

# **Performance Studies**

Advanced GCE **A2 7873**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3873**

## **Report on the Units**

---

**June 2006**

**3873/7873/MS/R/06**

OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) is a unitary awarding body, established by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate and the RSA Examinations Board in January 1998. OCR provides a full range of GCSE, A-level, GNVQ, Key Skills and other qualifications for schools and colleges in the United Kingdom, including those previously provided by MEG and OCEAC. It is also responsible for developing new syllabuses to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers.

The mark schemes are published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by Examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

The reports on the Examinations provide 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 syllabus content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Mark schemes and Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers.

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

© OCR 2006

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annersley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 870 6622  
Facsimile: 0870 870 6621  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

## CONTENTS

### Advanced GCE Performance Studies (7873)

### Advanced Subsidiary GCE Performance Studies (7873)

#### REPORT ON THE UNITS

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
*	Chief Examiner's Report	4
2556	The Language of Performing Arts	6
2559	Community Performance Project	8
2557	Contextual Studies 1	10
2560	Contextual Studies 2	18
2558/2561	Performance Realisation/Student Devised Performance: General Comments	25
2558	Performance Realisation	29
2561	Student Devised Performance	36
*	Grade Thresholds	43

## Chief Examiner's Report

### General Comments

The number of candidates aggregating for Advanced Subsidiary GCE Performance Studies (3873) in June 2006 was 2893 and the number aggregating for Advanced GCE Performance Studies (7873) was 2267. Across both qualifications, there was a pleasing increase in the number of candidates obtaining a Grade A. This increased from 7.8% to 8.3% in AS between June 2005 and June 2006 and from 7.2% to 8.3% in A Level. The factors that may have contributed to this are outlined in the body of this report together with areas identified by the examining and moderating teams as inhibiting good performance.

#### **2556: The Language of Performing Arts (Coursework)**

There were no major issues with this unit. Virtually all candidates used the prescribed template for the submission of the written commentary. There was some concern that a minority of candidates persisted in discussing the workshop sessions rather than the performance pieces they had devised. The majority had, however, focused well on the performance work.

Moderators were keen to insist on good standards of written communication and this is an area where Centres are particularly encouraged to maintain rigorous standards. In particular, weaker candidates would be well encouraged to move completely away from a diary-based approach in favour of a detailed reflective commentary.

#### **2557: Contextual Studies 1 (Written Examination)**

In spite of a good response to the paper, there were fewer high performing candidates this session than in June 2005. Examiners pointed out the higher-than-usual number of formulaic answers to the paper and that may well account for the outcome. There was relatively little variation on the range of works chosen for study in this session and examiners were earnest in their desire to encourage greater breadth to promote fresh and exciting work from candidates.

#### **2558: Performance Realisation (Practical Examination)**

Performance standards in this paper remained constant and examiners reported similar strengths and weaknesses as in previous sessions: generally strong devised dance work, variable realisations of repertoire in Drama and a very mixed bag in Music, ranging from spine-tingling pieces of devised music in the style of Steve Reich to 'my-Mother-said-I-never-should' versions of some Gershwin songs! Since there were so many possible combinations of choices, it was not possible to identify any one combination of options that produced stronger or weaker work.

#### **2559: Community Performance Project (Coursework)**

The single most important feature underpinning excellent work in this unit continues to be the extent to which the performance style is clear. Throughout their reports, Moderators reported that candidates often described their pieces as eclectic but in reality demonstrated confusion as to what they believed they were trying to achieve. The quality of written communication remained as in previous sessions, although a worrying number of candidates threw marks away through sloppy work in this area.

**2560: Contextual Studies 2 (Written Examination)**

This was the first opportunity to sit the revised examination. Feedback from Centres was confirmed by that from the examining panel: the new examination provides a much fairer test of whether candidates have understood the nature of the topic they are studying. There was a very pleasing boost in the number of candidates achieving the top grade on this unit with a 2.5% increase obtaining a Grade A and with no reduction of standards whatsoever.

The most obvious improvement was in the number of candidates who actually attempted to answer the question! In previous sessions, a number of candidates unhelpfully attempted to memorise aspects of the works they had studied and then trot these out in answer to virtually question that was asked. In the new questions, credit is given for lateral discussion, backed up by close reference to a wider range of works. It was gratifying to find that candidates responded so well to it, and also that the majority had no difficulty in writing for two hours in response to a single question.

**2561: Student Devised Performance (Practical Examination)**

There was evidence that candidates had been better prepared in dealing with the requirements of working from a commission. There were fewer examples of groups who had completely ignored their chosen commission or wrenched it to make it fit their pre-conceived ideas. This had a favourable impact on the grades of the better candidates. That said, the quality of the performance work itself remained of a similar standard to previous sessions and the report outlines in detail those aspect of performance work that candidates would be well advised to work on.

## 2556 - Language of Performing Arts (Coursework)

The majority of Centres provided the work by the date required with the necessary documentation. Centres should be aware that when a sample is required by the Moderator they must send the sample required. If the necessary work is not sent it could mean a delay in the publication of marks. Submissions were well annotated making it clear where marks had been awarded. Centres that had marked the work thoroughly also provided full comments on the CCS which did not simply repeat the marking criteria.

Centres who achieved high marks were those who taught a clear range of skills and who chose stimulus material which enabled the candidates to devise securely in the relevant art form. Abstract stimuli such as pictures or poems do not always produce the best results for the discrete art forms. The Specifications make it clear that candidates should develop a range of skills in each area. There were some examples of excellent work where Centres had used stimulus material specific for each art form such as focusing on Jazz Dance, or the writing of a vocal piece where musical lines are developed and used together and in contrast. The development of line and its use as a single entity, in combination, canon and contrast, with the use of rhythm and pace automatically lends itself to teaching and understanding conceptual links between the art forms. This particular Centre built the unit around delivering the common language of the art forms rather than choose abstract stimulus material. The latter often has the effect of the candidates 'starting from scratch' in each performing area and having to force links at a later date. There were several instances where able candidates were writing that they were unable to write about the full range of musical techniques required because their stimulus material was 'Stomp'. These initial performance pieces should be in the discrete art forms so that candidates can show clear knowledge develop their understanding and show how concepts link within the three art forms. It is important that Centres consider the material they use for this so that candidates are guided appropriately.

Centres were using the structure for the submissions as outlined in the Specifications and there were few rubric errors. Good responses came from candidates where the stimulus material was applicable to that particular art form and candidates could develop these basic devising and performing skills and use them in their work. High marks were seen from candidates who showed their knowledge of the techniques required by the Specifications through their direct use in the practical work.

### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

Candidates were rightly awarded high marks where they had shown a clear understanding across the three art forms. Where this is not the case then marks should not be awarded in the top band(s). Moderators reported that adjustments to marks tended to be made for an uneven approach to the art forms, a limitation due to the stimulus material studied or incorrect application of technical terms. It is expected that candidates will show their understanding through the pieces that they have devised and not through a list of professional performances that they have seen. There were more examples of candidates focusing on the performance pieces rather than the discussion of workshops and warm-ups. Candidates should avoid discussion on warm-ups and workshops, unless skills are directly related and used in one of the four performance pieces.

- Discuss equally all three art forms displaying an understanding that arises through the devising of the four performance pieces.
- Use appropriate technical language clearly and correctly.

