

**G401 - Piece Two**

**Candidate 3: Matthew**

**WRITTEN COMMENTARY**

<b>Assessment Criterion</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Please refer to specific aspects of the work which support the mark being awarded</b>
Knowledge and understanding of aspects and applications of the performing arts <b>(max 20)</b>	14	Matt has a good grasp of a wide range of technique and style in all three disciplines. Some examples of application are very clear but many require further elaboration and detail. Linking of the arts is good but could be more frequent. The intention for the audience is always clearly driving the work.
Understanding and evaluation of process and performance <b>(max 12)</b>	8	Again, some moments of process are succinct and detailed whilst others require more explanation and context for real clarity. Matt's evaluation of performance in both sections is honest, detailed and objective. There is a clear understanding of the process of devising despite some lapses to narrative.
Quality of language <b>(max 8)</b>	4	Matt's writing style at times obscures his points. Nevertheless there are moments of real clarity and fluent analysis. The work is variable with some complex ideas being succinctly addressed whilst other points are undeveloped and harder to decipher. Technical terminology is used accurately. Some obvious spelling and grammar errors.

**PRACTICAL WORK**

Assessment Criterion	Mark	Please refer to specific aspects of the work which support the mark being awarded
Devising the community performance project (max 10)	10	The piece deals with two main narrative topics, the death of Milne after his stroke and what happened to the Pooh characters after his death. These two are dealt with in very contrasting ways showing a breadth of skill in all three disciplines. Seamless transitions are effected between moments of narrative, and are used to create sophisticated comparisons of mood and content. The work is extremely creative and original and has a well selected range of styles from symbolism to puppetry, all focussed on the group's intentions to inform, educate and entertain the audience as well as creating sympathy for the character of Milne. These intentions are more than met. The piece is fluid, seamless and coherent throughout.
Performance skills in dance, drama and music (max 20)	18	Matthew is a very strong supporting member of the ensemble and is able to take a more prominent role for example as Milne in the dream sequences. Musically Matthew adds a strong supporting voice to all ensemble numbers as well as playing piano in the opening song. Dramatically, Matthew's role as Milne is very subtle. He has a lovely quality of vulnerability in the 'daily routine' sequence after the stroke and makes very effective additions to the puppetry sequences. His Disney character is by contrast extremely comic. In dance, his contribution to the 'drawing' routine at Disney HQ is committed and very effective despite this being his 'third' discipline. Overall a very focused and well judged performance.
<b>Total (max 70)</b>	<b>54</b>	

## Creating Performance

### Individual Devising Projects

Improvisation is the non-selective process of experimenting with the stimuli given. It is your first initial response, which can be shown through movement or inner feelings.

Our drama stimulus was the poem 'Office Friendships' by Gavin Ewart. We discussed ideas and attempted mind-mapping some potential plot-points to focus on when telling our story. We came up with ideas that resembled immaturity at work, the fact that office life never really allows us to grow up as people, instead causing a build up of frustration, sexual or personal. Our intention became for us to show the insecurities and the stereotyping of the typical '9 to 5' office job.

We began improvising ideas by exploring with characterisation. We took names from the poem and their motives, such as the plot thread involving Eve in love with Hugh, who is in fact in love with Dick. We experimented with dynamics, and how we could build tension. When my character, Hugh, moves towards Dick, I move with a slow, effeminate walk, which whilst is amusing, builds tension as the audience anticipates what is going to happen when Hugh reaches Dick.

Our music stimulus was a section of the 'Caucasian Chalk Circle'. The main intention for our music was to tell a story. The script comes from the Brechtian style of 'epic theatre', so our song had to convey emotions and struggles similar to something that epic theatre would show. We brain-stormed ideas, which led us wanting to create a sombre tone for the piece. Our intention was for the audience to emote with Grusha as she comes to terms with the decision over her child. The texture had to avoid being too rich so it didn't feel overly melodramatic and the rhythm had to be slow in order to achieve its sentimentality.

We experimented with what lyrics we could use for our piece. Considering the section had no rhyming patterns, we tried using repetition over lyrics to signify important elements which represent Grusha's struggle to decide what to do for her child. We also used female and male voice to experiment with harmonising. The effect of mine and Esther's voice harmonising helped create an ambiguous sense of the child when we call 'Woman, help me'. It's not gender specific so it brings through the issue of a child lost, not just a little girl or boy.

