



Australian Speech Communication Association
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2024
ONWARDS

Syllabus for Communication through Musical Theatre



Australian Speech Communication Association Inc.
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MUSICAL THEATRE SYLLABUS 2024

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MUSICAL THEATRE SYLLABUS 2024

MUSICAL THEATRE

Musical theatre involves the integration of acting, singing and choreographed movement/dance whilst remaining “in character” and communicating the story line. It is a HOLISTIC performance so the student needs to be trained in the areas of speech, drama, mime, singing and movement/dance. The degree and standard of the movement would depend on the extract/character/level of examination; that is, whether it requires simple characterised movement to accompany the song or a full dance routine in either modern dance, tap or classical ballet. For example Dorothy/Tin Man/ Scarecrow and Lion from “The Wizard of Oz” would require choreographed movement whereas the duo of Oliver and Dodger from “Oliver” would require a modern dance routine and a number from “42nd Street” or “Annie” would require a tap routine.

THE AIM OF MUSICAL THEATRE IS TO BE ENTERTAINING.

Musical theatre offers an outlet to be used in a performing arts school or in a private school system where the teacher of speech and drama can combine with the music dept. and the dance dept.

Examination candidates would be assessed on their ability to:

1. Sing in the style appropriate for a) the character and b) the style of the show.
2. Develop characterisation taking into account the period of time, nationality, accent, age etc.
3. Speak with projection and clear articulation.
4. Move/dance in an entertaining manner which engages an audience as well as depicts the character and tells the story or enhances the song.
5. Move easily between the transition of acting/singing and dancing.

Musical Theatre includes: Musical Comedy, Opera, Operettas, Rock Musicals, Cabaret, Revue, Music Hall, Vaudeville, Revues, Pantomime, Movies or musical extracts devised from prose or poetry.

A large enough performance space will be necessary to allow the candidate to dance and use the “stage area” appropriately. Instrumental (not vocal) backing tapes may be used or a live pianist - in this case a piano would need to be available.

Suitable flooring is required eg: wooden NOT carpet or concrete. It is up to the teacher to supply the appropriate examination venue.

Costuming needs to be symbolic not elaborate.

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS AND ORGANISERS

1. **Booking of Examinations**

ASCA assessments are held at the time and place most convenient to the school, college or private teacher concerned. It is, therefore, necessary to book an examination well in advance, even though the numbers and grades may only be approximate. We can use examiners' time and arrange yours more sensibly and economically if we have a pattern of the academic year ahead in the first term. However, **Examination Request** forms with final numbers must reach ASCA by the specified dates. Please check our **March ASCA News** for dates. No telephone requests can be accepted as firm bookings. Upon receipt of this request form you will be sent **Examiner's Report** forms for your pupils, together with **Examination Results** forms. Both of these forms need to be filled in prior to the examination, preferably typed or very clearly printed.

2. **Fees**

Fees must be forwarded to the Treasurer, together with an **Examination Request Form**, by the specified date. Cheques should be made payable to 'ASCA'. A list of current fees may be obtained from the Secretary and also the ASCA website.

3. **Timing and Planning the Day**

Approximately 20 Junior school children or 15 Seniors can be examined within the normal school day, but if there are Senior IV candidates or higher, appropriate timing needs to be allowed. Details of times are given in the relevant syllabus. If possible ensure that no period lasts for more than two hours without a break.

Time can be saved by:

- a) a punctual start;
- b) candidates helping one another in setting and striking props;
- c) pre-pinning on boards of diagrams, maps, pictures, etc.;
- d) mid-morning and afternoon drinks for Examiner brought to the table;
- e) prescribed times at natural breaks for the smooth entry of the listening groups.

