

GCE

Performance Studies

Advanced GCE A2 **H548**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H148**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2016

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Performance Studies (H548)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Performance Studies (H148)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
G401/01 Creating Performance	4
G402/01 Performance Contexts 1	8
G403/01 Performance Contexts 2	18
G404/01 Performance Project	20

G401/01 Creating Performance

Administration

The vast majority of centres produced submissions that complied with the OCR requirement.

Whilst the quality of DVDs continues to improve, there remain problems with the small number of centres that fail to ensure candidates identify themselves to the camera with name and candidate number. This must be done with the candidates wearing the costumes they will be wearing in the performance. In several centres the identification was filmed at a different time with candidates in different clothes and in one case with different hairstyles. It is essential that centres find ways to ensure that the moderator can identify candidates easily.

The CCS mark and evidence record is an important document. It is worth repeating the comment made in last year's report:

Not only must the marks be recorded correctly, but the comments supporting the mark given by the centre must be concise and address the criteria. It is not acceptable to repeat the wording of the assessment criteria given in the specification. The moderator needs to be guided to the evidence that causes the centre examiner to decide the mark given is appropriate.

Annotation of the commentaries improved considerably this session. Clear indications of where evidence within the commentaries occurs points out to the moderator where it is felt the evidence lies to support marks, and links with the comments on the front sheet.

Centres are reminded that if re-submitting work for a candidate, not only must the new commentary be sent, but also the DVD of the original work linked with it. The moderation process will be across the whole of the submission, not just the written work, and the moderator needs to assess everything. Moderation cannot take place without the original performance DVD.

Selected Material

Many centres again opted for local legends both in an historical sense and also in the context of significant persons.

Some centres integrated projected video images into the action but can become a little problematic since sections of the piece might be exclusively video thereby, in one example, depriving the audience of a live climax to an otherwise very well-told ghost story. Several other centres used video effects and care should be taken to ensure this does not replace live performance.

There was a strong community flavour to the topics chosen with most centres reflecting the spirit of the unit.

Assessment

Knowledge and Understanding

The ability to discuss style and genre as well as the application of research was generally strong. Essay work has been mostly of good quality with candidates demonstrating a fairly comprehensive grasp of the art forms studied in the majority of cases. There was a good range of stimuli, some drawn from past G404 papers and current practitioners representing good practice across the art forms.

Practitioners and their work were well represented and integrated as an influence into the candidates' responses. Candidates are using technical language appropriately and confidently in most cases.

Moderators reported once again that the major area of weakness in Knowledge and Understanding related to the links between the art forms. This was true not only in the commentary in the short pieces, but also in the performance project.

Many candidates were very clear on purpose, intention and performance style. It was clear that they had been introduced to several practitioners in order to inform their knowledge and understanding of style. Candidates who scored the highest had used the 15 elements as a basis for their discussion rather than the three art forms themselves. There was a better balance between the three art forms with fewer examples of a third artform bolted-on to the community performance.

Understanding and Evaluating Performance Process

There was a good level of Understanding and Evaluation of the Performance Process shown in higher-level responses and overall there was clear evidence of an attempt to provide embedded, ongoing evaluative comment rather than in the form of tightly packed end of essay paragraphs. In one or two cases the criteria had been awarded slightly generously, but this was not a significant issue. Candidates should remember to evaluate the extent to which specific performance intentions were met. It follows that it is important for candidates to articulate such intentions when devising their work.

The weakest in this area gave little or no thought to performance skills and the success of using a particular performance style. Weaker commentaries were subjective instead of objective.

It is important for their discussion here to include the structure and content, without repeating the centre's summary of the piece. Moderators in some instances had to guess at character, role and structure with the candidate assuming they knew.

Quality of Language

It was very pleasing that the noticeable improvement recorded last year in the accuracy of marking of this criterion has continued, with a declining extensive use of the first person, (both singular and plural) in candidates' essay writing, or penalising where it did occur. There were however, some examples where even in the case of quite sophisticated submissions candidates were prone towards a narrative style in which 'we did' was the dominant context. This is a commentary that requires academic writing; significant spelling, grammar and punctuation errors along with awkward syntax must be taken into account when awarding a mark, and centre assessors should note the limitation in the mark scheme where the personal pronoun is evident frequently.

Devising

It is worth repeating the comments from last year's report, as this criterion is the one where assessment is most often too generous.

'There was an undoubted tendency to over reward Devising in the Community Performance. In most cases this was manifested where the art forms were not wholly integrated or where there was a significant imbalance between them. Other contributory factors were pieces that did not successfully identify a specific style or genre and which produced work of an eclectic nature resulting in a lack of shape or definition to the performance as a whole. Other shortcomings were related to staging ...

‘Some moderators reported that the devising process was weakened by a reliance on clichéd formats such as those inspired by television. Blind Date, Crimewatch and various game shows were examples where creativity was stifled by the constraints of television content and formats.

‘Other examples where there was evidence of weak devising include performances that were drama-led, with music and/or dance as bolt-on excerpts; and where the performance was structured into the separate art forms in a very rigid way so that it appeared as if each art form was showcased one at a time’.

Far too many centres still seem to use this criterion to reward effort rather than reflecting the quality of the product as it develops.

When selecting a venue great care should be taken in considering the challenges the venue might pose. There were a number of former and current churches used, with the inevitable problem of an echo. Whilst not wishing to prevent the use of such venues, which are often appropriate to the subject and very atmospheric, the moderator does need to be able to hear what is being said or sung, and so attention needs to be given to the equipment used to record the performance.

