>Modification</b> One of the pieces from Tasks 1 - 3 modified to show the character in a different context that explores a new interpretation. <i>Fen</i> New context: a music festival	By changing the context of <i>Fen</i> to a huge festival site such as Glastonbury, in which everyone is camping, they might be drunk and there is loud music in the background. Using exactly the same lines as the original, the character of Val might become much more relaxed, enjoying talking to a group of friends, perhaps finding some humour and different nuances within the text.

## EXAMPLE PROGRAMME 2

This programme shows the examiner contrast in character, literary and dramatic style.

### WHAT

**Play extract**  
*Oedipus the King* by Sophocles, Creon  
First line: 'First, I bid thee think'

### WHY

A classic Greek tragedy, in which Creon talks of his balanced view of the world. Typically performed on an open stage with very minimal set, Greek theatre relies on detailed investigation of the text and well-developed vocal skills to handle the complex sentences along with confident physicality and ownership of the space to show character and status. Working on objectives and intentions in rehearsal will help make this persuasive and bring the oratory to life for an audience.

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### Play extract

*Jerusalem* by Jez Butterworth, Johnny Rooster  
First line: 'It's true. My mother was a virgin...'

Larger than life Johnny Rooster is variously endearing and repelling as he refuses to conform. Encouraging the candidate to be physically and emotionally courageous will help bring this character to life. Using Laban's working actions, or Stanislavski's techniques may help in creating a personal connection to the character and his motivations.

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### Play extract

*Many Moons* by Alice Birch, Ollie

First line: 'Prude, I think would be a bit far.'

An introverted character, who struggles to integrate. Written in a poetic style which mimics the speech rhythms. This contrasts well with the extrovert Johnny Rooster, and the awkwardness that Ollie feels will be something many young people will identify with. The speech is humorous, but requires sincerity and careful pacing to realise it for an audience.

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### Modification

One of the pieces from Tasks 1 - 3 modified to show the character in a different context that explores a new interpretation.

*Many Moons*

New context: sailing boat

The speech could be set on a sailing boat, with Ollie trying to raise the sail and steer the boat as the wind starts to rise. Using the same words as the original, the increasing sound of the wind will affect the volume of the speech, and the physical strain and energy of the situation will have a marked effect on the interpretation.

## EXAMPLE PROGRAMME 3

This programme shows the examiner a range of periods, dramatic styles and characters.

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### WHAT

#### Play extract

*As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, Rosalind  
Act III scene 5 '

First line: 'And why I pray you? Who might be your mother?'

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### WHY

A period play, with a female character disguised as a man, in a moment of unguarded irritation. This is an opportunity for a candidate to examine the duality of genders within one character both through physicality and emotions, whilst enjoying the opportunity to be thoroughly rude to Phoebe. The language and form requires good vocal technique and breath control.

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**Play extract**

*Eigengrau* by Penelope Skinner, Rose

First line: 'And actually the colour rose has all these mystical meanings'

Described as a play about 'urban chaos' this is an amusing colloquial piece from a character who is something of a dreamer. Contrasting in tone and intention to *Rosalind*, this is an amusing speech which needs a variety of pacing and careful timing to be effective.

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**Play extract**

*Mother Courage* by Bertolt Brecht, Mother

Monologue from scene 1 omitting other characters. First line: 'Papers?..Courage is the name..'

or

Duologue with Cook scene 9 opening section.

An unconventional and feisty character, surviving as a single mother in a war-torn environment. Work on physicality and vocal tone will help create the earthiness of *Mother Courage*. The themes have echoes for modern times, and will allow the candidate to consider their own interpretation and imagined setting.

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**Modification**

One of the pieces from Tasks 1 - 3 modified to show the character in a different context that explores a new interpretation.

*Mother Courage*

New context: migrant centre

The scene from *Mother Courage* could be set in a migrant centre where *Mother Courage* and her family, are being processed as illegant imigrants. Perhaps *Mother Courage* refers to the officials as 'Sargent' in a disparaging way, or perhaps to show respect; either way the new context will lead to a new interpretation of the text.

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**PREPARE TO PERFORM**

**PRACTICAL ACTING SKILLS  
FOR ASPIRING PERFORMERS**

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