**** A daily exam session should not exceed 6.5 hours – this includes a lunch break and short breaks for morning and afternoon tea, if appropriate. Generally, at least 3.5 hours are needed to send an examiner.**

4. **Examination Procedure**

a) **Arrangement of Room**

Check with the Examiner to see where he/she prefers to be placed in the room. The audience should be comfortably seated, whilst the candidates should have ample room to perform.

b) **Examiner's Table**

Two copies of **Results Lists** containing the candidates' names in order of performing, together

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with the **Examiner's Report** forms should be placed on the Examiner's table. Names must be typed or printed, correctly spelt and be in the form which the candidate wishes it to appear on the certificate.

c) **Title of talks, songs, poems, extracts, readings, etc. must be clearly printed or typed in the appropriate sections on the Examiner's Report forms. Copies of memorised selections must be provided for the Examiner.**

d) Results

As soon as the Examiner has finalised results, they will be posted to the teacher. Examiners will send results as soon as practicable after the examination.

e) Certificates

One **Results List** will be sent to the examination organiser/teacher and the other retained in the ASCA files. It is from the latter list that the certificates are typed and sent to the organiser/teacher in due course.

5. Consideration and Treatment of Examiners

Examining and travelling can be tiring. Please give as much information as possible – map, route, etc. about the locale of your building. If appropriate introduce the Examiner to your Principal, if the centre is a school, before the proceedings start and make it clear well before the day to your Principal and members of staff that they are most welcome as listeners if they have any available free time.

Please arrange that your Examiner has mid-morning and afternoon tea or coffee brought to the table and that he or she is given a short (45 minute), but not rushed period for a quiet lunch which is provided by the organiser. No session should be scheduled for more than 2 hours. ASCA Examiners treat all entrants as individual people and are generous in their encouragement. If you have a candidate who is contending with some physical or emotional difficulty, a note clipped to the **Examiner's Report** form is more helpful than a whispered comment which might add to the speaker's insecurity.

Start the day with a buoyant introduction of the Examiner to dispel nervous strain and make quite sure that names are known.

6. Listening Group

Listeners are active participants. Sometimes it is an advantage to have people there with whom the speaker may not be as familiar as his own group. Inquiry may then be more genuine and searching. It is also a useful way for a teacher to introduce a group which may consist of prospective candidates.

All practical examinations will take place before an audience (of at least 6 people) who will be invited to take part by asking questions or commenting at the appropriate times. This provides an opportunity for a more realistic and natural communication environment which is of benefit to both speaker and audience. Parents and visitors are most welcome to participate by asking questions.

To ensure maximum benefit from this examination, **it is beneficial** for candidates and audience

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to remain for the whole session of approximately **two hours**.

7. **Methods of Presentation**

Candidates may be entered for an assessment as individuals **or** as part of a small group where appropriate (2-4 candidates). In the latter case, the group, guided by the teacher, will choose a project and select material (fiction, non-fiction, musical items, drama, documentary or verse and, where relevant, visual aids or apparatus), which gives the group opportunities for personal exploration and comment, reading aloud and speaking memorised drama or verse, or presenting appropriate musical items.

A synopsis of the theme chosen, with major items marked with the names of the contributors, should be presented to the Examiner, who will then be able to evaluate, not only the total presentation, but each individual contribution.

A separate certificate and report will be awarded to each participant at the appropriate level of achievement.

8. **Grading of Students**

The final grading for Junior and Senior Examinations (up to Grade V) will be: *Unsatisfactory, Pass, Good Pass, Credit* and *Distinction*. Numerical marks will be given for Senior Grades VI-VIII (see Syllabus). A *High Distinction* may be awarded at the Examiner's discretion to candidates whose work has been exceptional in all sections. If the Examiner feels that a candidate is out of his/her depth in one Grade, the Grade level may be adjusted.

9. **Re-entry**

By permit (through illness) half fee. A Doctor's Certificate may be required.

10. **The Examiner**

The Examiner will have the final say on examination results and no correspondence or contact of any kind will be entered into.

11. **Video cameras or recordings of any kind are not permitted during the examination sessions.**

12. **After each Grade in the Table of Contents there is a code in brackets – this code is to be used on the Examination Results Form where it says *Grade*.**

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JUNIOR PRELIMINARY GRADE (MTJpre)

(Approx. 10 minutes)

1. Candidate to perform from memory a poem, combined with movement, or sing a nursery rhyme, combined with movement.
2. The examiner will ask the candidate to either explain the story of the poem or nursery rhyme or describe a character from either one.
3. The audience will be invited to ask the candidate questions about their interests, hobbies etc.