Candidates must ensure they demonstrate very clearly their part in the devising process. The centre should also ensure that the evidence they provide to support the mark does not rely on the energy, commitment or enthusiasm of the candidate, as these are not being assessed, however laudable they may be. A piece with poor structure, weak characterisation, badly researched content and unsatisfactory transitions means a candidate should be receiving a low devising mark.

Performance Skills

Centre assessors have shown an appreciation of the level of skills required and have generally awarded marks appropriately. Most candidates choose this subject because of their love of performance, and so it is not surprising that this criterion often provides examples of high marks. Centre assessors do need to beware of the halo effect of very good candidates providing a strong ensemble impact and possibly hiding the weaker skills of some candidates.

When awarding very high marks for performance skills, a high level of skills would be expected across the three art forms working together. It is accepted that candidates will have one skill in which they may specialise, but this alone is not sufficient for the awarding of a high mark. On the other hand, candidates should ensure that they showcase skills. Sometimes a moderator sees a short contribution in an art form when it is clear that the candidate has the skill to do much more.

The level of difficulty of what is being attempted should also be considered. There is a big difference between singing a devised nursery rhyme sweetly and a complex four-part harmony.

General

Once again moderators reported that most centres had really entered into the spirit of the unit, and in the way candidates had written it was evident that even weaker candidates had gained a lot from the experience of following the unit.

Inevitably there will be times when candidates fall out, feel they do not have enough time, or even want to criticise a centre’s staff. It is important for candidates to realise that none of this is of any interest to the moderator, and to use words to do this does not help their assessment. No allowance is made for such traumas.

Candidates must ensure they follow the *Improvise – Rehearse - Perform* format in their commentaries. Having separate headed sections for each art form should be avoided as the commentary is more concerned with the technical terms in operation, the way work is devised, performance outcomes and their effectiveness and how the art forms link and work together.

Finally, the enjoyment, commitment and level of learning by candidates have been evident, and it is sad this opportunity will not continue into the future.

G402/01 Performance Contexts 1

General comments:

Examiners reported that many of the general points were similar to previous series, and that some centres continued to prepare candidates in ways which didn't always help them achieve their full potential.

1. The **areas of study** were, as they have always been - the elements of the performing arts (at the very least the terms from G401), stylistic influences on a given practitioner, structure and form of his/her works, performance techniques to interpret the works and social, historical and cultural contexts.

To respond to questions without covering some of these areas didn't give candidates the opportunity to show broad knowledge and understanding.

2. While the **specification** requires the study of a play, a dance piece or at least 4 songs, it also states (P11) that broad trends in the output of the practitioner need to be addressed.

Four Beatles' songs, for instance, particularly if from one album, may not fully meet that requirement. The study of *Teechers* alone may not show broad trends in Godber's work.

3. Centres continued to prepare candidates with **formulaic** or **generic** responses which include some of the following:

- a) a standardised, largely biographical opening
- b) the point-example-rewrite the question structure in every paragraph
- c) using pre-prepared examples from a work which may not be relevant to the question
- d) listing other works by title, as if that constituted an illustration of a point
- e) a partially understood political point, particularly in Godber's early works
- f) a conclusion that simply restates every statement above
- g) a list of all they can remember about a given practitioner
- h) listing the practitioner's fingerprints with little application to the question.

None of these approaches was conducive to effective essays, in the main. Examiners looked for personal, individual responses to works. Examples from the material that supported an argument and showed understanding of dance, drama, music elements were essential to describe performance skills.

A simple list of instruments used on a Beatles' song was no substitute for understanding texture, harmony, melody, timbre or rhythm. To describe Newson's or Bourne's work knowledgeably, some mention of dance elements was demanded.

In centres where candidates had been 'trained by rote', the same few examples from works were used over and over again and led frequently to a purely narrative approach in describing songs, dances and plays, rather than addressing the question.

4. **Recycling old questions** is a good part of preparing candidates, but some often made a little go a long way by trying to answer a current question only through what they had learned from previous questions.

5. **Practitioners and their works** do not function in isolation from their times, their influences and their artistic output. Candidates who appreciated that generally did better than those who

didn't. A narrative retelling of a plot or story by itself rarely did well as a thorough study of works was frequently not in evidence.

6. Quality of Written Communication – with up to 6 marks available out of 30 per question, this area seemed to be often neglected by centres in preparing candidates.

Examiners reported a disappointing increase in the number of candidates who had a poor grasp of the basics, such as the names of practitioners they had studied, Brecht, characters in a play, playwright, Laban, choreography, rhythm, pas de deux, their/there, minor/miner, repertoire and practitioner.

Lack of correct punctuation, particularly apostrophes and capitalisation, poor sentence sequences, poor sense of paragraphing and mixed tenses did not show careful use of English.

As we mentioned in previous reports, the use of 'relatable' was only acceptable if used in a context, such as 'relatable to an audience' or something specific. 'John Godber is relatable' is meaningless.

We did **not** accept the following:

'over the top' unless it was actually explained;

'etc', 'sort of' or 'kinda';

the use of abbreviations like STWOM (Someone to Watch Over Me), DDOMM (dead Dreams of Monochrome Men) or ADITL (A Day in the Life);

calling practitioners by his/her first name; or

'as I said earlier'.

