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The unexpected trials of being an examiner

After reading the article in the June issue of the Dance Magazine by Claire Helliwell on tips for a smooth examination session, I thought to impart some of the more memorable experiences I have encountered whilst examining.

I have been an examiner for various examining bodies for 35 years. I have to say that in the vast majority of cases, the teachers are excellent in running a smooth and efficient session so that the experience can be enjoyed by all. However, that is not always the case.

I went to a session where the teacher took me into a room and told me that this was where the exams were to take place. She asked me if I needed anything. I told her that a table and chair would be helpful. She came back after a while with a table, but she told me that she could not find a chair. After I explained to her that this was necessary, she went away again and came back with a beer barrel for me to sit on. Possibly, after looking at the dismay on my face, she went away again and came back with a plank of wood to put on top of the beer barrel. In these situations, one has to be careful what one says to the teacher.

In a different session, the teacher put some toilet roll on the table and told me that, on no account was I to leave it in the toilet. I must bring it back to the

examination room with me once I had finished with it.

On many occasions the exam has been disturbed by people entering the room and they are sometimes quite perturbed by the dancers who are disturbing their progress as they traverse the room. They often do not like being told to leave.

In other situations, I have been to schools where there is no heating at all. Please check the heating arrangements, especially in winter.

These are real examples of my experiences whilst examining. I have to say that, although they are memorable, they are also thankfully in the minority.

In summary, I'd like to suggest a few things teachers can provide examiners to make the examination easier: a good-sized table (the examiner will usually have quite a lot of papers to put on the table and a little card sized table is too small), a comfortable chair of the right height, sufficient heating (or a fan), enough lighting so the examiner can actually see the candidates, and guidance as to how to find the exact building/venue. If all or most of these details are complied with, it will hopefully make for a happy examiner.

Madeleine Shea