JUNIOR INTRODUCTORY GRADE (MTJintro)

(Approx. 10 minutes)

1. The candidate will present a song with choreographed movement.
2. The examiner will ask the candidate to explain to the audience what the song was about. Audience invited to also ask questions.
3. Examiner will ask the candidate to mime the story of the song.
4. Candidate to recite from memory a poem of own choice.

JUNIOR GRADE ONE (MTJ1)

(Approx. 10 minutes)

1. Candidate to present a drama piece from memory.
2. Examiner will ask the candidate to perform an improvisation based on the drama piece performed in section one.
3. Candidate to sing a song of own choice combined with choreographed movement/dance. (2 mins max.)
4. Audience invited to ask candidate questions about themselves.

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JUNIOR GRADE TWO (MTJ2)

(Approx. 10-12 minutes)

1. Candidate to present an extract from a musical show giving dialogue, song, movement/dance (3 mins max.) with a backing tape.
2. Examiner will ask questions about the musical show eg: title, candidate's favourite character, favourite part of the show etc. Examiner will invite the audience to also ask questions.
3. Candidate to present a prepared mime of own choice.
4. Present a prepared reading from the candidate's own book.

JUNIOR GRADE THREE (MTJ3)

(Approx. 15 minutes)

1. Candidate to present two contrasting songs together with choreographed movement/dance.
2. Examiner will ask the candidate about the song writer(s) and/or the musical show(s) from which these songs have been taken.
3. Present from memory a monologue, poem or a prose passage which contains some dialogue. (2 mins max.)
4. Candidate will be asked to read from sight a passage from a book of own choice.

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JUNIOR GRADE FOUR (MTJ4)

(20 minutes)

1. Present two contrasting songs, with movement/dance, from any genre of musical theatre, based on a theme.
2. Briefly tell the audience about the show(s) from which these two songs have been taken giving names of composers, lyricists and period(s) of time in which they were written.
3. The candidate must present the Examiner with a musical anthology containing 8 selections of not more than 1 minute each, and including at least 3 different styles (genres) of music without lyrics, from which the Examiner will select two of the tracks for the candidate to present movement in keeping with the timing and mood of the piece.
4. Candidate to read at sight a monologue provided by the Examiner.

SENIOR GRADE ONE (MTS1)

(Approx. 15 Minutes)

1. Present a talk with demonstrations (2-3 mins) on one of the following:
 - a) Breathing technique and relaxation
 - b) Various dance styles.
 - c) The importance of clear articulation and how to acquire it.
2. Present a song from a published musical show, together with dialogue and choreographed movement/dance.
3. The examiner will invite the audience to ask questions about the prepared extract.
4. Memorisation: Candidate to present either a lyrical poem or a drama piece or monologue. Introduce the piece to the audience and give some brief information about the author of the poem or character being performed.

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SENIOR GRADE TWO (MTS2)

(Approx. 17 minutes)

1. Biographical research: The candidate will be required to select a person from musical theatre (performer, choreographer, composer, director, singer, dancer) either living or dead and convince the audience of the worth of this person's contribution to musical theatre. (4-5 mins)
2. Questions will be invited from the audience.
3. The candidate will perform a song from a musical (with dance movement).
4. Performance, from memory, of a spoken extract from a play, musical or screenplay.
5. Examiner will ask the candidate to present a mimed movement piece based on a word given by the Examiner.

SENIOR GRADE THREE (MTS3)

(Approx. 20 minutes)

1. The candidate will give a practical demonstration of the techniques required to perform a particular style of dance OR the techniques required to sing a song in character from a particular musical show chosen by the candidate. (5 mins)
2. The audience will be invited to ask the candidate questions relating to section one.
3. The candidate will perform an extract from a musical show of own choice, giving dialogue, song and choreographed movement/dance. (3 mins max.)
4. Present from memory a poem, prose extract or piece of drama. (3 mins max.)
5. The examiner will ask the candidate to present an improvisation based on the performance presented in section four.