7. Command words at the start of each question were designed to guide candidates into their discussions. The merits of an opening paragraph that did not begin at once to address the question is a matter of debate and perhaps taste, but much candidate time was wasted in irrelevant statements at the start, such as 'Caryl Churchill was an English playwright, born in ...'

8. Timing – given that each question was worth up to 30 marks, it was surprising how many candidates left inadequate time to complete the second response.

Equally writing out the question in full often seemed a waste of time.

9. Planning was as previously reported, a variable feast. A few plans were as long as the responses. Without planning, many candidates resorted to addenda and postscripts. Many plans were simply an identification of practitioner fingerprints rather than an intention to apply them to the actual question.

10. Presentation – with more candidates offering typed manuscripts, centres need to know that they are marked as if handwritten, so QWC is treated in the same way.

Font size used was usually too small. In both typed and handwritten responses, few candidates had been advised to leave sufficient space between first and second answer for examiners to write comments.

Comments of Individual Questions:

There were no responses to questions on John Adams, Athol Fugard and Shobana Jeyasingh. There were a small number of responses to the Churchill and Gershwin questions.

1 Matthew Bourne

With the area of study on contexts, the question asked about 'celebrity culture' and was widely interpreted in ways which also included all kinds of celebrities (such as Isadora Duncan who stylistically influenced Bourne). Some did grasp that it was meant to open discussion about society's obsession with famous and apparently glamorous individuals.

Contemporary society was also occasionally misunderstood but generally this was well answered. The best responses drew on several of Bourne's works, the commercial appeal and the way the public responds to popular treatments of evergreen themes.

For this question, much seemed to depend on choice of studied repertoire, with *Swan Lake* found easier than other works.

2 Matthew Bourne

This asked about how music is a stylistic influence, but without reference to or understanding of some dance/music elements, it was often treated in a thin manner. Where candidates showed wide knowledge and understanding of Bourne's working methods, the styles of dance, musical theatre and design that influenced him, responses were strong.

Some candidates misunderstood Bourne's approach to modernising and assumed he modernised the music content making it more contemporary.

Other influences discussed included Musical Theatre with examples from various musical theatre shows, such as 'Oliver!', 'The Sound of Music', 'The Wizard of Oz' and Hollywood musicals/films, especially the work of Busby Berkley and Fred Astaire. These influences were shown to manifest in his works by a strong narrative through line and so his dancers are required to act; use mime, gesture and facial expression and have a rehearsal methodology to create a background to character; to play character consistently throughout the piece in question and to be able to play more than one role within a piece.

Stronger candidates discussed how character often correlates with the music, for example Tchaikovsky's music reflecting the Prince's moods in 'Swan Lake'. Other influences mentioned included Film Noir and Hitchcock, and films such as the 'Twilight' Series and 'True Blood'. Also noted were his ways of using these filmic influences, particularly their musical scores, to assist his storytelling and to help to attract and engage a wider audience than just lovers of ballet.

Also noted was his use of an eclectic range of movement styles that often matched the dynamic of the music to highlight appropriate sad or funny moments in the works. Styles discussed included ballet, social dance, pedestrian dance, contemporary dance and unison work, resulting in dancers being selected by Bourne for their abilities in a range of dance styles, also his use of the spectacular and exploring themes such as sexuality.

5 Lloyd Newson

Generally, most candidates identified the importance of the message (though sometimes what that message was not always clear with some very simplistic political views expressed).

There was some good knowledge and understanding of structure and form, though many candidates avoided mentioning any dance/movement elements at all, instead relying on general narrative of the plots or detailed accounts of the story in small scenes.

Lists of other his works often appeared without use of any significant examples of structure and form from them to support the discussion.

It was pleasing to see that many candidates interpreted 'form' as the way Newson structures his work and stronger answers were able to link choreographic devices with the strong narrative

elements that run through many of Newson's works and come to a conclusion as to which they felt was more important.

Works including *To Be Straight With You* and *Enter Achilles* provided supported answers that drew on the material. Examples of 'messages' explored through movement included; taboo subject matter with dialogue and risk taking and how this often resulted from Newson's psychological investigations during his earlier education in Australia; the psychological desire to be seen as 'fitting in' or 'one of the boys' with reference in particular to 'Enter Achilles', as was male pack mentality/identity/masculinity in general and how gay men are often insulted verbally and physically by homophobic heterosexual men; In 'Enter Achilles', the blow-up doll scene was often discussed in psychological terms; how men regard and can objectify women through movement and dialogue.

Many responses demonstrated that candidates had a good knowledge of the various 'messages' that Newson explores in his work, resulting from his interest in social, cultural and historical issues. Most often the 'Strange Fish' was used to discuss Newson's views on religion and loneliness and how the episodic structure of the piece explored those issues through movement.

However, some responses became more of a list of those issues rather than a discussion of the importance of their portrayal in relation to the way his works are structured. Often candidates were clear though that Newson requires dance to have a meaning, so that is why his work is often formed with dialogue to fully explore the issue and through psychologically based narratives and also why the movements' meanings that he and his dancers create are often linked to his own experiences and psychological background.

Most candidates were aware of his time at London Contemporary Dance and how the influences from there helped him formulate his structural devices. For example as he encountered pedestrian movement, Isadora Duncan's and Martha Graham's methods, these led to his use of site specific performance and the use of atypical or non-dancers (and specifically disabled dancers like David in *The Cost of Living*); also dancers who can act and be comfortable with the use of dialogue and contact improvisation, physical theatre, comedy text and the more traditional use of costume and props. The fact that Newson often combines text and movement was illustrated by the 'Blow-up Doll' and 'Pool Table' scenes in *Enter Achilles* or David's interrogation scene in *The Cost of Living*, examples of where movement, form and text clearly work together to 'tell' a story and convey a message.

