

**G401 - Piece Two**

**Candidate 1: Joshua**

**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 (max 20)	18	Josh has a broad and detailed understanding of a variety of techniques and styles in all three disciplines. His application of these in practice is usually detailed and analytical. A couple of points could use further elaboration. His linking of the arts is excellent. Intention and effect are analysed in detail. Some examples could have been better selected in the drama section of part 1.
Understanding and evaluation of process and performance (max 12)	10	A detailed discussion of the process which is driven by intention and desired effect. Again, some further elaboration of points is required at times. However there are other points which succinctly review and evaluate the process and performance with originality and in great detail.
Quality of language (max 8)	6	This is well written, easy to read and shows a keen understanding. There are some errors in spelling and grammar and a few points which become a bit vague. However, there is also accurate use of terminology, clarity of ideas even when dealing with complex concepts and an excellent range of expression.

**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)	19	Josh is a very talented performer in all three disciplines. At times his exuberance can mean a loss of subtlety, but his support and leadership of the ensemble are extremely strong and energetic. His dance skills are broad and effective, as demonstrated in the 'stroke' dance and the 'fight' sequence between Milne and his son. His characterisation of Milne in the 'stroke' shows great commitment and he is equally strong in comic roles for example the Disney character or Christopher Robin at christmas which employs excellent comic timing. Musically, Josh's voice is strong and precise. His harmony work in the funeral scene and final song are impressive as is his accompaniment of the 'if I were a king' poem on piano.
<b>Total (max 70)</b>	<b>63</b>	

## CREATING PERFORMANCE

### Individual Devising Projects

Improvisation - Improvisation is spontaneous ideas you create in response to a stimulus.

The stimulus for our music piece was an extract taken from "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" by Bertolt Brecht. Reading the extract, about a woman (Grusha) and her decision of whether to take or leave a child crying out to her, we brainstormed the emotions that we felt most strongly stood out from it and so we thought we could show the desperation of the child and the indecision of Grusha. To show this, we explored taking words directly from the extract and using them as lyrics, therefore telling a story to audience. We improvised with a piano, using chords in different keys we thought established our mood of anxiety. We tried a C-major key, although happy sounding, we felt when played slowly and lightly, the soft timbre sounded haunting, like a child calling out. This then allowed us to experiment with different chords in C-major, using notes within them to create our basic melody. We explored using different chord patterns, trying block chords for strength and broken chords for softness, the contrast illustrating Grusha's confusion, whether to take the child or not and her knowledge of the consequences. We discussed using a piano as part of the piece, feeling it helped further establish the mood and complimented our voices.

We had two stimuli for dance, one being a picture, entitled 'The Family' by Paulo Rego and the other a piece of music by Steve Reich called, 'After the War.' As a group, we discussed the stimuli, the emotions they conjured and how we were going to transfer them from the stimuli to our dance. We felt the picture showed a fight for control and the different layers and timings of the music created a feeling of madness, so we started improvising actions around those words, one where we quickly jerked our heads with our hands against them, shaking and moving around our faces, almost like shivering, which created the sense of being stuck in a nightmare and wanting to escape. We created a basic motif, which was a unison jump where we bent our legs behind and threw our arms over our heads, the contorted shape of our bodies adding further to the idea of madness. We improvised spontaneously in a contemporary style, as we felt it fitted with the music and would be easy to convey our powerful themes, due its free movement and use of levels.

Our stimulus for drama was a poem called 'Office Friendships.' Being a funny poem about different relationships in an office, we thought our piece was for entertainment, wanting to perform in a caricature style, as it allowed us to heighten our physicality. We brainstormed many sexually tense situations that could occur in an office. Our ideas ranged from someone being sent a dirty email to simple, awkward conversations between colleagues. After developing a basic narrative, we discussed what physicality the characters should have and their effect, leading us to experiment with comic characters, using inoffensive stereotypes, such as an 'office perv' and an 'office loser,' the contrasting characters working well in creating awkward situations, that involved the use of both body and dramatic tension.