## **Process**

Commentaries should be structured around the Improvise – Rehearse – Perform process. Candidates who achieved high marks were objective and used examples from each art form to highlight the three aspects of the devising process. It is important that candidates show understanding of what it means to improvise and that focused improvisation will yield ideas which can be moulded. High marks were also achieved in submissions where there was a clear understanding of rehearsal. In these commentaries there was an understanding of the refinement of skills in order to produce a secure performance.

Adjustments to marks occurred when candidates wrote in a narrative fashion, almost telling a story, without highlighting the significance of their decisions. Less secure work came from candidates who suggested that the performance had not been prepared for properly and that the process was lacking in rigour and understanding. Moderators reported that they were clear examples of Centres teaching the performing process to candidates so that there was a clear understanding of the devising framework. These submissions justly received high marks.

- Within the devising structure of Improvise – Rehearse – Perform discuss objectively the shaping of the performance material.
- Avoid lists of colleague's names and anecdotal details about the group.

## **Links**

Moderators reported that this is still the single most likely area to produce an adjustment to the marks. High marks are achieved when candidates are taught how the art forms compliment each other and how, for example, there is a rhythm and pace within all three art forms that can be controlled by the performers and used in combination in a devised piece. Through work in the individual art forms candidates should be discovering and exploring the areas where the art forms compliment each other and noting this in their discussions. From this work should develop the integrated piece where the three art forms then naturally work together. Moderators reported several instances where Centres had produced schemes of work where each art form showed how a number of key concepts worked and the candidates experienced a common language in all their lessons e.g. where the development of expectation and narrative is taught in Music, Drama and Dance.

- Use a 'common language' when delivering lessons to candidates to encourage exploration of how the art forms work together.

## **Quality of Language**

Candidates who wrote in an objective style, developing ideas within tightly focused paragraphs justly received high marks. Where candidates are unable to develop a sustained argument or write in narrative, subjective style the commentary should be marked lower in the mark range. There is a tendency for candidates to provide a set of bullet points, or a list, evident when a significant number of sentences begin with "We then did" or variants on this. This style should not be awarded high marks and is a significant reason why an adjustment of the marks was made. High marks should not be awarded to candidates who do not present their work printed out appropriately. If a printer is running out of ink or has significantly damaged the paper it would be advisable to reprint the work.

- Avoid narrative lists.
- Use paragraphs of an appropriate length. Make a point, develop it, and then move on.
- Present the work as professionally as possible.

## **2559 - Community Performance Project (Coursework)**

The success of this unit depends on the choice of project and the style adopted for it. There were examples of some excellent work where Centres had chosen the project and the style from the outset so that candidates could undertake the necessary research and focus their devising. One piece submitted was about a shipwreck and performed on a beach with candidates emerging, dripping from tide pools. The candidates had obviously had a very real performance experience and the enthusiasm and quality of the learning experience was evident from the level of discussion.

It is the responsibility of each Centre to determine the style that the piece is in. Centres would not wish OCR to dictate the style and the responsibility must lie with the Centre to find the necessary supporting performance theory and teach this to the candidates. Moderators reported that where candidates were working in an eclectic style, this was used as an excuse to mention any practitioner that they had come across in the hope that the more mentioned then the more marks would be available. If an eclectic style is most appropriate it still needs to be justified and the practitioners identified so that this is used as a spring board for the research and devising of the piece. Adjustment to marks awarded were often made when submissions did not have a clear direction and the inclusion of practitioners appeared arbitrary as a candidate decided that what they were doing happened to remind them of something else.

A similar problem occurs when candidates state that they are using a post-modern style. Too often this was being used as a 'catch-all' style to enable the candidates to justify anything. Good work was seen from Centres where there was a clear focus on a style, or one aspect of a style, and candidates were able to assimilate this and develop an understanding through their devising.

More Centres are including a description of the performed piece as part of the unit content. This has the advantage of leaving the candidates free to discuss the devising without feeling obliged to write at length about every single scene.

### ***Knowledge and Understanding***

High marks were achieved by candidates who showed a clear understanding of the style and how the art forms were used in combination to achieve the stated effect of the performance. Adjustments had to be applied to work where either the style was unclear or there was insufficient knowledge and understanding about the art forms used. Performance theory and practitioners must be relevant to the style and an integral part of the discussion. Some candidates had problems when the total performance was made up of several different groups. It is intended that the candidate will be part of a performance that lasts for approximately 30 minutes. If a candidate is only part of a small section of this that lasts only 10 minutes they are unlikely to have the necessary knowledge and understanding to achieve high marks at this level. There were occasions when this caused an adjustment in the marks.

- Choose a focused style that can be clearly understood and related directly to the performance project.
- State the intended project, style and intent of the performance at the start of the submission.
- Clearly show how research of style informs the development of the piece.
- Give equal attention to the art forms used.



### **Process**

There were some excellent examples of work where candidates clearly demonstrated how knowledge and research of the style informed the shaping of the performance material. Where candidates showed the ability to bring together the research and development of the piece with the knowledge of the performance style they were justly awarded high marks. This excellence was supported by the clear understanding of the devising process which had been learnt during unit 2556. As with the Language of Performing Arts it is expected that the writing will be objective and not centred on narrative discussion about problems within the group.

- Discuss process in terms of *Improvise – Rehearse – Perform* objectively.
- Show how the piece was crafted from the research undertaken.
- Clearly show how the piece was refined and why creative decisions were taken.

### **Evaluation of Performance**

There were more examples of candidates clearly stating their performance intent at the beginning of the commentary and then evaluating their work against this at the end of the discussion. These candidates achieved high marks. Adjustments had to be made to the marks awarded where there was no performance intent and a paragraph had been added to the end of the commentary. If a candidate chooses to do this then marks should be awarded in the lower bands as appropriate. Candidates often discussed intent and the audience reaction within the main body of the commentary and used concluding paragraphs to draw together their argument and then evaluate outcome against the intent stated at the beginning of the commentary. This worked well and these candidates rightly gained high marks.

- State intent at the beginning of the commentary and evaluate the success of this at the end.
- Consider discussing the effect upon the audience within the main body of the commentary.

### **Quality of Language**

Candidates are expected to write in a clear, objective, evaluative style. Where this happened marks were high. Adjustments were made to the marks where the writing appeared to produce a list in a diary-like style. The problem with this unit is not to allow the main body of the text to become a narrative description of the piece. This inevitably leads to a simplistic written style. Candidates should make sure they can discuss their understanding of the style clearly and can spell the names of the relevant practitioners and techniques used.

- Write in a clear, objective style.
- Avoid unnecessary anecdotes that are not part of a reasoned line of discussion.
- Avoid writing a list.

## **2557 - Contextual Studies 1 (Written Examination)**

### **General Comments**

Once again most Centres appeared to have entered candidates for this examination in May so that they could work concurrently on the two linked units, 2557 and 2558.