6 Lloyd Newson

This was the more popular response as challenging social attitudes was easily and widely demonstrable in numbers of Newson's works. Without knowledge and understanding of dance (and sometimes other performance elements), candidates struggled to make successful responses.

The higher responses widened analysis of contexts to include gender and political besides social, historical and cultural. Without a sense of wider contexts, it was difficult for responses to fully address the question.

Features of Newson's time in hospital were often referred to in the creation of *Enter Achilles*, which was by far the most popular work. The focus on 'pack' mentality was discussed and attempted to exemplify. The focus on homosexuality was often a link with some candidates now referring to LGBT community in the context of British Values.

Many responses demonstrated a reasonable knowledge of the various social attitudes that Newson challenges and consequently the demands that Newson places on dancers in his works to explore these, demands resulting from his psychological studies and his interest in social, cultural and historical issues.

However, some responses became more of a list of those issues with the words ‘...and that’s how Newson challenges social attitudes’ tacked on to each, rather than a discussion of the effectiveness of their portrayal in Newson’s works.

Examples of ‘social attitudes’ which Newson challenges that candidates discussed included those attitudes towards taboo subject matter and how this often resulted from Newson’s psychological investigations during his earlier education in Australia; the psychological desire to be seen as ‘fitting in’ or ‘one of the boys’, discussed with reference in particular to *Enter Achilles*, as was the male pack mentality/identity/masculinity in general and ideas about how gay men are treated by homophobic heterosexual men; In ‘Enter Achilles’, the ‘Blow-up Doll’ and ‘Shaving’ scenes were often discussed in psychological terms; how men regard and can objectify women and how dancers need to portray and perform scenes as explicit as this and similar scenes, such challenging attitudes towards religion in the ‘Stoning’ and ‘Crucifixion’ scenes in ‘Strange Fish’ or the burka scene in *Can We Talk about This?*

Often candidates were clear that Newson requires dance to have a meaning, so that is why his work is issue and psychologically based and why he and his dancers must be equally determined to create each movement with meaning to challenge widely held attitudes towards the subject matter.

Others were aware of his time at London Contemporary Dance where he encountered pedestrian movement and Isadora Duncan’s and Martha Graham’s methods and that he uses site specific performance and atypical or non-dancers and specifically disabled dancers to perform complex dance movement and to be comfortable with the use of dialogue, pedestrian movement, contact improvisation, physical theatre, interaction with multimedia, comedy and the more traditional use of costume and props to put across challenging ideas. More able candidates also went on to discuss Newson’s expectation that his performers are able to identify with taboo themes, particularly homophobia & homosexuality, difficulties in the relationships between men and women and disability, in relation to *Enter Achilles*, *Strange Fish* and *The Cost of Living* respectively, and how these themes were often explicitly presented through nudity and sexual imagery, to challenge society’s attitudes towards all these themes and ideas.

7 Caryl Churchill

The question focussed on structure and form with *Cloud 9* an obvious work to demonstrate Churchill’s unusual approach to time, but others occur in other plays. The need for dramatic elements and a number of contexts was also clearly expected, if not always delivered by candidates.

Brecht featured widely as a main stylistic influence, sometimes without real understanding. Where candidates how Churchill absorbed ideas and devices into a range of work, then they achieved higher marks.

8 Caryl Churchill

While some candidates did not understand the term ‘evocative’ to describe dialogue, most used at least some drama elements to discuss the question and focus on dialogue.

A large number took ‘economic’ to refer to economics in a political sense and answered accordingly, which was a valid interpretation.

Brecht again featured widely as an influence, usually without any examples.

11 John Godber

The 'energy of the drama' was outside the range of comprehension for a large minority, but most understood that Godber's structures, dramatic devices and the needs of performance skills make his work capable of producing energy.

In this question, those candidates who focussed on parts of a single play often lacked depth of knowledge to make an interesting argument about how structures lead to successful performance.

Features such as episodic related Brecht's didactic theatre and to Godber's time in TV, use of short snappy dialogue to move the piece on, colloquial language were discussed. Prologues and epilogues were also variably featured. Some candidates used the response as a soundboard for the current state of educational unfairness and lack of equal opportunities, attempting to refer to Godber's use of social comment to structure.

Where candidates were able to give references from works studied, they sometimes used quotes unnecessarily and without being entirely relevant to the point being made. This question attracted greater use of past questions and repeated quotes such as 'opening a vein'. One candidate stated that the structure and rap 'was to keep the actors alive'.

Most candidates had a good understanding of how Godber structures his works (with all candidates in this session referencing his earlier works for supporting examples) and had a good biographical/contextual knowledge of Godber's influences including drama teaching, Brecht, Berkoff, Pinter, Classical Theatre (particularly Shakespeare and his use of soliloquy, prologue and epilogue), writing for TV (particularly soaps), mining, his own family, nightlife, music, Yorkshire, the north of England and a lack of money in general.

However many answers could not explain how the structure and form of his works 'captured the energy of the drama', often simply tacking this phrase on to the end of a sentence, rather than discussing the effectiveness of the various plays' energy and excitement in exploring 'working class Britain' and the other issues that Godber raises in his works, both political and societal.