In dance, our two stimuli were Paulo Rego's painting The Family and Steve Reich's After The War. We discussed ideas and began mind-mapping, exploring ideas of female dominance and how we could incorporate movement into a family seeking vengeance over the husband in the house. It led to questions such as why are they seeking it, so we felt we might introduce a narrative to engage our audience.

We experimented with motifs, looking at how to show the united front to the women. We thought the women should be pitted against the men. A motif using strong sharp arm movements to signify the shielding of the body from attack was performed in unison to show them collaboratively threatening the male dominance. We attempted spontaneous improvisation to see what we could interpret into movement, but returned to our ideas to look at greater aspects of domination. We explored how lifts could be used. Lifting involves power and led onto the idea of man in control, as shown through a full-body lift, and by the end, the women are in control, shown through them being raised above the man, having power and dominance over him.

The rehearsal period involved us selecting and perfecting what we had built on after our initial thought processes and our basis from improvisation.

In drama, by concentrating on our characters, we managed to rehearse our basic improvisations into a structure. Our starting image consisted of an office tableau where we could show our characterisation through standing positions and how we type at the office desks. For instance, I played Hugh, who stood legs crossed and his wrists limp to signify a stereotypical homosexual image. Each character took on stereotypes in order to reduce offensiveness by being surrounded with equally ridiculous characters and repeating our actions, highlighting the ludicrous nature of the scene and the characters. We also rehearsed dialogue. Since we lacked a script, we developed our own dialogue, which enforced stereotypes of characters and helped build tension towards the idea of hidden urges e.g. when Eve is frantic over an email, Clive, the office 'pervert' due to his animalistic lust for the office women, reaches behind her when Eve claims 'There is a problem', with Clive replying in a deep lusty voice 'Yes, there's a problem, there's an ass in view and I'm not shagging it!' It allowed the audience to understand what they represent and through their dialogue and actions, we're comically mocking their urges through using exaggerated stereotypes of modern life.

Through our music, we explored different instruments, such as adding a violin to layer the music on the piano, but it made the texture feel too thick and perhaps over-sentimental. The grand piano had the best timbre, with a rich, fulfilling sound, and it corresponded well when we added vocals to it. It also affirms the 'epic' style of Brecht's work in relation to our texture and the sound of the music played. Through our lyrics and melody, we also developed solo vocal lines into harmonies to solidify certain parts of the song in relevance to its importance, such as over the line 'Woman, help me', strengthening the voice of the child we represented and bringing power through the collection of voices. Through tuning, we rehearsed using vocal scales in order to align an effective harmony in thirds over the central melodic line. It helped us feel in unison when singing and also helped us develop an accurate way of keeping our vocals in-tune.

Our responses to dance allowed us to explore relationships between performers. We developed action, showing the abuse the man has given his family and how it is rightful they are avenged. By deliberately setting a family member either sides of the stage, we could develop individual relationships to show how the man has affected his family. We attempted a variety of lifts. This required concentration when deciding upon how to dynamically approach it so we didn't fall out of pace with the music and also for our safety. We used an outside eye to comment on the lift and with a positive response, we continued to develop it to where I was lowered fully onto my daughter, showing male dominance and the abuse he's inflicting. With my legs straight and closed together, it shows precision in how I'm controlling my family. By showing abuse in other ways, we decided upon applying some brief moments of action where abuse was seen through physical violence (dragging and hitting). By timing carefully, we showed the abuse of the wife being dragged by her head, maintaining the disturbing atmosphere whilst building dramatic tension with the attack. It kept up the pace and by using various parts of the space, we could apply motifs whilst the main action occurred, showing the planning of attack when the women finally get control over the man.

Our audience consisted of other Performing Arts students. It felt more relaxed considering we all had the opportunity to experience each other's works but also made me feel nervous considering I knew members of the audience. However, I felt my energy was high and I felt committed to giving the best performance I could.