Candidates' answers varied tremendously and again there were a significant number of candidates falling within the middle bands. All examiners commented that they had seen a very wide range of responses with the more sophisticated responses showing a deeper understanding of the practitioner's intent and included more relevant background research. However, there were far too many candidates who presented formulaic responses that therefore failed to answer the question directly and were often very generalised. It was also noted that candidates often resorted to formulaic responses when they seemed to have difficulty in terms of interpreting the question and its demands. Often in such cases candidates chose to either ignore the question completely and to produce a "shopping list" of techniques or to write in entirely general terms with little or no reference to the works studied. There were many examples of candidates who left the examiner to identify the question by inference, a situation further complicated when candidates failed to identify the question number that they believed they were responding to.

Many candidates included the appropriate performance vocabulary and it was felt that almost all candidates had a good or very good knowledge and understanding of the studied practitioners and their works but were not able to write in sufficient analytical detail or to apply that knowledge in a meaningful way to the question.

Middle band candidates would discuss techniques in abstract terms but could not contextualise points made in terms of specific reference to the work studied.

At the top end of the mark range responses were more structured and references were thoughtfully included, serving to exemplify any points made. Such candidates demonstrated a real familiarity with the studied works and a personal engagement and enthusiasm that made these responses a pleasure to mark.

The quality of written communication was variable with some examiners noting an improvement in the quality of language whilst others lamented the poor quality of communication with glaring spelling mistakes, including practitioner's names and the names of techniques and devices. Uneven and convoluted writing often obscured the work of weaker candidates and prevented their work from achieving higher marks.

Some candidates once again focused on their own practical work for 2558, writing lengthy accounts of their preparatory process. Identifying characteristics techniques and how they can be applied in performance might be an appropriate approach for some questions but personal creative diaries should not detract from the thrust of the question. A few candidates wrote what appeared to be a review of the practitioners work in very vague terms with no reference at all to any text whilst strongest candidates ensured that each idea was fully supported using specific moments in the studied works.

The experience of examiners was very diverse with some examiners commenting on the improvement in work this session and the lack of narrative accounts whilst other examiners highlighted a trend towards narrative accounts of the content of the studied works without recognition of the significance of the techniques and devices used within them and the effects created. Although the work often lends itself to the narrative, particularly with Newson's Physical

*Report on the Units Taken in June 2006*

Theatre and sometimes Brecht, it is expected that all candidates can see beyond the narrative in a more analytical way.

Examiners noted that success seemed to be even more determined by Centres rather than by the ability of the individual candidates. There was once again a resourcing issue as some candidates had obviously never seen live performances of their studied work, and indeed in many cases presumed that the practitioners works were created only for film and not for live performance at all,

Very few candidates made use of the notation paper provided to offer musically annotated examples to exemplify and those that did offered inaccurate responses. Strongest candidates clearly identified choreographic processes and movement material for the dance works, dramatic form and devices for the drama works and musical structure and techniques for the music works.

There were few rubric errors and no one attempted more than two questions although a few candidates were obviously answering a different question from the one indicated on the paper, There were a very few semi-illegible responses and Centres are once again reminded to check that the information on the candidate's answer booklet to ensure that the numbers of the questions they are responding to is identified, both alongside their responses and in the right hand column on the front of the booklet. This ensures that all candidates are marked in relation to the correct question.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **SECTION A – Dance**

#### **Christopher Bruce**

The most popular works studied were “Ghost Dances” and “Swansong”

- 1) This question was generally not as popular as question 2. Candidates often failed to get to grips with the question, often skirting around it and ignoring the “not statements” and discussing, or listing the techniques used by Bruce to create dance. Candidates were expected to be able to show how Bruce applies his work in order to achieve a powerful message and to reflect an understanding and appreciation of Bruce’s strongly held political and social beliefs. Strongest candidates were able to identify Bruce’s social conscience and to use key moments in the studied work to reflect that social conscience.

Weaker candidates did not seem to handle the demands of the question and tended to revert to the narrative style, failing to recognise the purpose of Bruce’s work. Some candidates spent much time describing the set and costumes, particularly for “Ghost Dances” or explored the episodic structure of both “Swansong” and “Ghost Dances” at length without relating their findings to the set question at all. This often resulted in a lack of analysis in relation to the choreographic devices. Stronger candidates showed an in-depth understanding and often used a range of works to illustrate their ideas.

- 2) The more popular question in this section that seemed to elicit far more sophisticated responses, particularly from those who managed to make intelligent comparisons with other works by Bruce.

Features were usually well explained and most candidates covered set, design, musical and choreographic features to varying levels of success whilst stronger candidates were also able to show a personal understanding of wider intention and influences. Some answers were quite pedestrian and were narrative accounts with offered no detailed examples from the studied works to exemplify ideas. A few candidates gave the impression that they were just writing everything that they knew about Bruce regardless of its relevance to the chosen question.

Weakest responses tended to consist of lengthy biographies of Bruce’s upbringing, his polio, his dance career, his love of vaudeville, commedia del’arte, Fred Astaire and his use of canes, followed by minor points about lighting, set design, costume and props with perfunctory reference to actual movement material. Few candidates used the terminology of key elements in Dance to describe their key moments.

#### **Lloyd Newson**

The most popular works studied were “Strange Fish”, “Enter Achilles”, “Cost of Living” and “Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men”

- 3) Candidates were expected to recognise that Newson’s work has characteristic features and to be prepared to identify those features but the focus of the question should be on the relationship between Newson and, through his performers, the audience. Many people believe that Newson’s prime objective is to shock with images that deliberately upset the sensibilities of the audience whilst pushing the performers to their absolute physical and emotional limits. Candidates could agree or disagree with the statement as long as they supported their arguments using specific examples from their studied work(s).

Some examiners felt that responses tended to be too generalised, consisting of descriptions of Newson's work in very general terms with statements such as "Newson challenges his dancers by asking them to take risks" being presented without then referring to the work to support any statements made. Many candidates were able to identify aspects of the works that might shock an audience but were unable to explain the reasons for Newson's decisions and the effect he wished to convey to the audience. Strongest candidates tended to focus on Newson's challenge being to communicate rather than merely shock.

- 4) The focus of this question is on the range of techniques which Newson uses to create a powerful visual, auditory and emotional experience, Newson himself has stated that his work is "physical theatre" and must therefore combine the theatrical elements with the movement material to create an effective piece of Total Theatre which is a synthesis of all the individual parts. Examiners noted that most candidates showed a real engagement and enthusiasm for the studied works. The availability of resources was reflected in responses that were able to cross reference different works.

Candidates could, on the whole, identify a wide range of theatrical Elements but tended to be rather vague on movement content. Some candidates answered in such a way that it was not clear that this was a dance work that they were discussing. Some candidates sidetracked into accounts of Newson's strange creative methods such as visiting cottaging locations so his performers could use the experience to generate ideas and weaker answers were pedestrian and overly narrative.

## SECTION B – Drama

### Bertolt Brecht

The most popular works studied were: “Caucasian Chalk Circle”, “Good Person of Schezwan”, “The Resistable Rise of Atruro Ui”

- 5) This was a popular question and the wording of the question helped the candidates maintain their focus on what the audience learns from the journey that they observe. However, many candidates chose to ignore the central character element of the question, often choosing instead to identify one or two pertinent points about the character and then proceeded to respond to the question as if it were a very general theory question. Weaker candidates who did detail a specific character often described their “story” without relating it to Brechtian style or techniques and how Brecht used the central character to convey a message or intent.

