

## Programme examples

### Acting exams for groups

#### GRADES 6-8



This resource has been designed to guide and inspire text choices when preparing candidates for Trinity Group exams and offers example programmes for Advanced Grades 6–8.

These examples are intended for Trinity's Group Acting exams, however, several of these examples could be adapted to be used in the Performance Arts Group exams and in some cases the Musical Theatre Group exams.

Teachers may find that they need to make cuts in the text to adhere to exam timings. Please note the minimum as well as maximum timings – arrival, set-up and exit must be managed within the maximum timing, so make sure the groups have their props ready and can move any furniture needed swiftly.

#### GRADE 6

At Grade 6 the maximum time is 20 minutes for two pieces either from published plays or devised by the group, or a mixture of the two. There should be a contrast in the style of language of the pieces chosen and the examiner will be looking to see if the whole group can sustain character by delivering an imaginative and accurate performance. Remember to practice any scene changes and make sure that these are included in the maximum timings.

#### EXAMPLE 1

Number of performers/characters: 9-14 | PIECES 1 & 2 – Mowgli / Baloo / Bagheera / Kaa / Shere Khan / Ban / Luna / Taak / Taqabi (scope to add more monkeys)

#### WHAT

*The Siege* by Adrian Mitchell  
Act 1, scene 2

#### OR

Scene 3. There are several other options within the play.

As the play is episodic, and there are many voices in each scene this play lends itself to larger groups.

#### WHY

A play about ordinary people caught up in the nightmare of a country undergoing an unpredictable war between factions. The subject matter will resonate with candidates throughout the world. The episodic nature means that there is a narrative structure within each scene and the surrounding environments have to be created by the actors. There are some songs which can be excluded, or included if the Performance Arts syllabus is chosen. Plenty of characters, all sharing the dialogue.

#### STAGING SUGGESTIONS

A bare stage will work well for both of these pieces. Using blocks, treads, or platforms will give the sense of the changing environments and terrain and add interest in the stage pictures.

## WHAT

*The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, adapted by Stuart Paterson

Act 1, scene 3

## WHY

An exciting moment in the story when the monkeys have taken Mowgli to the Lost Palace and Shere Khan arrives with Taquabi. Mowgli is rescued in the nick of time. Opportunities to explore physical characterisation or puppetry to create the animals, and to work on building the dramatic tension through pacing and conflict. The high stakes of the scene means that language is used in quite a formal and often poetic way, contrasting well with the second piece.

## STAGING SUGGESTIONS

Working on movement will be important to help with the animal characteristics. Using simple markers onstage such as hat stands or poles with draped creepers or festoons will create the idea of pathways and using simple blocks or treads will help create the environment. Puppetry and sound effects could add dimensions and atmosphere.

## EXAMPLE 2

Number of performers/characters: 4-8 | PIECES 1 & 2 – Cecily / Gwendolen / Jack / Algernon / Lady Bracknell / Miss Prism / Chasuble / Merriman

Characters can be adapted for the number of performers in the group and the scene chosen.

## WHAT

*Chaos* by Laura Lomas

All scenes are episodic – choose scenes to suit your group.

## WHY

The author's notes state 'the play was written for a flexible cast size. All characters are suggestions, names, genders and pronouns can be change to suit the needs of the company ... companies are encouraged to find the connections. It's nice if stories emerge, it's okay if they don't. Not everything needs to make sense.'

The lack of proscription will suit a creative group of older teenagers.

## STAGING SUGGESTIONS

Several scenes use a ball which is thrown between performers – it would be good to practise theatre games with balls to make this second nature.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde.

EITHER an extract from Act 2, for four performers (Cecily, Gwendolen, Jack and Algernon),

OR

An edited version of Act 3 for a bigger cast.

A well-loved comedy, using stylised language, and set in Victorian England.

An opportunity to work on physicality in the characterisation, articulation, comic timing and sustaining a sense of the formal environments.

This piece will need a swift scene change, to bring on chairs and tables. Make sure the candidates have practised the scene changes as well as the scenes!

## GRADE 7

At Grade 7 the maximum exam time is 23 minutes for two pieces – either from published plays or devised by the group, or a mixture of both. The pieces chosen should be set or written in different periods or cultures. This will suit a group that enjoys working on the classics.

### EXAMPLE 1

Number of performers/characters: 6+ | **Casting options are flexible depending on which extract is chosen.**

WHAT	WHY	STAGING SUGGESTIONS
<p><i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> by C H Hazlewood</p> <p>Act 3, scenes 3-5, L.Audley 'Not a word to Robert...' to the end of the play.</p> <p>Some cuts will be necessary for timing.</p>	<p>A melodrama, which requires exaggerated and confident performances, whilst sustaining the fast pace of an unravelling story in which Lady Audley's 'secret' is discovered. There are high and low status characters, with scope for everyone to work on voice and physicality. The rising panic of those caught in the fire and the final shocking revelation will require careful pacing and very good audience awareness to bring to fruition. Work on tableau and stock characters will help to develop the style.</p>	<p>It is more important to work on physical shapes and frozen tableau in melodrama than to worry about the setting. The actors will create the sense of style if they have done some work on stock characters and demonstrating emotional responses clearly to the audience.</p>
<p><i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> by William Shakespeare</p> <p>Act 1, scene 2</p>	<p>The first mechanicals scene. This comic scene gives the candidates opportunities to work on physical characterisation and group interaction. A group of amateur actors, keen but unskilled – there are multiple layers to be explored to capitalise on the humour and sharing this with the audience.</p>	<p>A bare stage will work well for this as they are in the forest. However, a bench or a few logs will create opportunities to sit, or 'trip' for physical humour.</p>

## EXAMPLE 2

Number of performers/characters: 7-10 | Casting options are flexible depending on which extract is chosen.