Teechers, *Shakers* and *Bouncers* were again the main works studied and most candidates chose to focus on how Godber's influences were represented in these plays. Stronger answers could link Godber's structural devices with the energy presented and were also clear about his aims.

Discussions included how Margaret Thatcher had affected Godber and 'the North', the miner's strike, northern culture in general seen as disadvantaged as opposed to the culture of the south with examples. Berkoff's 'Total Theatre' and 'poor theatre' of minimal props and sets also played a part in the assessment by higher level responses.

Identifiable situations included comprehensive schools v public schools, the music in the 1980s, poverty of comprehensive schools in general, the energy in northern dialect and slang, taboo language and non-elitist theatre, how government decisions affect ordinary lives, engaging and involving local working people in artistic endeavour and widening participation in theatre to working and unemployed non-theatre goers in general and how these issues were also manifested in the plays.

Weaker candidates provided very generalised comments about Godber's background. For example; '...Godber was always poor...', '...the working class do not read books...', '...the working class would never understand Shakespeare...'. Better answers took each of Godber's structural techniques in turn and demonstrated how these created an energy which effectively portrayed Godber's working class political ideology or an issue, giving specific examples from the work(s) studied to show why Godber's work is effective in putting across these messages.

12 John Godber

Discussion of performance techniques needed a sense of dramatic elements and stylistic influences. Where candidates used acting skills that are applicable to any performer in any play, credit was given but the higher marks went to those who were able to identify the unique performance skills demanded from a performer in a Godber play.

In these responses where a stock answer was used, any wider context was often tokenistic and showed lack of independent thought.

Where candidates went beyond multi-roling, comedy and stock characters, incorporating discussion of Commedia dell'Arte, political theatre and some depth to the physicality aspects, they gained higher marks.

Candidates tended to take each of Godber's techniques in turn and discussed how these were demonstrated through the 'larger than life' characters in *Bouncers*, *Teechers* and/or *Shakers*.

The challenges were discussed best by exemplifying the skills of the actors, giving specific examples from the work(s) studied to show why and how Godber's work is effective in putting across specific messages.

These challenges presented to actors included; Brechtian conventions (e.g. the actors' needing confidence when breaking the 'fourth wall' and delivering direct address/narration in all three works); the skill to deliver Shakespearian-style monologues and soliloquys, the actors having good comic timing and being comfortable with creating humour through taboo language and improvisation; having excellent concentration and focus to keep the audience engaged, (particularly when multi-roling 'larger than life' characters whilst still being able to focus on putting across political issues clearly); keeping energy levels high to play stereotypical 'larger than life' characters in episodic scenes at a fast pace; having the confidence to engage and involve potentially rowdy, non-theatre audiences through recognition; being able to dance, using a Greek-style chorus in 'Bouncers'; skilled in Berkoff inspired unison movement, mime and other 'Total Theatre' techniques and able to work with 'Poor Theatre' conditions (able to cope with small-scale touring which by definition does not/cannot have a big set and is thus minimalistic with few props).

Weaker answers also focused on challenges that are less specific to Godber and can be seen as involved in any theatrical production, for example actors learning lines, being able to cope with emotional scenes and being able to undertake rehearsals.

15 The Beatles

Clearly with a focus on musical elements, this question demanded some understanding of the instruments (including voice) that created contrasting textures. Detailed analysis of contrasting musical textures was shown by a very few candidates.

A simple account of some songs through lyrics alone was a hallmark of lower marked responses. The better ones showed understanding of the skills employed in producing a range of characteristics from contrasting songs.

A sense of the level of contexts and stylistic influences also helped differentiate the responses as did a grasp of the contexts of the period and the textures that came from musical experimentation (such as technology, sitar, lyrical innovation).

There were some answers that discussed how the melody and experimentation with advancing technology or unusual instrumentation often created interesting textures that reflected these changes.

Most candidates could discuss how the earlier works were less story based and aimed mainly at a young female audience, identified by repetitive lyrics (with examples from songs such as 'Please, Please Me' and 'She Loves You'); that these works had simple textures due to simple chord structures and harmonies and memorable melodies whilst later songs had increasingly complex textures due to their narratives (e.g. 'Eleanor Rigby'), the texture and timbre becoming more complex and atmospheric due to the use of those latest recording techniques, including multi-tracking, overdubbing, tape loops and reverse effects.

Drug influences were again often discussed as resulting in unusual textures due to unusual instrumentation (e.g. Harrison's experimentation with the Tamboura and Sitar) and sound effects like the 'seagull' sound in *Tomorrow Never Knows*; also, narrative, darker lyrics and more strange lyrics in songs such as *Eleanor Rigby* and *Tomorrow Never Knows* giving these songs darker and moodier textures; orchestration and orchestral instrumentation creating a 'thicker' and richer texture and songs with identifiably different textures from each Beatle (most examples here were from *Eleanor Rigby*, *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds* and *A Day in the Life*). *Eleanor Rigby* was used to give good responses here, how its story of loneliness and desperation is reflected musically to create a 'sad textured' mood.

Better answers demonstrated how possible drug influences created psychedelic textures in the later works through sound; the latest recording techniques resulting in unusual sound effects reflecting a drug-induced state of mind and body.

16 The Beatles

This question specifically asked about lyrics, so where no musical elements were mentioned at all, allowance was made, but the totality of a song includes lyrics, music and vocals.

In this response there was frequently quite limited understanding of the contexts, often confined to generalities about drugs influencing certain songs. Candidates with higher reach demonstrated a wide grasp of the cultural, social and historical contexts that affected society, all age groups, politics, laws and popular culture during the years of The Beatles' activities.