Stronger candidates were able to show an in-depth knowledge and understanding of Brecht’s work and were able to identify the purpose of the central character and to show the path they take through the action of the play, the choices they make throughout that journey and the consequences of those choices. Best candidates highlighted Brecht’s use of specific stylistic devices such as satire, irony, allegory and comedy to influence the audience’s learning. Only a few candidates recognised the importance of characterisation as a didactic device.

Examiners noted that some candidates seem to have not seen any live Brecht performances and this was often a disadvantage as they failed to appreciate the dramatic structure and flow of the work and how it unfolded in performance.

- 6) Candidates needed to have a clear command of the text that had been studied and its context in order to use references from it to illustrate their ideas regarding this question. Almost all of the Brecht plays have topical, contemporaneous or deliberate allegorical references in them in order to make the political point.

Weaker candidates did not have sufficient background knowledge to fulfil the demands of this question so resorted to formulaic answers that listed Brecht’s techniques. Strongest candidates were able to show an appreciation of the historical and social influences on Brecht and indeed there were some excellent examples of candidates who had obviously gained real ownership of their acquired knowledge and who were able to present their own ideas in an informed and intelligent way, using references from the text to prove their theories. Very few candidates managed to also comment on the cultural reference to art, music, sport, literature and self-conscious theatricality. Some candidates concentrated on the social and historical issues of the time and forgot to include any textual referencing.

### John Godber

The most popular works studied were: “Teechers”, “Bouncers” and “Shakers”

- 7) The more popular of the two Godber questions. Most candidates seemed to understand the question and candidates who had a good knowledge of Godber’s background and works and were able to make intelligent presumptions about why Godber’s work might be popular with contemporary audiences. The significance of Godber’s background as a TV writer and elements such as the use of popular locations were clearly understood by many candidates, particularly those who had not studied their work in isolation but who had cross referenced the work and knew how it fitted in to the canon of Godber’s work and how it was representative of Godber’s particular style and craft.

Many candidates ignored the “might” in the question and described why Godber was popular which gave the responses a very different slant than identifying not only what elements and techniques there are in Godber’s work but how they might contribute to making the works relevant to, and popular with, a modern audience.

Strongest candidates could identify both the techniques and Godber’s dramatic intention.

- 8) Godber’s work is heavily character driven and some roles have depth and are rounded out whilst others merely serve to colour the action or reflect a major character. Many candidates struggled to explain how Godber used the representation of the stereotype to communicate effectively to his chosen audience. Too many candidates were able to identify the stereotypes but could not discuss their purpose or the different ways in which they are used in Godber’s work.

Many candidates did not make specific reference to the work studied to demonstrate in context how stereotypes were being used. It was clear that some candidates were ignoring the “how” part of the question and were describing the “what” rather than analysing the “how”. A very few candidates were able to explore the difference between characters and stereotypes and presenting interesting arguments analysing Godber’s purpose in choosing to use either a character or stereotype.

## **SECTION C – Music**

### **Songs of George Gershwin**

The most popular works studied were: “Summertime”, “I got Rhythm”, “They can’t take that away from me” and “Someone to watch over me”

- 9) Although candidates may not cover all of the musical influence evident in the studied work they are expected to be able to discuss different musical influences in detail and to use specific examples from the songs studied to illustrate points made. Answers to this question were often quite autobiographical and examiners noted that there was a great variation in the quality of the responses presented, particularly in terms of in-depth musical knowledge and understanding.

Strongest candidates were able to explore a range of elements and there was a sense that these candidates had been curious and had investigated the lineage of popular music and how Gershwin fitted into that time line. They were able to identify the influence of Tin Pan Alley and the music publishing industry, how Gershwin evolved the “hit” song style, the influence of piano ragtime music, particularly the syncopated melody as well as diverse influences such as Jazz, Blues, Classical and Eastern European music.

Weakest candidates focused on only a couple of influences and described them, failing to recognise their significance and how they were reflected within the structure of Gershwin’s work.

Very few candidates used musical annotation to support statements.

- 10) Generally the more popular of the two Gershwin questions. Many examiners encountered the same problems as with question 9. Candidates were often able to identify elements of music but did not put them into a specific context, demonstrating how they worked in the songs studied. There was a lot of generalisation declaring that Gershwin used a particular musical element but then not explaining how he used it and to what effect.

Strongest candidates explored elements of music, such as Structure, Form, Harmony, Melody and Rhythm but went beyond merely identifying them and were able to explore their use in Gershwin’s work with insight and clarity. Often good musical notation was used to substantiate points made. Weakest candidates seemed to have learnt their responses by rote and there was no real sense of personal engagement or understanding of the works. A few candidates wrote long biographical accounts of Gershwin’s life and failed to differentiate between George and Ira discussing them as one entity.

Examiners noted on the lack of musical annotation to support ideas.

### **Steve Reich**

The most popular works studied were: “Clapping Music”, “Different Trains” and “Drumming”

- 11) There were very few responses to Reich in this session. Those that did reflected extreme negative or positive personal reactions to Reich’s work. Because many candidates seemed to have studied one work in isolation they did not really have the breadth of knowledge and understanding of the genesis of minimalist music in order to respond effectively to the question and to present a case either for or against the statement. Candidates were expected to have an understanding of the term “minimalist” as applied to Reich’s early works and those who had studied his later pieces would be able to appreciate that Reich rejects the term “minimalist” as his pieces evolve to contain larger structures, some of which rely on narrative and/or visual content.



Strongest candidates were able to show this progression and charted his evolution, using specific musical references to highlight this progression from his minimalist earlier work through to his later pieces that were less so.

- 12) Few candidates attempted this question and those that did seemed to understand the concept of Reich challenging traditional conventions but struggled when trying to identify how he challenged the traditions of “orchestral writing”. Candidates were expected to show how Reich rejected large orchestral forces in his earlier pieces in favour of small ensembles and used the minimum of means to create music that is a reaction against Western classical music traditions.

Strongest candidates identified influences from non–Western cultures and Reich’s experimentation with developing recording techniques as well as his use of short rhythmic or melodic cells to generate a whole composition. Weakest candidates could not make any valid comparisons between orchestral writing and Reich’s work because of limited knowledge so they tended to make general sweeping statements and to focus on Reich’s life and work without attempting to address the main thrust of the question at all

Again examiners noted that very few candidates supported their ideas with annotated examples.

## 2560 – Contextual Studies (Written Examination)

### General Comments

This was a fine start to the new version of this unit. Examiners consistently reported thorough knowledge and understanding of the area studied, the works and the practitioners, and many more candidates were addressing the question than in the previous version. The challenge of an extended essay answer over 2 hours did not seem to be a problem for the great majority of candidates and it certainly produced more thoughtful and thought-through answers. This new configuration also drew a greater number of high level answers than in the previous unit, with many candidates writing with genuine enthusiasm particularly in the post-modern approaches questions.

