The performance arts: reviews and critiques

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct category for each performance word.

Word | Positive review | Negative review | Person | Element

1 lacklustre [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2 choreography [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
3 captivating [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
4 ensemble [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
5 standing ovation [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
6 wooden acting [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
7 stage presence [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
8 understudy [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 The acting was very wooden and unnatural. _____
2 She has amazing stage presence on. _____
3 The choreography were beautiful. _____
4 They received a standing ovation of the audience. _____
5 The performance was quite lacklustre honestly. _____
6 He is understudy for the lead role. _____
7 The ensemble worked well together as team. _____
8 It was a captivating of performance. _____

3 Choose the more suitable description.

1 For a dull, unimpressive performance: lacklustre / captivating.
2 For a performer who commands attention on stage: stage presence / stage fright.
3 For the whole group of performers acting together: ensemble / soloist.
4 For enthusiastic applause with the audience standing: standing ovation / polite clapping.
5 For stiff, unnatural acting: wooden acting / natural acting.
6 For a performer ready to replace the lead if needed: understudy / headliner.

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4 Complete the reviews with words from the box.

captivating | choreography | ensemble | lacklustre | stage presence | standing ovation | understudy | wooden acting

Review A: The lead actor had impressive 1 _____, holding the audience's attention throughout a genuinely 2 _____ performance.
Review B: Unfortunately, the supporting cast delivered rather 3 _____, and the overall show felt somewhat 4 _____.
Review C: The dance company's 5 _____ was flawless, and the entire 6 _____ moved together beautifully.
Review D: When the lead was ill, the 7 _____ stepped in and still earned a 8 _____ from a delighted audience.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Writing a fair review

Good theatre criticism balances honest assessment with respect for the work involved in a production. A reviewer should distinguish between elements that genuinely fail, such as unclear direction or wooden acting, and elements that simply reflect different artistic choices the reviewer personally dislikes. Describing a performance as lacklustre without explaining why offers little value to readers or to the production team. The most useful reviews combine specific, concrete observations, such as praising the choreography or noting a strong ensemble, with a clear overall judgement that helps potential audience members decide whether to attend.

1 What does good theatre criticism balance? _____
2 What should a reviewer distinguish between? _____
3 What offers little value to readers, according to the text? _____
4 What do the most useful reviews combine? _____
5 Give one example of a specific, concrete observation mentioned. _____
6 What does a clear overall judgement help readers do? _____

6 Rewrite each phrase using the word in capitals.

1 The performance was dull and unimpressive. LACKLUSTRE _____
2 The audience stood and clapped enthusiastically. OVATION _____
3 The dancing was perfectly coordinated. CHOREOGRAPHY _____
4 She commanded attention the moment she appeared. PRESENCE _____

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OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word review of a performance (real or imaginary), covering the acting, staging and your overall impression.

[ ] Use at least ten target expressions. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the review clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Negative review 2 Element 3 Positive review 4 Person 5 Positive review 6 Negative review 7 Element 8 Person

2 Corrections

1 wooden and unnatural 2 amazing stage presence 3 choreography was beautiful
4 standing ovation from the audience 5 quite lacklustre, honestly 6 the understudy for the lead role
7 worked well together as a team 8 a captivating performance

3 Suitable descriptions

1 lacklustre 2 stage presence 3 ensemble 4 standing ovation 5 wooden acting 6 understudy

4 Reviews

1 stage presence 2 captivating 3 wooden acting 4 lacklustre 5 choreography 6 ensemble 7 understudy 8 standing ovation

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Honest assessment with respect for the work involved.
2 Elements that genuinely fail and elements that reflect different artistic choices the reviewer personally dislikes.
3 Describing a performance as lacklustre without explaining why.
4 Specific, concrete observations with a clear overall judgement.
5 Praising the choreography or noting a strong ensemble.
6 Decide whether to attend.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The performance was lacklustre. 2 The audience gave a standing ovation.
3 The choreography was perfectly coordinated. 4 She had impressive stage presence.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.