Some candidates offered musical notation with some linking to word painting or use of syncopation, for example. Most simply wrote out a section of music without relevance or reference to the actual question.

Many candidates had been prepared by seeing the Beatles' work as falling into distinct time and style sections which generally gave them a broader perspective on the repertoire.

Most candidates had a fair biographical/contextual knowledge of how the Beatles were influenced by or involved with the 60s, in particular the 'free love' and hippy movements, drugs, 'Mod' fashion, India and the East, war (and peace), youth rebellion, the 'women's lib' movement and 'Beatlemania'.

However, few placed this knowledge in relation to the Beatle's earlier influences on their lyrics and changing musical style, for example from Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley, Spector's 'Wall of Sound', Broadway show tunes and the teenage reaction to the 40s & 50s, or discussed George Martin & Brian Epstein's input, the Rolling Stones influence or contemporary newspaper reports.

Stronger answers documented how the Beatle's music and lyrics changed over the 60s, for example how developments in studio recording techniques meant that many of the later songs could not be fully replicated live.

Few answers had an in-depth analysis of the Beatles' musical and lyrical techniques resulting from influences from across the world with any examples; some could discuss the lyrical and musical characteristics of the early 60s' works, such as simple lyrics, verse/chorus/verse, aimed

at the fans (particularly teenage girls), catchy tunes with a 'happy' feel, but none discussed the influence of skiffle or the guitar, bass, drums rock 'n roll line-up influenced by Elvis.

However, some answers did also analyse the later 60s' songs as having increasingly complex textures and timbres influenced by the latest recording techniques, the unrest of the times and the fracturing relationships within the band, such as those songs on the 'Sergeant Pepper...' album, and how these techniques/sounds were simply not possible to be played live at that time.

Weaker responses were mainly conjectural and generalised, or did not link the songs to the changing times and events of the 60s at all. Some again focused only on drug issues and often contained sweeping statements such as '...they were all on drugs' or that the songs '...are all about drugs'.

17 George Gershwin

The area of study for this question was stylistic influences and to do justice to it candidates needed to be aware of earlier/later work and film/stage writing. Comparison between the opposites was a feature of higher answers.

Selective biography, including Tin Pan Alley and Ira and social contexts including the Depression, where understood, were often used effectively.

There was sometimes confusion about when historical events occurred in the USA, but where there was a grasp of history, the responses reflected greater understanding of the chosen songs.

Most candidates discussed how influences from 'Tin Pan Alley' were reflected in the structure and form of some of Gershwin's early songs and how Ira's lyrics enhanced the majority of those songs. However, very few answers could discuss the crux of the question, how these early songs were altered to meet the requirements of film.

Many answers took each of the songs they had studied in turn and discussed their musical elements; for example how the music by George was written before the lyrics were added by Ira, the matching of the rhythm of words with the music, moments where significant changes in emotion take place, the manipulation of pause and the use of word painting.

Music influences from 'Tin Pan Alley' that were discussed included the use of blues notes, chromatic notes, ascending and typically pentatonic descending scales, rubato and call and response patterns.

Most answers also contained references to songs written to 32-bar melodies, divided into four phrases of eight bars each, the overall pattern of AABA (except *Summertime*), with some candidates able to discuss the precise moments of the use of each in a number of Gershwin's songs. Most answers however, were where candidates did not put forward any argument about how Gershwin's music developed for his career in film; how developments were made to the songs' 'Tin Pan Alley' structures or stories, simply listing musical elements and ignoring any reference to why his style changed: because he was writing for film.

Many answers showed a real enthusiasm for the works studied and discussed how the 'Tin Pan Alley' style was reflected in some songs' structure with an analysis of a range of Gershwin's techniques with examples, to show how the songs could provide drama musically and lyrically and identify with universal themes and emotions.

However, although some answers analysed the works studied over time, none linked these changes to how working in cinema led to these distinctive musical differences (from and similarities to the 'Tin Pan Alley' style) in the structure and form of his songs. No candidates

discussed either actual performances of the songs by any film performers at all, current or past or noted any other influences, such as Broadway musicals, the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression, escapism or prohibition.

18 George Gershwin

It was possible to argue for and/or against the quotation, but a sense of wide contexts was essential. Where candidates had little or only a partial grasp of America/world history during the Gershwin years, his Jewish origins, jazz, gospel, race relations and economics, they tended to rely on formulaic, heavy biographical narratives.

Without some sense of musical elements, several candidates relied on a few lyrics. This answer gave rise to a large number of lists of song titles as a substitute for extending a discussion through meaningful illustrations.

A few acknowledged that the songs were written in the 20s and 30s and therefore embraced the contextual 'time' aspect of the question. Most talked about how influences from 'Tin Pan Alley', song plugging and 'Piano Pounding' were reflected in a range of Gershwin's songs, but there was a complete lack of putting the works into any kind of cultural, historical or social context.

Most answers were formulaic, often ending discussing the musical elements of a song with '...and this shows how his work is American.' Often the 'My time is today' part of the question was ignored completely.

Some of the responses which acknowledged the time and the 'American' nature of the music simply discussed the literal aspects of the lyrics of a number of Gershwin's songs, for example in terms of where the singer was located, e.g. in the deep south in *Summertime* or in New York to meet the man of her dreams in *The Man I Love*.