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Rehearsal – Rehearsal is the development and repetition of ideas you created in improvisation in order to perfect them. (kw) (opp)

While rehearsing for our music piece, we used repetition for the first two verses, to create a solid structure and then selected the lyrics from the extract that illustrated the emotions of the characters. We practiced the use of suspension, for example when we sang 'evening turns to night,' as one member of the group sang a 'C', the other sang a 'D'. The clash of notes was resolved by the changing of 'C' to 'B,' the resolved chord creating a rich timbre. We added a <sup>details?</sup> key change at the end of our bridge 'Terrible is the temptation to do good, do good,' leading into our third verse, which created a sense of hope, the image of the child calling to Grusha desperately, 'Woman, help me.' We focused on rhythm, the first three verses being slow which led to a fourth verse, where the rhythm changed to a faster tempo, portraying the happiness Grusha felt when sitting with the child, 'For a long time, she sat with the child.' When Grusha steals the child, 'Like a thief, she sneaked away,' we returned to a slower rhythm, leading to a climax in which we perfected using the crescendo in our voices to create a sharper timbre and to add to the dramatic tension. We would listen to one another; helping each other to perfect our harmonies. I rehearsed singing the song in different ways, altering the dynamics of my voice, choosing to sing the child's crying with a breathy, soft timbre and Grusha's thoughts with a mix of power and falsetto to show how she is in two minds. (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp)

For our dance rehearsals, we worked on our relationships, such as me dancing individually with the girls, developing sequences that showed my violent relationship with each of them such as aggressive lifts, addressing our narrative of me overpowering and abusing three girls before they take their revenge on him. Any lifts we did we repeated many times in order to make sure they were safe. To signal changes in music, we altered the dynamics by moving slower, practicing the actions to make sure they looked meaningful yet graceful. We added a floor section, improving our use of space in which we would crawl towards the audience, hoping to intimidate and threaten our audience, adding to our theme of a 'nightmare.' We practiced using canon to show the fight for control in our piece and so developed a fast paced, modern section, containing quick, sharp actions in which one person began the movement, and then another two joined in, followed by myself. To learn this, we used counts to help us perfect our timing due to its fast speed. We would also constantly repeat it, to clarify any misunderstood actions, in order for the action to look perfect and have the right effect. (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp)

During our drama rehearsals, we put our characters in to tense situations and then built a structure around them. For example, the 'office gay' would stand behind the 'office loser' at the water fountain, gazing at the back of his head, longing for his attention and so he sniffs his neck, the long pause as the 'loser' turns around creating high tension between the characters. To help pacing, we developed transitions that were smooth and snappy, for example, the 'office gay' would nervously run away from the 'office loser' only to be slapped on the bum by his own admirer, this movement acting as a transition leading into another section. We worked on our characterisation, adding comic features to each of them, so the 'office perv' would have a sexy walk where he would swing his hips, and the 'office loser' would try to make conversation but everybody would constantly swear at him to go away. We worked on introducing the characters to the scene with an exchange of dialogue between (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp) (kw) (opp)

them using only their names, and we would vary the pitch of how we said them to keep the conversation entertaining and fresh. We mastered using very little dialogue between characters; any chosen dialogue was quick and entertaining. To perfect this we would step out from the scene and watch each other, giving tips on how to deliver a certain line to provoke the right reaction from the audience.

Performance – Performance is a full energy, perfected presentation of your ideas to an audience.