It was very heartening to see that most candidates right across the ability spectrum were equally confident between and across the three art forms. Whilst it was anticipated that it might have needed some time and encouragement for centres to make the change, they had clearly understood this important shift in focus in the revised unit. With that having been accomplished, it is now important that candidates are able to discuss the art forms in depth with terminology that is appropriate. For example, there was a tendency for candidates discussing *Showboat* to write about issues, rather than music, drama or dance in the American Musical. How does Hammerstein use character, dialogue, action, song? Bernstein's *West Side Story* was often discussed well in musical terms, especially rhythm and tempo, but often this was not then compared, contrasted or related in any way to the other two works. Dance works also tended to be discussed in terms of what happens rather than how it happens – i.e. the movement vocabulary used. These are indicative examples only, to point Centres in the way of developing their approach to this unit. In terms of vocabulary, it would not go amiss to re-visit the vocabulary introduced in the Language of Performing Arts (Unit 2556) and use that as the starting point for discussing works.

Most Centres had covered the range of required works, with only a very few where the candidates were not able to indicate three works for each of three practitioners. It is important to note that Centres should not use the same works in the American Musical to cover for two or three practitioners. This limits the range that candidates can use and ultimately the marks available. Similarly, Centres are reminded that the nine extracts studied “must equate to between four and six hours in performance”. It was very clear that in some cases, there had been both a sketchy overview and very short sequences considered in any detail. This was most evident in the identification of only three songs to represent the work of a composer/band. ‘Extracts’, in this case, should be from three different albums or shows and in the latter some acknowledgement of underscore, especially to emphasise the working between score and action in the Musical.

However, the “template answer” was very prevalent and had been learnt so well in some Centres that the whole entry produced the same answer, with the same references and irrespective of the question asked. Whilst this may help candidates who may struggle with this paper, this approach tends to disadvantage the more able candidates. Neither does it encourage candidates to demonstrate their individual knowledge and understanding. When candidates write with a sense of personal engagement with the work it is clear that they have not only absorbed the learning, but can synthesise that knowledge and understanding and apply it to the question. Centres are advised to adopt a more flexible approach to revision of the topic prior to the exam, which perhaps reminds of the range of what has been considered, rather than laying down a pre-prepared answer.

Some candidates had the view that a methodical work through the nine extracts, often with phrases like “the next extract I wish to consider...”, would suffice. This is not the intention of this unit. First and foremost, it is a study of one of three generic areas in relation to the performing arts, the specification expects that this be done by looking at the work of three practitioners in the three different art forms and three extracts from each practitioner's work. Credit was

awarded for candidates that took this approach in their answers. The essential problem with the “work through the extracts” approach is that it often denies candidates marks for a knowledge and understanding of the generic area.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, were the answers that gave overlong background to the generic area but had very little to say about the ways in which the three art forms worked within the specified time period. This was particularly obvious in the answers to the Twentieth Century American Musical, many of which insisted on lengthy, sometimes three pages, background on *The Black Crook*, Vaudeville, Burlesque, Minstrel Shows, Operetta, all more or less regurgitating textbook information that never got used again in the answer. This is not necessary and providing it is done sensibly and with authority, can be presumed when talking about the main period and works. For example, there were some good one line references to Fosse’s background in Burlesque and the obvious impact on his style.

Many Centres had given their candidates a very impressive amount of knowledge but needed to coach them in applying it to a range of possible questions. Candidates also need to identify their own references and examples, which helps personalise the answer, rather than rely on a stock few examples given to them. Evidence of planning varied from none at all, often this provided weak answers apart from the exceptional few, to three four pages, only half of which was used. There needs to be a happy medium and whilst spider diagrams are exceptionally helpful, it is always useful to see the essence of the question and the area studied at the centre of the ‘web’, rather than three ‘webs’ with the individual practitioners at the centre, and a range of remembered points about each, which may or may not be relevant to the answer. This is especially important when candidates misjudge the timing of their answer.

Post Modern Approaches appeared to be the most popular area with 39% of candidates answering questions 1 and 2. There was a good range of practitioners looked at and none were found to be so inappropriate that candidates struggled to respond to the questions. There were some very good, knowledgeable, intelligent and enthusiastic answers indicating that the candidates had obviously enjoyed understanding both the intellectual challenge and practical manifestations provided by the work.

Political Performance was covered reasonably well, with only the odd practitioner squeezed into the ‘political’ mould and not really easy to discuss. Lea Anderson was the most prevalent example, where candidates had to be very strong indeed to discuss the gender politics of her work within the frame of the questions. Union Dance as a company were popular, but with a wide range of success. Perhaps the most effective Union Dance combination in terms of understanding the political nature of the statements made by the work was where they were put together with Bob Marley and American dramatist Lorraine Hansberry. Ludus Dance was another company used very successfully by several centres for this area. Banner Theatre, a well-established and very relevant theatre company for this unit, who are marketing their work towards this new version of the unit, provided contemporaneous as well as historical perspective on this topic. However, it is important to ensure that candidates have access to three works by a company in a form that can be studied and re-visited i.e. scripts and recordings. Live performance is the very essence of this specification, but unless prepared for very well and reviewed very quickly and thoroughly reliance on just one visit can encourage candidates to discuss a particular performance rather than using the work to reference a comment about one of the three focus areas.

The Twentieth Century American Musical mostly followed the mainstream writers, composers and choreographers, with Fosse, Hammerstein and Bernstein being the most popular practitioners. This area brought the greatest apparent confusion among candidates about who did what and with whom. There are no sympathy marks for wrongly attributing work to a composer, writer or choreographer. However, the biggest problem in this area was the extensive background referred to above, followed by very sketchy discussion and references, very often the same few in a Centre referred to in every candidate’s work.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1) 19% of candidates answered this question.  
There were some very good responses to this question. In the main they understood the statement and were able to prove why they supported or contested it. Many were able to interpret the question in its widest sense, whether relating to pastiche of previous work or styles re-used, historical figures worked into pieces and sampling and intertextuality. Some got themselves in to deep water when, having asserted that post modern work was 'value-free' then attempted to claim K&U credit for explaining Churchill's politics of gender. However, responses to this question showed an excellent start to this new area and indicated that centres taking this on had approached it with relish rather than trepidation.
- 2) 20% of candidates answered this question.  
This question proved most successful in expecting the candidates to take some overview of the area, show understanding of the form and relate the practitioners to one another. Weaker candidates tended to discuss the works in order or had a list of post-modern characteristics that they worked through, with set references, and little comparison. The stronger answers could work across the genre considering the 'parallels' between different approaches.
- 3) 23% of candidates answered this question.  
This was the most popular of the two questions by as much as 6:1. There were some intelligent discussions of what was meant by 'instruct' and candidates determining what they wanted it to mean for their own purposes. Some candidates seemed to be confused by the reference to 'performance contexts', but in the main candidates were able to apply their study to the question. Many took the opportunity to argue that some practitioners didn't aim to 'instruct' but could be still very effective in raising issues. This very often applied to the Music and Dance examples, and providing it was well argued, the approach was valid and rewarded.
- 4) 4% of candidates answered this question.  
Most candidates that studied for Political Performance avoided this question. Perhaps because they did not understand the word 'lament', or because they did not think there was much 'laughter' in political performance to talk about. Most of those that did try it struggled with the same problems, some more valiantly than others. Only a very small number could discuss the idea of lament, some sensibly guessed at what it meant, i.e. the antithesis to laughter, and got on with answering the question. Others ignored 'lament' altogether and talked about laughter in the works. The most disturbing answers were those that could see no humour at all in their chosen works, even when they were using Fo, Berkoff, Dylan's early songs, Ludus' Dance pieces. One of the most successful answers linked the works to Brecht's idea of 'Spaß' or 'fun'.
- 5) 19% of candidates answered this question.  
Most candidates attempted to answer this question, but with varying degrees of success. Some ignored it after an opening general paragraph that said 'everyone worked together'. Others challenged the idea of 'struggling to bring about collaboration' or the sense of an 'artificial genre' bravely defending what they clearly considered to be worthwhile. Many saw it as an excuse to put in all the 19th Century background material they had learnt, as referred to above, justifying it by saying that there was very little collaboration, but then did not explain how the art forms worked together during the 20th Century. The best discussed the ways that the 'book musical' developed, and particularly how dance was integrated successfully.
- 6) 16% of candidates answered this question.