There was generally understanding of a range of Gershwin's techniques, such as word painting, the songs providing drama musically and lyrically, the use of rubato, call and response patterns, blues notes, chromatic notes, ascending and descending pentatonic scales, songs written to 32-bar melodies, divided into four phrases of eight bars each, the overall pattern of AABA (except 'Summertime').

Most answers also discussed the music by George being written before the lyrics were added by Ira, matching rhythm of words and music, moments where significant changes in emotion take place and gave examples of these in various songs. Again,

Only the very top candidates discussed actual performances of the songs by any performers, contemporary relevance or even their own attempts at performing a Gershwin song.

G403/01 Performance Contexts 2

General Comments:

Given that this specification is due to be withdrawn, there are still a significant number of candidates sitting this paper, particularly from centres where there has been a long standing commitment to the specification and a well-developed understanding of the requirements of this particular paper.

Responses this series have been noticeably lengthier in quantity which has offered greater opportunity for the candidates to achieve quality.

Comments on Individual Questions:

- 1 Whist there were some very strong responses to this question, there were also some that misread the emphasis of the question and attempted to reference all the work they has looked at in the last fifty years with “The Sixties” and all that means.

Most answers were able to identify to some degree the idea of the performing arts reflecting life, but only the stronger candidates could identify moments when the performing arts have influenced life since 1960. The live global broadcast of The Beatles et al singing “All You Need Is Love” was one example.

- 2 This was the more popular choice of the two questions on this topic. Most responses could discuss at length the variety of styles that practitioners have used within this topic, but it was the stronger candidates that were able to determine whether there had been any development of those styles.

Weaker candidates tended to offer responses detailing techniques used by practitioners rather than taking a wider view of the styles.

- 3 Few answers to this question attempted ‘analysis’, but most offered a list of works with some relevant techniques, and /or a brief explanation of the context of the ‘political intent’. Those candidates that had a sufficient overview of the topic were able to identify, for example, the way satire worked across the art forms.

- 4 The majority of responses to this question were willing to compare and contrast across a variety of works but tended to ignore the marker of the Second World War. Only the brave bothered to argue that whilst there may be differences in the issues raised, the war itself made little impact on the ways practitioners approached politics in performance.

Some candidates got confused thinking that all comments on works needed to reference the war and others got mixed up about when the Second World War happened, despite the dates offered in the question.

- 5 This question mirrored the approach in Question 4 with a little more success, possibly because *Oklahoma!* has a greater significance to the development of the American Musical.

Many were keen to offer the early forms of entertainment that influenced the development of the musical as significant to this question, but could not go beyond listing different forms. Whilst there is no doubt of the impact of, for example, Vaudeville or Minstrelsy in the development of the musical, it is for the candidate to use that knowledge in responding to the question rather than merely offering the information without real comment or analysis. Rather too many were content to discuss the political and social issues raised in the American Musical as though that was the only significant element of them.

Strong candidates were quick to see that *Oklahoma!* had been chosen as the separating marker because of the integration of music, dance and drama, although there were bold claims made that this was the first time that dance had ever been used in a book musical, which tends to give the impression that there is not a sufficient overview of the topic.

- 6 This question produced some of the best answers across the whole paper. Examiners reported that whilst the question is not unusual, essentially candidates are often asked about the relative importance of the three art forms, this time responses were more considered.

Many could discuss the positive merits of 'songs' in a range of musicals, but could also indicate how they fitted with the on-going narrative, the action and characterization and the choreography.

- 7 There were no responses to this Question.
- 8 There were no responses to this Question.

G404/01 Performance Project

General comments

Administration of the examination

Centre staff deserve warm thanks for their invaluable contribution to G404 visits.

All centres supplied useful and relevant paperwork in advance of the visit, arranged for supportive and attentive audiences and ensured a relaxed but disciplined performing environment for the students to present their work. Some centres went to considerable effort to illuminate the work and to make detailed comments on candidates' contributions. It was also helpful where texts of lesser-known drama pieces were provided. DVD recordings of the examination performances were generally produced to a good standard and dispatched quickly following the examination.

Audiences generally consisted of other students and staff, mostly those connected with the course, sometimes with a few others. In some instances, there was a wider audience that was also receptive and helped to create more of an atmosphere. One Centre held a ten-year retrospective, showcasing the work of their most successful candidates over the course of a decade, and celebrating the extensive amount of creative work that Performance Studies has generated. Examiners reported that there was a joyous approach to the work in many centres, which was not diminished by the discontinuation of the Specification after 2017.

There was a very marked improvement in performance standards in this series, which was most noticeable in repertoire pieces. There were noticeably fewer ensemble performances this session, and a consequent increase in solo performances, although examiners reported that this was not the sole reason for the increase in standards, however.

Examiners reported seeing a wide, enjoyable and challenging choice of repertoire with attention to both performance technique, as well as the context of the extracts. The ablest candidates displayed the confidence and excellence demanded on the professional stage, and even at the lower end of the mark range candidates were able to produce creditable performances displaying embryonic signs of flair and a genuine reason to develop their studies further. Many candidates clearly enjoyed what they were performing, and there were very few lapses in attention.

The most popular practitioners were as in previous years. In dance, the work of three choreographers dominated: Matthew Bourne, Alvin Ailey, Bob Fosse. In drama, performances were most often of works by Brecht, Godber, and Caryl Churchill, although the plays of Sarah Kane and Steven Berkoff continued to gain ground. The work in music was typified by a large number of songs by George Gershwin with songs by The Beatles proving almost as popular. There were a large number of performances from the genre of Musical Theatre, particularly from *Chicago*, *Sweet Charity* and *West Side Story*.