Before our music performance, we warmed up our voices using scales and diaphragm exercises. In the performance, I stood behind the piano as my partner played it, this way the audience could clearly see both of us. We performed the piece confidently, evidence that our rehearsals had helped us perfect it. In the climax, I felt I sang very controlled, ascending in power which created a much darker timbre, before hitting the final note (a top G) in full belt, creating a piercing timbre. I think my voice may have overpowered my partners; showing I perhaps needed more control over my voice so that the polyphonic texture could have had full effect. Because of a sore throat, some higher notes were flat and strained, demonstrating I must use my voice more carefully. If I were to do it again I would use my head voice for higher notes, therefore taking away the strain and demonstrating more variety in my voice to show emotion.

Before our dance performance, our group stretched together, making sure our bodies were warm so we didn't injure ourselves and that we would be able to fully energise every action. I felt we really attacked the dance, performing with integrity and getting into character, telling the audience the story, the madness and the fight for control, which is what we wanted. Our opening was strong, minimalistic yet effective. I felt transitions needed to be clearer in places but generally felt we did well moving from one section to another, especially when highlighting the action between me and the girls individually. I also felt I needed more control in certain actions which would have helped build the dramatic tension. We used the space well, building good relationships with one another and performed our dance with an excellent sense of attack, with good presentation.

Our drama was performed with energy and enthusiasm, heightening the physicality of our characters and focusing on the tense moments to show the audience their personalities and relationships with each other. The audience reacted positively to our caricature stereotypes, laughing continually throughout the performance. We set the scene well, our proxemics of standing 6ft apart from each other in formation while miming typing gave the audience an early indication of our office setting. Highlights included my character's erotic dance across the stage, where I led with my groin and moved slowly using my hips, which built tension on stage. Another highlight was when a dirty email was sent around the office, and my character filmed a video response by lifting his shirt and rubbing his nipples, again the slow movement of him rubbing his chest with a perverted look on his face created tension on stage but comedy for the audience. All lines and cues were perfect in the performance, we created a range of tensions from awkward silences to the 'office orgy' and our dramatic timings were evidently effective due to our audience's reaction.

## The Community Piece

Our Community Piece stimulus was Alan Milne, known as A.A Milne. He relates to our community as he attended Trinity College in Cambridge, the city in which our sixth form is located. A.A Milne was an established author, most known for the creation of teddy bear character Winnie the Pooh and children's poems. My group was focusing on the death of Milne and what happened when Disney bought the rights to Winnie the Pooh after his death, as well as incorporating the new Winnie the Pooh book, "Return to Hundred Acre Wood." We wanted the whole of the piece to inform the audience about Milne's life, his difficulties with his son as well as Pooh's overriding success. We, as a group, wanted to emotionally engage with the audience, building up to the climax of Milne's death. We wanted to shock them at how his relationship with his son was still unresolved by the time of his death as well as create different contrasting moods like the sudden change between his funeral and the selling of the rights.

As we were given a sensitive part of his life, we wanted our music to be emotional, using close harmonies and strong melodic lines to convey the sad emotions to the audience and so we were particularly inspired by 'The Beatles,' due to their range of styles and strength of character emotion in their lyrics. For our dance, we wanted to work in mainly a pedestrian movement style as its link to everyday movement would help build characterisation, and were therefore inspired by choreographer Matthew Bourne's use of it, as he successfully uses the style to clarify different characters and use them to provoke different reactions from his audience. As our part of the stimulus was widely spread over time, for our drama we wanted to use montage to show this, and were inspired by Caryl Churchill, whose frequent use of this technique in her plays incorporates different styles of drama to show different periods of time and introduce different characters so a scene in the style of realism to address strong emotions to an audience would be directly followed by a scene performed in a satirical style, entertaining the audience. We wanted to use the technique similarly, feeling the contrast in styles would keep our audience engaged.

We were to perform at the Robinson Theatre, located at our sixth form. We had tried to secure Trinity College as a location, due to its relation to our piece, but were unable to do so. Other attempts to find venues linked to Trinity College were unsuccessful; therefore we had to settle for our own theatre. This had both positive and negative effects on our performance. It was positive as it was a designated performance space that had a dance floor and good acoustics. We were also then not concerned with difficulties that could arise in a different venue, such as the height of the space and hard floors. However, performing at the Robinson Theatre meant there was no added dimension to our performance and there would be little atmosphere in comparison to a non-theatre space, as our theatre is not linked to our stimulus.