WHAT	WHY	STAGING SUGGESTIONS
<p><i>Junkyard</i> by Jack Thorne</p> <p>A play about a group of kids who help build an adventure playground – the writer describes them as the ‘kids no one else wants’.</p> <p>The play includes songs and a ‘junk yard orchestra’ so this play could use the songs as commentary in Acting, or performed with the music and junk instruments in Performance Arts or Musical Theatre.</p> <p>There are numerous scenes with the group of kids eg scenes 3 and 4 which includes Mum and Rick.</p>	<p>A colloquial modern play, which is witty, hard-hitting and ‘celebrates the right of children and young people to turn their individual lives into an adventure through physical and imaginative play.’</p> <p>An ensemble show that is full of spirit and will capture the imagination of young performers.</p>	<p>If it’s possible to get a sense of the adventure playground with levels such as platforms, blocks and treads, ropes and old oil cans or plastic containers that will help the young actors create the environment.</p>
<p><i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare</p> <p>Act 1, scene 1</p>	<p>Full of action and drama, this is the scene where the rivalry between the Montagues and Capulets is first seen, in a street brawl.</p> <p>Scope to work on stage fighting, and use the whole of the space and the ensemble to create the sense of menace and gangs.</p>	<p>Work on stage combat and use the ensemble to create the rising tension. Make sure everyone is involved in the rivalry, rather than standing as bystanders if they don’t have a line.</p>

## GRADE 8

At Grade 8 the pieces should contrast in two or more of the following: style of language, mood, genre, period or culture.

With the requirement to perform a continuous programme of 25 minutes at Grade 8 there will need to be a deft changeover between pieces, and consideration will need to be given to how the transition happens onstage. The setting of the second play should happen fluidly rather than breaking the sense of performance demonstration.

### EXAMPLE 1

Number of performers/characters: 7-15 | Casting options are flexible depending on which extract is chosen.

WHAT	WHY	STAGING SUGGESTIONS
<p><i>Our Town</i> by Thornton Wilder</p> <p>EITHER the wedding scene (Act 2)</p> <p>OR</p> <p>the funeral scene through to Emily's visit back to her childhood (Act 3).</p> <p>Edit as necessary.</p>	<p>An opportunity to work on American accent, with a wide variety of characters, and an oppo. The play asks the performers to swiftly change environment with only minimum props and scenery and therefore the company will need to be inventive and creative to bring the text to life. Act 3 in particular has an interesting juxtaposition of characters dead and living. The character of the Stage Manager breaks the fourth wall, acting as both narrator and participant in scenes.</p>	<p>Both of these plays expect the actors to create the changing environments themselves. Projections onto a screen would help change the tone, but essentially it is the performer's imaginative response and physicality that will show the audience what is happening and where they are.</p>
<p><i>Spring Awakening</i> (a musical) by Steven Sater (based on Wedekind)</p> <p>Act 2, scenes 6, 7 or 8 (there are many possibilities in this piece)</p> <p>For Acting omit the songs or use snippets as choral speaking. For Musical Theatre or Performance Arts the early scenes in Act 1 would work well by including the songs.</p>	<p>A heart-breaking play about adolescence and the consequences of poor education around sex and social taboos. An up-to-date adaptation which sensitively explores teenage dynamics, switching between 19th century Germany in the dialogue to the modern teen experience.</p>	<p>Most productions of this musical use a bare stage but use period wooden chairs and tables to bring on and off. This allows the switch between genres to happen effortlessly. Working on a number of movement motifs that can punctuate the music will help to emphasise the change in style between scene and song.</p>

## EXAMPLE 2

Number of performers/characters: 4 | PIECE 1 – Bosola / Antonio / Duchess / Delio | PIECE 2 – Beth / Mort / Gert / Stu

### WHAT

*Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster

Act 2, scene 1 – from Bosola: 'I have other work on foot: I observe our Duchess'... to end of scene.

### WHY

A key scene in the play, in this Jacobean tragedy, which Bosola schemes to unmask the Duchess's pregnancy. Written in a mixture of prose and verse, the candidates will need to work on building to the dramatic climax, whilst each defining their particular intentions and objectives.

### STAGING SUGGESTIONS

The scene is set in a room in the palace. Use a day-bed to give a sense of grandeur (this can stay onstage and double as the bed in *California Suite* to make the transition smoother.) Encourage the performers to collectively agree on the imagined surroundings, such as paintings on the wall or mirrors and where exit points lead to.

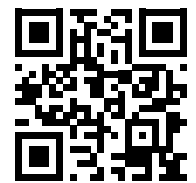
*California Suite* by Neil Simon

Act 2, scene 3 – from Mort: 'Can I have the front desk please? ...' to Stu: 'Gert! GERT! ... One... two... three'

A fast-paced American farce, which requires whip-sharp timing and an immersion in the accent to capture Neil Simon's comic writing and characterisations. An interaction in a hotel room between two couples who are on holiday together, one of whom has tripped and fallen on the tennis-court.

Bringing on a bedside table, chair and desk/table at the beginning will help create the idea of a more compact space, which the performers have to negotiate as they move around.

There is more 'business' in this scene which will need careful blocking. Using possible door-frames or a mark-up on the floor will help to define where the hallway and bathroom are placed.



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