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SENIOR GRADE FOUR (MTS4)

(Approx. 20 minutes)

1. Candidate to give a critique of a musical stage production or musical movie that he/she has seen. (5 mins)
2. Audience invited to ask question about section one.
3. Candidate to perform an extract from a musical show using dialogue, singing and choreographed movement/dance. (3 mins max.)
4. Examiner will then ask questions re the name of the show, period of the setting, name of the playwright/lyricist/composer.
5. The candidate will perform a prepared extract from a musical show in contrast to the item in Section 3, in a different style e.g. opera, vaudeville, music hall, revue etc.

SENIOR GRADE FIVE (MTS5)

(Approx. 30 minutes)

1. Based on a theme of the candidate's own choice he/she will present a program which includes poetry, prose, drama, singing and dancing. (12-15 mins)
2. A discussion will take place with the examiner and audience about section one.
3. Candidate will be asked to briefly discuss each one of the following:
 - a) Characterisation
 - b) The roles of a director and musical director
 - c) The role of a choreographer
4. Sight Reading: The Examiner will present the candidate with a piece of prose to be read with expression and fluency.

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SENIOR GRADE SIX (MTS6)

(Approx. 40 minutes)

1. The candidate will present two **contrasting** performances from a musical show presenting dialogue, singing and dance. Each performance will be introduced giving the name of the show and a brief description of the character. (25 marks)
2. The examiner will then ask questions about the shows, re the writer/lyricist/composer. Questions will also be invited from the audience. The candidate will be expected to be proactive during the discussion and offer a brief summary upon closing. (15 marks)
3. Candidate to present a nursery rhyme or fairy tale in the form of musical theatre i.e. opera, musical, pantomime, broadway musical style. (20 marks)
4. Impromptu Reading: The candidate will be handed an extract from a play or musical and will be asked to read it aloud giving their interpretation of the character as in an audition. (The candidate will be given two minutes to scan the piece.) (20 marks)
5. The candidate will briefly discuss each of the following with the Examiner and audience: (20 marks):
 - a) The role of the chorus in a musical show.
 - b) The purpose of rehearsing.
 - c) Breathing technique, relaxation, resonance, projection, modulation, care of the voice.

SENIOR GRADE SIX

(Written: 2 hours)

1. The care of the voice and body and techniques for warming up and cooling down of both the voice and body when preparing for a performance. (35 marks)
2. Skills required to develop and maintain characterisation in dialogue, singing and movement/dance when performing in a production. (30 marks)
3. Write about the introduction and development of early Australian musical theatre, including naming practitioners/performers/writers and composers. (30 marks)

Pass Mark for both practical and written examinations: 65% Good Pass: 70%

Credit: 75% Distinction: 85% High Distinction: 90%

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SENIOR GRADE SEVEN (MTS7)

(Approx. 45 minutes)

1. Candidate to give a 15 minute talk using visual/auditory aids on any form of musical theatre performed in Australia during one of the following periods: Early Australia; 1950's to 1960's; 1969's to 1980's; 1990's to present day. (25 marks)
2. The candidate will be expected to be proactive and engage the audience in discussion after the presentation and offer a brief summary of the discussion upon closing. (15 marks)
3. A thematically linked programme of three performances demonstrating different styles of acting, singing and dance. Each performance to be linked by appropriate dialogue. (25 marks)
4. Candidate will perform an item (from a recent musical) which contains lots of movement/dance. The performance should be preceded by brief introductory comments placing the item in context. (Total Time: 3-4 mins) (20 marks)
5. Examiner will ask the candidate about the preparation, style and interpretation of pieces performed in section three. (15 marks)

SENIOR GRADE SEVEN

(Written: 3 hours – 25 marks per question)

1. Questions will be asked on the production of musical shows and may cover aspects such as administration i.e. budget, publicity, programming; technicians i.e. front of house, back stage, lighting, sound, costumes, sets; rehearsal schedules; directing; musical direction; choreography.
2. Questions will be asked on methods of auditioning a cast.
3. Questions will be asked about a musical show that you have seen and/or performed in and your opinions of the show, giving examples of dialogue, songs and dance routines.
4. Compare the works of two contrasting writers or composers or directors of musical theatre.