Our drama was enhanced with the added energy of the performance, meaning we were highly focused on delivering a performance that was going to engage our audience. I felt in time and focused from the opening tableau, with further energy produced by the positive reaction from our audience. The comic moment when my character attempts to seduce Dick received an enthusiastic response, which I felt was enhanced by the dramatic build in tension, exploring the dynamics between the two characters and how far I could go before Dick would be aware of my presence. You could hear the nervous laughter, which was the reaction anticipated, due to lack of dialogue and tightly-wound tension. I felt fully in-character until the final moments when the release in tension and urges is explored through sexual activity with everyone, par Dick, in the office. I felt drawn out of character because of the eccentricity of the scene but the audience reacted positively and found themselves laughing, with some stating they were watching with fingers over eyes because of the awkwardness, meaning we achieved the shocking reaction anticipated. I feel we achieved our intention, considering we got every reaction desired from our audience. Whilst I should have stayed in character, I feel that the themes were well understood and that the audience could pick up on our over-the-top uses of social stereotype to represent the 'office' worker of today.

Dance had us applied with the same added energy as seen with the drama. I felt fully focused and had every intention on delivering a rigorous and effective routine. Our beginning started perfectly, with the use of unison and layering of the piece, with Annie, one of the dancers, engaging in a motif whilst the main action occurs, showing the man literally throwing his family away. Our audience commented on the effectiveness of this, showing the idea of control and building tension when they know the women will seek vengeance.

However, our change in dynamics unsettled me most. Whilst our audience gave us positive feedback, the time-change in the music led to obvious pace changes, which I felt wasn't as smoothly transitioned in the final third. I felt too focused on the previous bar count during the slower middle section so felt out of time, and it also gave the dance a bloated feel when the women are controlling. There is a lot going on, with different motifs occurring at the same time and spread out across the stage. There are too many motifs occurring and too many identities trying to get across. It worked through the themes of women trying to individualise, but it was overwhelming for some of our audience, and the jolt in time-change meant it wasn't handled very effectively. I feel we mostly achieved our intention, as it was clear in showing aspects of domination, but by always having something going on, it made the piece feel over-stuffed and confused viewers when they were unsure of where to look.

Our music piece was performed last but was the most nerve-wracking. We presented with the piano angled towards our audience with me and Esther stood at the far end of the piano. It didn't affect our ability to perform, but it did cut us off from the audience and affected some intended emotion with the physical barrier. However, a use of a dissonant chord over the lyrics 'City full of flame and grief' brought across the emotion perfectly. The harmony felt in-time and tuned perfectly and brought across Grusha's 'grief' through the depressing nature of the chord. The final section; a combination of descending broken chords between major and minor, showed the

happiness in Grusha's choice and overall, helped form a story. The narrative allowed engagement with the audience but also forced us to concentrate hard on the timing in order to draw through emotional connections, but it worked effectively, particularly over 'woman, help me' and 'terrible is the temptation to do good', despite our positioning. I felt our intention of telling a story was achieved, and by showing emotion and a tonal change in the song, we conveyed Grusha's emotions effectively.

### The Community Piece

Our community project centres on the life of AA Milne, the author of the Winnie The Pooh stories. As groups, we took different segments of his life to inform our audience of the man behind the bear and what became of his life and work. Alan Milne attended our own Trinity College in Cambridge and his effect on the world through his work is important to tell because of his importance in our community. Our group told the final moments of his life, looking at Milne's suffering through a stroke, his death and what happened to his stories after his demise. The segments I found to be most compelling were his final moments and how Winnie The Pooh has seemingly determined people's expectations of the man behind the story. The audience should have hopefully become emotionally involved in the more human elements of the story. I think his final moments and his family rift will evoke the pain we anticipate for our audience through the use of naturalistic elements in his death. We intend to emotionally engage the audience with the story, hoping to inform them and open their eyes to a man who died alone, shunned by his son and distanced from his wife. However, we also want to entertain them, showing how Disney took on Milne's work and how it became his legacy.

