

Programme examples

Acting exams for groups

GRADES 4-5



This resource has been designed to guide and inspire text choices when preparing candidates for Trinity Group exams and offers example programmes for Intermediate Grades 4-5.

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 4

Examiners will be looking for a growing confidence in producing a shared performance at these grades and how the candidates apply performance techniques such as vocal and physical skills. The performance time is to 16 minutes for one piece at Grade 4 and 18 minutes for two pieces at Grade 5. Encouraging candidates to think about their own character and how they relate to each other will help develop interpretive techniques and teamwork.

EXAMPLE 1

Number of performers/characters: 5-12 | Characters can be adapted for the number of performers in the group and the scenes chosen.

WHAT

The Suitcase Kid by Jacqueline Wilson, adapted by Vicky Ireland

A story about a girl whose parents have split up so that she ends up living out of a suitcase between two houses.

An adaptation aimed at a younger audience which has accessible dialogue and songs (which can be included for Performance Arts or Musical Theatre or omitted for Acting).

Prologue to Scene 3 or Scenes 6-9.

WHY

Material which is easy to relate to for teenagers. Candidates will enjoy building the characters.

Written with humour and with opportunities for creative improvisation session to find ways to switch between scenes.

Including the songs would mean this could be used in the Performance Arts syllabus, but the script flows well without them.

STAGING SUGGESTIONS

The quick changes of environment will require work in rehearsal on imagining the surroundings. Using devices such as tableau or freeze frames to give a visual picture ahead of each scene will help to give definition and add a creative touch.

EXAMPLE 2

Number of performers/characters: 6 | The Man in Pink / Cecile / Beauty / Lettice / Father
(Five speaking and one non speaking)

WHAT	WHY	STAGING SUGGESTIONS
<p><i>Beauty and The Beast</i> by Lucy Kirkwood</p> <p>Act 2: Christmas and The Man in Pink Hatches a Plan</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Act 1: Sisters, through to end of Dinner for Three.</p>	<p>A modern retelling of the story, with two characters breaking the fourth wall, and plenty of conflict within the relationships to allow candidates to start looking at complexity. Opportunities for inventive staging with Pink acting as something between a compère and a magician, whilst the Rabbit uses a prop called the Thoughtsnatcher to change dynamics and the course of events.</p>	<p>Some props will need to be used for this play, particularly the mirror in Act 2, and the lever that Cecile pulls. The Thoughtsnatcher could be a balloon or streamer on a stick, and the reveal of the Beast could be as a projection or a piece of shadow puppetry, or concealing him beneath a cloth until the moment of revelation.</p>

GRADE 5

At this grade we want to see some contrast in the programme and so we ask for two pieces. They should contrast in the style of language.

EXAMPLE 1

Number of performers/characters: 10-15 | Characters can be adapted for the number of performers in the group and the poem chosen.

WHAT	WHY	STAGING SUGGESTIONS
<p>Devised scene using a poem such as <i>The People Could Fly</i> by Grace Nichols or <i>Tsunami</i> by Joydeb and Moyna Chitrakkar, (This could also be used for Performance Arts).</p>	<p>Both of these poems lend themselves to group drama exercises, to use physicality and movement to bring the images to life. All or some of the words of the poem could be used. Looking at the rhythm and rhyme will show the contrast in language, and there are opportunities for shared choral speaking or individual lines.</p>	<p>When using a poem as a starting point, encourage the group to improvise at first to produce an 'impression' of the language or themes in the narrative. This will mean thinking about movement and sound as well as agreeing on a shared imaginary environment.</p>
<p><i>My Family and Other Animals</i> by Gerald Durrell adapted by Jany's Chambers</p> <p>Start Act 1, scene 1, Larry 'What we need is sunshine' – go through to end of scene 4.</p>	<p>Based on a funny book about a family who move to Corfu, and their adventures.</p> <p>Scope to build big stage pictures as the family move from England to Corfu, and to develop character work, with some of the Greek characters larger than life and the four children very different to one another.</p>	<p>Use improvisation to bring the arrival in Greece alive, with lots of sound, shouting and movement as people load things on and off boats.</p> <p>A few chairs, suitcases and a couple of crates will be all you need to create the illusion of either a sitting room, carrying luggage or sitting in a hotel.</p>

EXAMPLE 2

Number of performers/characters: 7+ | Little Mermaid / Blue / King / Queen / Prince / Journalist(s) / Courtier(s)

WHAT

A devised piece based on the Greek myth *Orpheus and Eurydice* or *Pandora's Box*.

WHY

An opportunity to do some cross-curricular work and bring a well-known story to life using drama improvisation skills. To encourage a poetic use of language, the piece could include one of the numerous poems on both subjects.

STAGING SUGGESTIONS

When devising a piece, give attention to physical motifs, movement and group ensemble work to create the visual images.

Mermaid by Polly Teale
An extract from Act 2, eg opening to page 48

A change of tone to the first piece, this is a stylish version of *The Little Mermaid*, told through the eyes of the teenage aspiring writer, Blue. Sometimes light-hearted and sometimes serious, this extract begins when the Prince introduces the Little Mermaid to his family, and realises that she will need help with both movement and communication. There is a dream-sequence when the Prince imagines he is at war, which will require imaginative staging and opportunities for characters without named parts to share the lines of the Journalists and Courtiers.

The dream sequence will need some work on movement, and possibly adding in projections or sound effects will add atmosphere.

EXAMPLE 3

Number of performers/characters: 3 | PIECE 1 – Bobbie / Peter / Phyllis | PIECE 2 – Bruno / Gretel / Maria

WHAT

The Railway Children by E Nesbitt adapted by Mike Kenny
End of Part 1 from Bobbie
'Did you think that was rather strange at the time' to the end of the scene.

WHY

Set in Victorian times, but with an adaptation that is modern, acknowledging the audience whilst allowing the characters to build the changing moods and environments themselves. An equal division of lines between the three children.

STAGING SUGGESTIONS

Originally this was staged on the traverse, and the idea of a railway line being present onstage does create an interesting aesthetic. It could be indicated simply by marking up lines on the floor, and choosing to set scenes on either side, and make a feature of crossing the lines. Using simple Victorian costumes like smocks and caps will add a sense of period.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne adapted by Angus Jackson

Part 1 – 'Maria tells a story'.

OR

Part 2 – 'Bruno tells a perfectly reasonable lie'.

A well-loved book about a difficult time in history for young people to understand written in an accessible adaptation. Scope to work on the relationships and the underlying intentions/objectives of the characters. Episodic in style, the scene can be staged very simply.

Episodic in style, the scene can be staged very simply. A clear space with a couple of chairs will suffice, and a few old suitcases which can contain props and be used inventively to create an environment.



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