Once obtaining our stimulus, we began brainstorming ideas of how we could finish the story of Milne's life in a way to satisfy the audience and give them a resolute ending. We had the idea of carrying a musical motif through the piece, and so began experimenting with chords, spontaneously playing around major chords on a piano that would create the uplifting sound we were aiming for, the piano also adding a rich timbre. We then began looking at the poems

of Milne, in hope to use them as lyrics to this music. We like, 'Wind on the hill,' as we felt the lyrics acted as a metaphoric image of Milne's life, "Where the wind comes from, nobody knows," the "wind" representing Milne's story, giving a sense of finality to the piece. We improvised further, creating a strong melodic line, experimenting with close harmonies in thirds and fifths, similar to that of 'The Beatles,' the polyphonic texture creating a thick, layered sound.

We experimented with Churchill's use of montage as an idea to show all the memories Milne is having as he slowly edges towards his death. We improvised different scenes that related to Milne's life, such as being in the army or the birth of Christopher Robin, playing around with different characters, acting satirically as the soldiers by having a heightened physicality, arms swinging and knees lifted high. For the birth, we'd have the girl playing Mrs. Milne on the floor screaming, while everyone stood around her with different expressions, such as Milne looking anxious, contrasting another looking excited. As we were experimenting with the montage technique, we came up with ideas for transitions between the memories, and found we could use props to take us from one image to another. One prop we tried worked very well was a thin white cloth that could be used as a veil at a wedding, the sheet as Mrs. Milne gives birth before being whipped in to a small heap to represent the actual baby.

We also experimented with physical theatre, discussing different ways of how to show Milne's old age. We played with the idea of using a simple 'head and coat' puppet for him. We came up with a 'morning routine' for the puppet, how we would show his trip to the park, what he would do and see, giving us the opportunity to play around with comic characters he could see in the park, like an unfit jogger, who's physicality would be heavy, moving slowly but with a facial expression of strain and effort. The puppet would watch these people, being controlled by three of us who would move his head, the different angles revealing to the audience different expressions off of its plain face. It would move by us moving forwards ourselves, one foot in front of the other, in which the arms of the coat would swing back and forth.

To show Milne's stroke we wanted to express his pain and shock through movement, so we experimented with sharp, intense actions such as body jolts, to illustrate the sudden pain Milne feels. We then tried different dynamics, slower movements that would gradually intensify, like the slow elongation of a trembling arm. We then tried different lifts and weight taking actions, like Milne leaning on one of our sides, so we were hip to hip, and then the supporter was able to lift and move him, portraying the weakness and restraint of Milne to the audience.

For rehearsals we began developing our ideas and combining the art forms to add strength and diversity to the scenes. We further developed the 'morning routine' idea with the puppet. But this time we showed the routine after he had his stroke, and how he now has carers doing everything for him. We developed our characterisation for the carers, by making them walk very upright hands clasped together and talk in a high pitched, patronising tone. We wanted to show the length of time that Milne had between his stroke and death, so we combined the drama of the scene with dance, using pedestrian movement in the style of Matthew Bourne,

that represented what the nurses did every day, such as for 'Wake up,' they would mime opening curtains. To improve the dynamics of the movement, after a repetition of the routine, they would state a time period such as, "Year two, week four," and the more times they repeated the routine, the dynamics would build, actions becoming more aggressive and the speed increasing. Due to the increasing speed and repetition of the sequence, we would practice each movement, using slower counts to perfect the actions and unison technique. We then worked on the vocals, wanting to demonstrate to our audience the selfishness of the nurses, how they are tired of doing the same routine every day. As we had to speak fast while moving fast, we discussed places to take breathes, going over the speed of the words to make sure they were clear and controlled, so the effect of our growing hostile tones wouldn't be lost on the audience.