Pass mark for both practical and written examinations: 65% Good Pass: 70%

Credit: 75% Distinction: 85% High Distinction: 90%

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SENIOR GRADE EIGHT (MTS8)

(Approx. 1 Hour)

1. Present an original piece of musical theatre devised by the candidate from poetry, prose or drama incorporating dialogue, singing and choreographed movement/dance with musical accompaniment. (25 marks)
2. Questions asked by the examiner and the audience on the preparation of this presentation. (15 marks)
3. Candidate will present to the examiner two extracts from various styles of musical theatre involving acting, singing and choreographed movement/dance and the examiner will ask the candidate to perform one. (5 mins max.) (Backing tapes or live accompaniment to be provided by the candidate.) (25 marks)
4. Examiner will ask questions about the other piece which could include questions about the plot, the writer, period of time the musical was written or performed, and names of performers who have played the characters either on stage or screen. (20 marks)
5. The examiner will ask the candidate to read aloud an extract of dialogue from a musical. (15 marks)

SENIOR GRADE EIGHT

(Written: 3 hours – 20 marks per question)

1. Voice Production: a basic knowledge of how the voice is produced including resonance, breathing techniques and the physiology of the speech/singing organs.
2. Questions will be asked on the techniques of presenting the various styles of musical theatre i.e. musical comedy, Broadway style musicals, opera, operettas, revue, pantomime etc.
3. Questions will be asked on the works of two contemporary contrasting writers of musical theatre or two contemporary contrasting choreographers.
4. Questions will be asked on the issues of occupational health and safety standards involved in producing musical theatre.
5. Questions will be asked on the educational value of musical theatre OR how musical theatre can be used therapeutically i.e. psychologically with sick children, sick adults, aged care, rehabilitation; music therapy.

Pass mark for both practical and written examinations: 70% Credit: 75% Distinction: 85% High Distinction: 90%. Candidates must pass in both parts of Grade VIII, or equivalent before attempting the Diploma of Musical Theatre. Both the practical and written parts must be taken within a twelve monthly period.

MUSICAL THEATRE SYLLABUS 2024

DIPLOMA OF MUSICAL THEATRE (MTDip)

Dip. M.T. (ASCA)

This diploma acknowledges a student who is multi-skilled in the holistic presentation of Musical Theatre. The standard should be of a professional level which will enable the candidate to progress to further tertiary studies in Musical Theatre.

PREREQUISITES:

1. Minimum age for entry 18 years.
2. Candidate must have passed both parts of the Grade 8 ASCA *Musical Theatre Syllabus* or equivalent.

Pass Mark: 70%

PART A: PRACTICAL (Approx. 1 Hour)

1. Working on a THEME the candidate will present a performance using dialogue, song and choreographed dance/movement from a published musical play **or** an original idea created from a novel or an historical event. This will be preceded by a brief explanation of the story line and character. (10 mins max.) (25 marks)
2. Recite from memory a lyrical poem AND a piece of prose both relating to the theme. (5 mins max.) (15 marks)
3. Examiner will ask questions about the writers of the play, song, poem and prose. (15 marks)
4. Examiner will ask the candidate to perform an improvisation based on either the play, song, poem or prose. (15 marks)
5. Candidate to give a prepared talk (6 mins max.) on ONE of the following subjects (20 marks):
 - a) Breathing Techniques
 - b) Voice Production
 - c) Improvisation
 - d) The Role of the Choreographer
 - e) The Role of the Musical Director
 - f) Storytelling in Musical Theatre
6. The Examiner and audience will ask the candidate questions about current and possible future trends in musical theatre. (10 marks)

DIPLOMA OF MUSICAL THEATRE

PART B: WRITTEN: 3 hours – 20 marks per question.

1. Questions will be asked on either:
 - a) Aspects of producing/directing musical theatre. OR
 - b) How to TEACH aspects of musical theatre
2. Questions will be asked on production of musical theatre and the rehearsal process to be employed.
3. Questions will be asked on the value of, and techniques for, using mime and improvisation to enhance the rehearsal process.
4. Questions will be asked on the development of American musical theatre and its influence on the Australian musical OR

Questions will be asked on the various ways in which the presentation of musical theatre has changed over the last 100 years.
5. Questions will be asked on: voice production; the care and training of the singing voice; warm up techniques for the voice and body to be used prior to a production, techniques of breathing and relaxation.

Pass Mark: 70%