The musical reflects, challenges and subverts the concept of “The American Dream”: everyone must work hard and you will succeed, live right and repent wrong-doing, uphold family values, be prepared to create conflict so that good triumphs over evil, be viciously loyal but know your place.

Those that were aware of this idea were able to work this question well, commenting on the conventional use of ‘dream ballets’, developed by De Mille in Oklahoma, on songs and characters that were aspirational, storylines and action that reinforced the positive, but also those that questioned the assumptions of the Dream. At least one candidate pointed out that “You’ve got to be carefully taught” was taken out of the film of *South Pacific* because it was felt to be too challenging, and linked that to other challenges within the musical genre, particularly by Hammerstein, as in *Showboat*, or *The King and I*.

One candidate pointed out that *Wonderful Town* – a set of happy-go-lucky sailors on 24 hour leave “in the city that never sleeps” appeared four years after Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, a portrayal of the American Dream having turned into a nightmare and in the same year, 1953, as his savage indictment of McCarthyist values in *The Crucible*. It was no more than half a sentence, but clearly indicated an understanding of the context of the musical they had looked at within the performing arts and society.

Less strong candidates who only had a faint grasp of the concept struggled on with everything-I-know answers, liberally sprinkled with references to dreams.

The following is a Guide to most of the practitioners and works used in the first examination of this revised unit. It is by no means prescriptive nor is it complete. Some that were used were more successful than others. Invariably, as we have seen in the past, the sometimes off-beat choice of material coupled with the enthusiasm from the centre creates an engaging scheme of work that excites the candidates. One of the keys to candidates’ understanding appears to be the coherence across the art forms with which the topic is approached. If art forms are dealt with separately then they are written about separately. Where the links between and within the art forms, the contrasts and comparisons have been determined in the topic area studied, the candidates, at all levels, respond more confidently and knowledgeably. Thus, Centres should consider carefully their combination of practitioners and extracts.

Centres should note that where only a small number of individual songs are quoted, this often proved insufficient for candidates to work with in answering the questions. The general guidance is that a number of songs/items from an album/collection should be used to represent the extract, and thus three albums should be covered.

A guide to practitioners and works used in the first examination of the revised unit

	Dance	Drama	Music
Post Modern Approaches since 1960	<p><b>Anderson</b>-Flesh &amp; Blood (both versions), Cross Channel, Car, Perfect Moment, Spectre de la Rose, Double Take, Lost Dances of Egon Schiele, Jesus Baby Heater</p> <p><b>Davies</b>-Wyoming, 88, Bird Song, White Man Sleeps</p> <p><b>Clark</b>-Because we must, Prospero's Books, Current/See</p> <p><b>Bourne</b>-Swan Lake, Edward Scissorhands, CarMan, Nutcracker, Drip</p> <p><b>Alston</b>-Soda lake, Pulcinella, Overdrive</p> <p><b>Bintley</b>-Still Life, Hobson's Choice, Flowers of the Forest</p> <p><b>Grupo Corpo</b>-Bach, O Corpo, Lecuona</p>	<p><b>Churchill</b>-Vinegar Tom, Top Girls, Ice Cream, Cloud Nine, Skriker, Heart's Desire, Soft Cops, This is a Chair, Mad Forest, Fen, Serious Money, Light Shining in Bucks, Blue Heart, Mouthful of Birds, Owners,</p> <p><b>Kane</b>-Phaedra's Love, Crave, Blasted</p> <p><b>Kaos Theatre</b>-Titus Andronicus, Moll Flanders, Alice</p> <p><b>Forced Entertainment (Etchells)</b>- Club of no Regrets, Pleasure, First Night</p> <p><b>Berkoff</b>-The Actor, Metamorphosis, Greek, East, Decadence, Belgrano, Trial, Salome, Dog, Oedipus, Harry's Christmas, Messiah, West</p> <p><b>Wertenbaker</b>-Our Country's Good, Love of the Nightingale, Three Birds</p> <p><b>Pinter</b>-Homecoming, Birthday Party, Caretaker</p> <p><b>Crimp</b>-Attempts on Her Life, Country, Misanthrope, No-one Sees the Video</p> <p><b>Stoppard</b>-Arcadia, Rosencrantz &amp; Guildenstern are Dead, Real Inspector Hound</p> <p><b>Brenton</b>-Churchill Play, Skinny Spew, Saliva Milkshake</p>	<p><b>Adams</b>-Nixon in China, Ceiling/Sky, Chamber Symphony, Death of Klinghoffer</p> <p><b>Beatles</b>-Please Please Me, Help, Revolver, Sgt.Pepper's, White, Magical Mystery Tour, Abbey Rd, Hard Day's Night</p> <p><b>Andreissson</b>-De Stijl, Man/Music/Mozart, Hoketus</p> <p><b>Gorillaz</b>- Demon Days selection</p> <p><b>Glass</b>-Music in Similar Motion, Strung Out, Company, Einstein on the Beach, Pawaqqatsi, Violin Concerto, Symphony II &amp; III, 'Heroes' Symphony No.4, Songs for Liquid Days, Koyaanisqatsi Music in 12 parts, Quartet 5, The Hours, The Orchard, Satyagraha, Truman Sleeps, 600 Lines, Akhnaten, Photographer</p> <p><b>Riley</b>-In C, Rainbow in Curved Air, Persian Surgery Dervishes</p> <p><b>Sex Pistols</b>- My Way, Anarchy in the UK, C'mon Everybody</p> <p><b>Cage</b>-Voiceless Essay, Europera 5, Roaratorio</p> <p><b>Nyman</b>-Piano, Draughtsman's Contract, Decay Music, Libertine, Ogre</p> <p><b>Stockhausen</b>-Gruppen, Klavier Stucke, Kontakte</p>