We developed some music to compliment the stroke dance, a violin solo that helped conjure the mood of 'pain' due to its sharp timbre. Using the violin, we were able to fully choreograph our movements and build on the routine to achieve its maximum potential of showing Milne's struggle. We introduced long pieces of elastic to the dance, intending to wrap them around Milne, hoping that when tugged, the stretch of the material would illustrate the internal strain of Milne's body to the audience, adding dialogue to encourage this such as "I can't move my arm," spoken by those acting as the cause of the stroke, building relationships in the dance between Milne and those acting as the causes of the stroke, as it was them pulling him. We thought the dialogue also directly showed the audience what was happening. The elastic built our use of space in the dance, as its stretch allowed us to develop actions that involved large amounts of distance between us, but that kept the focus mainly on Milne.

The song that we had started and experimented with in our improvisation time was combined with a stylised interview with Milne at the beginning of his career. The interview discussed touching areas of Milne's life such as his son and we thought soft playing of the music under the audio of the interview helped produce a very calm mood, and build the scene to a level which we thought the audience would really admire Milne. Not wanting to detract from Milne, we practiced that, as the journalists, our focus and eye contact would always be towards him, which encourages audience to attract to Milne's character. We extended this further, by breaking out from the interview after Milne answered a question to sing the motif of the song, a strong melodic line with many harmonies built on top. We rehearsed our harmonies continually, making sure everyone was confident in what they were singing, as in this song we wanted the beautiful sounds that the polyphonic texture made to come across effortlessly.

In the performance itself, I felt we combined the art forms successfully to create a certain moods. For example, in the Disney scene, we wanted to entertain the audience and therefore conjure a comic mood. So when we drew our pictures of 'Pooh,' the pedestrian movement dance style we used incorporated funny, sharp actions, which gave the illusion we were drawing, accompanied by Mr. Disney playing violin, the sharp timbre adding directly to the comic quality of the dance, as it looked like he was controlling us. Accompanied with Mr.



Disney repeatedly yelling "Draw!" at the assistants, this combination of arts helped create the comic mood which we sensed the audience were enjoying. ✓

I also felt we changed moods successfully. For example, the montage sequence of Milne's dream of memories was comic, incorporating props like the drum that were used for different things, like an army marching rhythm, or a Christmas present, to support the slick transitions. When we followed this into the second dream, we wanted to completely juxtapose the first, create darker and more disturbing mood as Milne came face to face with his son, which was shown through a tense, aggressive dance. The dance created a very spontaneous, violent atmosphere, as 'Milne' and 'Christopher' would lift and throw each other to the floor and 'Christopher' screamed violently as he ran at his father to attack him. This natural quality to the dance I thought helped the audience engage in the moment with us, therefore we successfully changing the mood. ✓

I thought our opening started the piece nicely; the combination of the gentle piano and singing creating a pleasant atmosphere which resulted in a very tranquil mood for when we formed the puppet. The music and drama of us forming and moving the puppet complemented each other, the audience warming to the puppet. The accompaniment of comic interjections such as when the puppet fed the ducks allowed the audience to identify with him and then suddenly sympathise with him when he was crowded by fans. ✓

One area that could have been improved was tidying up certain routines. In the stroke dance, although I felt we used the elastic effectively to restrain Milne, creating interesting shapes with our bodies and altering the dynamics by changing the speed of our movements, we sometimes appeared unsure of our exact movements, which therefore could have lessened the impact of us trying to show the audience Milne's struggle. ✓

Our inspiration from our practitioners allowed us to use a variety of styles in all three disciplines. Throughout the piece I could sense from the audience that we were effectively and constantly changing the atmosphere, informing them about the conclusion of Milne's life through entertaining sequences that combined all three art forms and we therefore successfully achieved our aim. ✓