There were many dynamic and creative moments in the devised work, although the level of performance skills was generally not as high as in the repertoire performances. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of devised work this session.

COMMISSIONS

Images

1 At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance (1890) by Toulouse-Lautrec

This commission produced a number of pieces that were dance-led. At best, these offered strong physicality, an engaging use of music, and a narrative that grew organically from these. Less successful pieces were strong on atmosphere but less clear as to what they were trying to communicate. Whilst a few pieces were little more than an enthusiastic recreation of scenes inspired more by *Chicago*, the majority were clearly related to Toulouse-Lautrec's painting.

There was ample evidence of ability to create performance material from the painting. Several groups extracted 'character' ideas from the painting, speculating on the identity of the central lady in pink and retaining the setting of the Moulin Rouge. Many candidates had discovered through their research that the people in the painting actually existed, and so a popular response was to tell a story reflecting these people. A number of groups focused on the life of the artist.

2 A nanny and her charge at The Round Pond, Kensington Gardens (c1935) by Humphrey Spender

This commission generated very few responses. Most recreated the scenario by the pond, although some offered terrifying caricatures of the nanny, some of which strayed far beyond anything suggested by the photograph.

Historical Situations

3 1215 – Magna Carta is signed

This commission produced a number of comedic responses, some of them akin to scenes from *Carry On, Henry* in style. Others were more inspired by a *Back to the Future* approach, with one piece based on the concept of time travel as a vehicle for the group's own blend of anarchic humour. A number were inspired by the *Horrible Histories* books, successfully creating a witty script and exaggerated characters to bring to life the historical narrative in an engaging and lively way.

A number of groups examined similarities between the conditions that gave rise to Magna Carta and the EU referendum, drawing intriguing – and in some cases, prophetic – links between the two.

4 The 1985 Live Aid Concert

A number of groups focused strongly on the allegations as to what happened to the money raised by the concert, and almost all revelled in stating and re-stating Bob Geldof's infamous phrase. However, many pieces were little more than a series of songs taken from the concert, interspersed with some contemporary historical references, most notably the Miners' strike.

Poetry

5 Advice to a Discarded Lover by Fleur Adcock

This produced some imaginative responses, although it was evident that some candidates did not understand the poem despite much research. There were a number of complex stories about lovers and domestic abuse, leading to potential suicide. By far the most common approach was to portray the various stages of a relationship after a breakup.

The most effective pieces made sophisticated use of the wording and imagery of the poem, and several were rich in dance and original music, sometimes using individual lines or phrases as musical motifs. There were also alternative readings of the poem, such as one lively dystopian piece that focused on environmental catastrophe with Nature consigning mankind to death and destruction.

6 *Alzheimer's* by Bob Hicok

This was the most popular commission and there were some very moving and sensitive pieces. The commission was often chosen by groups who were able to draw links between the subject and their own experience within their family, or as carers.

Extensive research led to some very detailed explorations of the disease, its impact on the sick person, their families and loved ones, and those who struggled to come to terms with it. In pursuing concepts of fragmentation and mental chaos that informed the nature and structure of the different characters' narratives, connection with the commission was sometimes lost. Those that focused closely on the poem often made a structural device out of the line, 'chairs move by themselves'. One group used a back-projected device of a jigsaw puzzle to highlight the inability of the sufferer to make sense of what they saw.

It was perhaps not surprising that several groups struggled to integrate music, and to a lesser extent dance, into their pieces. Some candidates selected songs from a character's past as mood music to represent memories, and a few created soundscapes; there were a number of physical sections to represent chaos and confusion of mind. There were a number of rather superficial and prosaic drama pieces that presented somewhat stereotypical characters and predictable storylines of gradual deterioration of the main character.

Diaries

7 *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank

This commission was a very popular choice.

Many groups gave an effective portrayal of Anne and her immediate family as ordinary people living in extraordinary situations, and used many direct quotes from the diary, which allowed a good mark for commission in both pieces. The historical dimension was generally handled sensitively with considerable creativity. Many pieces were exceptionally moving, capturing the fear of waiting in dread before being caught. One piece created very effective music and dance in an authentic Jewish style.

Another successful group used a central device of the teacher requiring her class members to give presentations that provided parallels between Anne Frank's diary and modern life led to a series of short episodes. These were acted with conviction and some force on such themes as savage racial discrimination and violent bullying. Other groups used the idea of a tour guide taking the audience on a tour of the attic implying they the audience would be seeing and hearing animated scenes of the lives of the main protagonists.

8 *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*

Very few candidates chose this commission. One successful group worked in the style of musical theatre, representing Pepys' flamboyant personality, large ego and complex relationships with his wife and lovers through elaborate gesture and over-exaggerated physicality.

Performers

9 *Louis Armstrong*

Few groups selected this commission, but those who did often showed advanced performance skills in music.

10 *Jean Harlow*

This commission was attempted by few candidates. One notable piece attempted to make their piece comedic and a 'family friendly show' from the 20's. Others lost their way and got bogged down in trivial aspects of Harlow's life. Other candidates created a straightforward episodic presentation of the salient points both private and public of her life, which kept within the historic time frame and utilised music of the 1920s.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations
is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England
Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU
Registered Company Number: 3484466
OCR is an exempt Charity

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
Head office
Telephone: 01223 552552
Facsimile: 01223 552553

© OCR 2016