			<p><b>Bryars</b>-Squirrel and the Ricketty Rackety Bridge, Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet, Sinking of the Titanic  <b>Bonzo Dog</b>-Chronology Vols.1, 2 &amp; 3  <b>John</b>-Lion King, Billy Elliot, Madman Across the Water  <b>Radiohead</b>-Hail to the Thief, Pablo Honey, OK Computer</p>
<p>Political Performance since 1914</p>	<p><b>Ailey</b>-Revelations, Cry, For Bird with Love, Blues Suite, Witness  <b>Jeyasingh</b>-Romance with Footnotes, Surface Tension, Exit No Exit  <b>VTOL</b>-Where Angels, Without Trace, Snowball Effect  <b>Union Dance</b>-Permanent Revolution V2R, Dance in House, Dance Tek Warriors, Sensing Change  <b>Ludus Dance</b>-Zygote, Clash, Sold, Perfecting Eugene  <b>Bausch</b>-Bluebeard, 1980, Nelken, Viktor, Café Müller, Windowcleaner, Palermo Palermo, Rite of Spring, Nur Du  <b>Vardimon</b>-Therapist, Tete, Park  <b>Candoco</b>-Sunbyrne, Phasing, Sour Milk, Outside In, Shadow,  <b>Jones</b>-Fever Swamp, Last Supper, Still/Here  <b>Wigman</b>-Witch Dance, Farewell &amp; Thanksgiving, Shifting Landscape</p>	<p><b>Boal</b>-Image, Forum, Invisible Th.  <b>Fo</b>-Can't Pay, Won't Pay, Accidental Death, Boniface VIII, Pope &amp; Witch, Trumpets &amp; Raspberries, Mistero Buffo, Virtuous Burglar, Open Couple, Hunger of Zanni, It Happened Tomorrow, Elizabeth, One Was Nude &amp; one Wore Tails, Same Old Story  <b>Cartwright</b>-Little Voice, Road, Two, Bed, Hard Fruit  <b>Bond</b>-Saved, Lear, 11 vests, Inland Sea, War Plays  <b>Banner Theatre</b>-Burning Issues, Migrant Voices, Free for All  <b>Littlewood/Th.Workshop</b>-Hostage, Taste of Honey,OWALW  <b>Fugard</b>-Coat, Sizwe Bansi, Island, Master Harold, Valley Song  <b>Berkoff</b>-Belgrano, East, Requiem for Ground Zero  <b>Brenton</b>-Greenland, Iranian Nights, Ugly Rumours  <b>Hansberry</b>-A Raisin in the Sun, Les Blancs, Drinking Gourd  <b>Russell</b>-Our Day Out, Educating Rita, Blood Bros  <b>Pinter</b>-One for the Road, Party Time, Mountain Language  <b>Daniels</b>-Masterpieces, Gut Girls, Esme &amp; Shaz</p>	<p><b>U2</b>-Joshua Tree, War, How to..Atomic Bomb  <b>Dylan</b>-Freewheelin, The Times they are a'changin', Bringing it All Back Home, Another Side of, Slow Train Coming  <b>Bragg</b>- England half English, Back to Basics, Talking with the Taxman, Workers' Playtime, Must I Paint you A Picture?  <b>Clash</b>-London Calling, Give 'em Enough Rope, The Essential Clash  <b>Marley</b>-Exodus, Burnin', Rastaman Vibration, Songs of Freedom, Natty Dread, Catch A Fire, Uprising  <b>Shostakovich</b>-Symphonies 5, 7, 8, 10 &amp; 11  <b>Masekela</b>-Promise of a Future, Tomorrow, Black To The Future  <b>Guthrie</b>-Dustbowl Ballads, Asch recordings Vols I,II,III,IV  <b>Weill</b>-Seven Deadly Sins, Mahagonny, Threepenny Opera  <b>Johnson (The The)</b>-Infected, Mind Bomb, Naked Self</p>

Report on the Units Taken in June 2006

<p>The Twentieth Century American Musical</p>	<p><b>Fosse</b>-Sweet Charity, Cabaret, Pyjama Game, Chicago (often the wrong version), All That Jazz, Pippin  <b>Robbins</b>-West Side Story, Fiddler, King &amp; I</p>	<p><b>Lerner</b>- My Fair Lady, Paint Your Wagon, Camelot, Brigadoon,  <b>Hammerstein</b>-Showboat, Oklahoma, Sound of Music, King &amp; I, South Pacific  <b>Sondheim</b>-Sunday in the Park, Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods, Assassins, Company, Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Gypsy</p>	<p><b>Loesser</b>-Most Happy Fella, How to Succeed in Business, Guys &amp; Dolls  <b>Bernstein</b>-West Side Story, Candide, On the Town  <b>Rodgers</b>-Carousel, Sound of Music, South Pacific, Pal Joey, Babes in Arms, Connecticut Yankee, On Your Toes, No No Nanette  <b>Sondheim</b>-A Little Night Music, Into the Woods, Company, Sweeney Todd, Follies, Passion</p>
---	--	--	---



## 2558 - Performance Realisation and 2561 - Student Devised Performance

### General Comments

#### *Administration of the examination*

The administrative arrangements for the smooth running of the examination ran smoothly in most Centres and examiners commented, as in previous years, on the warmth of the welcome they received from tutors and candidates. It was rare for there not to be a buzz of anticipation from candidates as they made their final preparations for their assessed performances and examiners often commented on the privilege of sharing the experience with them.

A small minority of Centres struggled to fulfil the administrative requirements of the examination and this inevitably meant that the candidates suffered, as they did not experience the confidence of being supported by good organisation. As one examiner put it, 'there is a popular stereotypical image of a performing arts teacher as one who produces brilliant shows but has to be excused from normal administration tasks that are beyond him. My experience is that there is actually a correlation between those Centres who are efficient and those who produce exciting and creative work with an inner performance discipline.' OCR has a comprehensive network of support for Centres and there is no need for any candidate to be disadvantaged by a breakdown in the level of support for their examination.

The most common administrative problems were:

- Difficulties in communicating with the Centre: telephone calls to the Centre not returned, e-mails and/or letters that elicited no reply. By contrast, most examiners reported that e-mail made the process smoother and more efficient.
- Timetables that were unworkable, either as a result of trying to cram in too much or allowing far too much time between performances. In some instances, the examination had been broken up with numerous breaks for lesson changes, break and lunchtimes and even school buses!
- Instances where there was clearly no general recognition at the Centre that a public examination was taking place. This was often evidenced by such indicators as there being no signs to require silence, other classes arriving at the examination area, the staff at the Centre attempting to undertake teaching of groups at the same time as running the examination. Ultimately, this culminated in a sense of the staff concerned having no established support networks for the examination with the result that it became a 'Cinderella' activity, best concluded quickly so that the 'real' business of written examinations could move in to the performance space. Centres are reminded that all public examinations should be afforded equal status: the practical units in Performance Studies should be accorded the same status as an A Level Mathematics examination.

In addition to these general points, there were specific problems with Centres working in consortium schools where this had not been communicated to OCR, particularly where it was not clear which of the Centres was making the entry.

### ***Video/DVD recordings***

It was refreshing that an increasing number of Centres were able to produce the recording of the examination on DVD. Examiners were especially grateful to those who were able to insert chapters on to the DVD as this for real ease of retrieval later in the examination process. Some Centres claimed to be unable to produce a copy of the recording on the day of the examination owing to limited technical facilities, although there were fewer than in previous sessions. Some Centres forgot to record AS and A2 on separate videos. Some centres sent DVDs and these were clearly headed with full titles allowing easy identification of students.

The video recordings produced by most Centres were good. However, the following checklist may be helpful in clarifying exactly what is required:

- The video camera should be placed close enough to the performance to ensure a good quality of picture and sound; long shot videos are unlikely to give enough detail
- There is no need to zoom in on the performance or pan across the stage (although this may be helpful in certain pieces)
- Candidates must announce themselves, in costume, **before** the start of each piece. Please allow a ten-second pre-roll on the video before asking candidates to announce their names. It is vital that this is not an occasion for embarrassment or awkwardness: a candidate who cannot say his or her name without collapsing in giggles is unlikely to be mentally prepared for the demands of performance
- It is vital that a running order is included for the recording

### ***Advance documentation***

Most Centres delivered the advance documentation promptly and in advance of the examination; a few did not. It is essential that the examiner is sent sufficient information in advance of the visit to enable him or her to prepare to examine. In particular, examiners require photographs of the candidates and details of the performance, supplemented on the day by a final programme notes.