Through dance, we wanted to explore the pain in Milne's deterioration and present his stroke in the form of dance to create an intense representation of suffering through a mental breakdown in a physical form. We wanted to use music to evoke emotion during moments of heightened tension, particularly his funeral, where soft harmonies or an 'a cappella' piece would add an emotional impact onto the dramatic scene taking place. Drama was used mostly to portray the main story, concentrating on human emotions and interactions taking place, becoming the backbone for our narrative. Our chosen practitioners were perfect for our segment. With Matthew Bourne, we could identify pedestrian movement in our dance, looking at how we can take a typical scene or action and recreate it into the dance medium. This was useful in confrontations, particularly when Milne conflicts with his wife, where we experimented with how pedestrian movement is used to take on typical attributes associated with arguments. The Beatles classically took on emotional subjects and different styles, which is needed when performing our piece. The Beatles' urge for experimentation, such as their sombre tones, was to be used greatly towards scenes such as Milne's stroke and his funeral in order for the audience to receive the full emotional impact of the scene. Caryl Churchill was used for drama, using her ability to capture elements of human nature such as overlapping dialogue and repetition, which was highly appropriate with the heightened state of emotion needed in our segment to portray weakness and dying.

With Milne having studied at Trinity College, it seemed fitting we perform in a place which was close to him and Cambridge. However, we were unsuccessful in obtaining the venue. We tried for other venues related to where he studied but had no luck, so we are now performing at our own college venue. It benefits us because it's a familiar environment with excellent staging, acoustics and a floor suited for dance.

However, we will lack the extra dimension an exterior venue would give us and won't have the same community feel being in our own college.

After our discussions and mind-mapping, we began to look at practically experimenting with ideas. We looked at music, focusing on how we can experiment with Beatles influences in order to bring emotion to our piece. The Beatles are known for their incredible narratives in their songs; they always tell a story. We explored having characters singing out songs on-stage to become a performance to avoid it becoming too musical theatre stylized, when our intention is to tell a story without being overly emotional in our portrayal of it. With inspiration from some of Milne's poems and our own lyrics, we attempted our songs, stripping them back from becoming overly emotional to focus on telling a story. With music for Milne's death established using dissonant chords in an 'A Cappella' styling, we found the emotion came naturally, evoking an emotional reaction through the collectiveness of the voices and the tension already present in the scene as the song takes place. The grand piano was our main instrument, giving a rich timbre and fulfilling texture to allow the emotion to come naturally to the song. After Milne's passing, we used a combination of drama and music to form an antiphonic 'A Cappella' piece, shown with Walt Disney's representatives hassling Daphne (Milne's wife) for the rights. Its used to show their persistence at obtaining the rights through a simplistic and repetitive melody to reflect the rise and fall of emphasising spoken words. With the spoken antiphonic style, the narrative is easy to understand as they persist with her ('give us or sell us the rights'). We experimented with harmonising the song but found it was most effective with a 3-part harmony over 'rights', giving an attitude to what they're after whilst emphasizing the point of what they want. By combining it into a scene of drama, it adds tension and fits into our own narrative as Daphne persists 'no'.

With devising drama, we looked at what makes Alan Milne, Milne. We looked into the lives of our grandparents to establish a routine an elderly man would be accustomed to doing everyday by acting it out to each other. It was difficult to interpret this through an ensemble style, so we looked at representing Milne through a puppet, so we often had to individually stand out so we could see the errors in our manipulation of Milne. When we found coherent movements for his routine, we looked at the routine itself: drinking tea; playing music and feeding the ducks at the park. When the puppet moved fluently, it worked effectively on-stage to create the illusion of an elderly man, but we have to ensure we're fully concentrated and we keep our facial expressions blank so the audience are drawn to the puppet rather than the puppeteers. It was easiest to work as a shoal, keeping minimal distance from each other to enable maximum control of the puppet and also because working further apart means we couldn't work on any of each other's mistakes when performing on the night. It would've become messy when our focus is entirely on Milne.

We also had to experiment with transitions, key when I replace the puppet as Milne. We originally thought it was best to give Milne a scarf, his symbol which anyone could wear in order to multi-role Milne. We found the best transition came by actually using a coat, which is already representative of Milne's body when he is shown through a puppet. After Milne's stroke, we developed a scene where carers would take care of Milne, helping with his daily routine but shown through dance style movements, which add an underlying beat to his monotonous life and to enhance the fact they are doing the routine for him. As the routine builds, I am sat centre stage controlling the puppet and gradually stripping it of its parts before placing the coat on,

taking on the emotion and frailty of Milne in the situation to signify a character change. It's a harrowing image, which I felt sent a message to the audience showing how Milne only regains his humanity as he nears the end of his life. I look frightened and alone, showing what the character has become and what's left of him. Whilst it's sad to watch, it's also shown to use Churchill's montage technique, flashing through Milne's years in care. The carers increase in speed and rhythm reflects the years flying in front of him ('week 5', 'year 2 week 29') as it opens the audience's eyes to what he's put under every year.

Dance was difficult to incorporate when a lot of the work's based on creating mood through scenes of drama and music, but we found dance became the strongest art form to explore Milne's stroke. It allowed more freedom for movement and offered a unique interpretation of a stroke that's yet to be explored. Strokes involve physical decomposition; losing control of the body. After exploring through a montage sequence of Milne's desire for everyday help post-stroke, we wanted to echo this for the stroke dance, showing Milne, played by Josh, becoming wrapped in an elastic material bound and out of control in how he moves. By using other performer's to keep with the ensemble style, they control Milne and represent the loss of ability in his body, taking control of his limbs when he no longer can himself. We thought of showing Milne dance downstage, showing isolation and also to show him fighting the stroke as he tries to pull from the strands of elastic, jumping to break from it and pivoting in an attempt to escape fate. With the performer's echoing the carer's on his life, their strength is enlarged through their unison, showing the strength and support needed for Milne. It shows the audience the seriousness of his situation and the reality of a stroke through the need for them to act together, united. Rehearsal was key to keeping safe, so warm-up and weight-taking were essential to ensure our muscles were prepared for lifts.

After performing our piece, I believe we were highly successful at matching our intentions of informing the audience about this man's life and his demise, exploring his time from being an elderly man through to his death and what became of his work. By using the ensemble style and facing the audience, we could communicate directly with them as to what this man has gone through. When we show Walt Disney addressing his assistants, we are all stood downstage centre, staring out into the audience. It makes it clear for the audience to see what is going on and also when Disney encourages ideas about Winnie The Pooh, it draws in the audience due to their open nature.

I was concerned that our constant multi-rolling would perhaps cause some confusion for the audience, but through making our transitions clear, we ensured our characterisation showed a clear change and the audience responded positively. With the Disney scenes, we used change in costume, applying jackets and sunglasses to reflect a character-change and applying a swagger to reflect the supposed 'coolness' of being Disney's assistants. I used an exaggerated bend in the knees in my walk to apply a swagger and also to satirise the idea of having to be a certain level of 'coolness' to work for Disney.

By combining dance and drama, we used a 'drawing dance', as Disney declares for us to 'Draw! Draw! Draw!'. The scene has the audience anticipating for the characters to draw, but to suddenly break into pedestrian movement to represent drawing, allowing the audience to react, laughing at the contrast and the ridiculous nature the assistants are going through in order to give Disney their best image of



Pooh they can. By rolling around and using large circular arm movements to show drawing, it satirises the prospect of designing a children's character, allowing the audience to laugh as the violin adds quick, sharp beats, applying tension as the characters finish their drawings. It worked smoothly, gaining the desired reaction for the audience whilst matching our intentions to satirise Disney through this scene.

However, I believe the segment involving Milne's stroke didn't work very successfully. With Milne approached by strangers and to suddenly transition to being covered in elastic felt slightly unclear. By saying 'I can't speak' and 'I can't move my arm', it helped to bring across the idea of panic, which did make the audience sit up, anticipating what was going to happen. The drama slowly shifted to dance, as movements sped up and became intensified, with harder tugging on the elastic and sharper movements, but with the majority of performers positioned downstage left, the relationship between Milne and the other performer's didn't feel clear and I don't believe it was able to show Milne's pain strongly enough to the point of showing the suffering involved with a stroke.

Overall, I believe I succeeded on my intentions. I felt whilst there were some issues with clarity, I do believe we were able to truly show what Milne was going through his final days, and how Disney's interpretation of his works is how most people perceive him. I feel our combination of the three art forms allowed us to explore ways of telling his life in new and exciting ways, such as using dance to explore a stroke, and that we did justice to the author and to the community where he spent crucial year's of his life discovering who he was going to become.