Photographs were not always helpful in establishing the identity of candidates in a Centre. It was not unusual for examiners to receive a page of photos of entire cohorts that did not specifically relate to performance groups. Centres were still prone to send either paper copies of digital photographs that required a magnifying glass to view or photographs taken on arrival in year 12 depicting fresh-faced cherub-like individuals prior to becoming careworn and raddled by sixth form life!

With regard to programme notes, there were some excellent examples of detailed material that was very enlightening in advance of the performance. It was useful to receive text extracts of the repertoire drama pieces. At the opposite extreme, however, it was not unknown for examiners to turn up on the day not knowing even which practitioners have been studied or the number of candidates and the size of groups. A handful of Centres produced no documentation whatsoever and this was an extreme disadvantage to their candidates. In two or three instances, the reason for this was cited as being that were not marked on this material so there was no need for it. This betrayed a sad misunderstanding of the whole educational philosophy underlying the assessment. It is essential that candidates are required to outline their intentions prior to the performance so that they can be examined on whether they have achieved these.

Programme notes are intended to help candidates focus on (depending on whether it is AS or A2) the practitioners they have studied, their intention in devising the piece, the links to the commission, the performance style and so on. There were no instances where examiners felt the absence of this information to be anything other than a disadvantage to the candidates.

### ***Audience to watch the performances***

More Centres provided audiences for performances although there were still a number of occasions where candidates performed only to the examiner, tutors and technicians. Generally, though, Centres had taken the trouble to invite an appropriate audience to watch the work, often consisting of peers, parents or students from the lower school. Many Centres had evening performances with audiences of parents and friends and this often served to provide a sense of occasion for the candidates. Needless to say, examiners reported that the 'best' audiences were those which had been invited and the 'worst' those who had been conscripted! The presence of an audience is vital to this work: Performance Studies is **not** about private performance where examiner alone gets it in the face. Not having an audience invariably disadvantages the candidates as there is no focus, atmosphere or 'lift'.

Conversely, however, some examiners reported that the presence of an audience was not without its problems. In daytime performances with audiences of peers, there was the danger of overstepping the bounds of examination decorum with over-enthusiastic whoops. Whooping and raucous cheering of friends is not in the spirit of a public examination and examiners are instructed to work with staff at the Centre to ensure that audience behaviour does not detract from the work. In extreme cases, examiners have the right to request that disruptive members of the audience leave the performance.

Occasionally, the audience was too close to the examiner and overlooking the desk and this should not be allowed to occur. Neither should the examiner be expected to join in the performance; attempts to break the fourth wall with the examiner were misguided. One examiner reported a Centre invited audience members into their Brecht pieces to hold the rope in the bridge scene in *Caucasian Chalk Circle*; bizarrely, the examiner was then also invited to hold the rope. Candidates should be aware that the role of the examiner is to mark the piece, not to act as an extra in their performance!

### ***Mark Scheme***

The mark scheme used for 2558 and 2561 was essentially the same as in previous sessions with a few minor amendments. This is published by OCR and is available through the publications department as well as being included in the INSET packs for 2006/7. Centres would benefit from using the mark scheme for practice sessions prior to the actual examination; it is also recommended that candidates are made familiar with the assessment criteria in order to allow them to improve their performance work.

## **2558 - Performance Realisation (Practical Examination)**

### ***Group size and length of pieces***

The decision regarding group sizes provided the usual conundrum for tutors in some Centres, whether to allow candidates to work in small friendship groups or to work in larger, more eclectic groups. In terms of performance standard, however, examiners reported no real difference as a result. The only discernable trend was that in groups of seven, there were nearly always one or two passengers who would have been better served by taking part in a smaller group. In some instances of repertoire, the extract itself gave a strong indication of how many performers were required.

The vast majority of pieces were of an appropriate length. There were some notable exceptions to this, however, at both extremes. On the one hand, some pieces were so short that the candidates were not on stage long enough to fulfil the requirements of the Specification. Conversely, some pieces were more than double the required length. At one Centre, a misunderstanding of the Specification meant that every single drama extract was twice the maximum length allowed and therefore was stopped by the examiner in order to be fair to those who had worked within the required timeframe; although examiners marked up to the point where the piece was stopped, the experience was obviously distressing for the candidates and perplexing for their invited audience.

Differentiation of candidates within groups occasionally caused problems: there were several groups of 5 or 6 dressed in blacks with little identification. Centres are requested to consider their groups in rehearsal and ask themselves if each candidate is clearly identifiable. If not, something must be done about it long enough before the visit to put the candidates at their ease.

There was a slight increase in the number of non-examined candidates in pieces. Centres are reminded that these are only allowed in strictly controlled circumstances such as to cover for someone who is taken ill or to act as sleeping partners. In all circumstances there is a maximum of two sleeping partners or non-examined candidates (on the basis that in the most extreme circumstances, a solo candidate would therefore be in a group of three).

### ***Performance skills – comments by art form***

#### ***Dance***

The devised work in dance continued to be some of the best aspects of the unit. It was often typified by commitment, originality and a good sense of ensemble. Nevertheless, there were some recurrent issues reported by examiners and these are listed here.

- Music was often poorly chosen and/or inexpertly cut at the end of the extract. Candidates should time their pieces to ensure that the movement content matches the length of the music.
- Candidates should resist the temptation to fiddle with their clothing, hair or jewellery during the performance: this is often an indication that a candidate is not entirely comfortable in their role and can be a major distraction for the audience. Assured dancers do not fiddle! Aligned to this is the issue of what to wear for the examination. A public examination requiring a dance performance is not a fashion statement and candidates should dress appropriately for the assessment. Long fringes, short tops and the ubiquitous thong worn by some candidates appear to cause frequent and mostly injudicious adjustment thus causing them to be distracted and generally lose focus during their performances. In dance pieces there are still examples of students wearing inappropriate footwear and jewellery or displaying inappropriate parts of the body, including belly buttons and builders' bums! The revelation of a naval piercing has not to date been reported to have improved the performance of any candidate!

## **Drama**

There was a slight improvement in the vocal delivery of lines in extracts from drama repertoire. Nevertheless examiners reported that the whole issue of how candidates engage with spoken language continues to be an area for concern. The movement from page to stage is a problematic one for many candidates since they seem to have so little idea what the lines mean that they are reciting. A similar problem is manifest in the creation of dialogue in devised pieces since this tends either towards the mundane, the trite or the downright unbelievable! Examiners also reported the following general points:

- scripted work was often rushed or gabbled, without expression or articulation. It had not been rehearsed, just learnt. There are no marks for recitations and Centres are reminded that here is a considerable amount of work to be done once books are down to achieve reasonable marks.
- drama work needed more characterisation and an understanding of the background to the scenes performed;
- candidates need to consider blocking more – at times masking other performers is a result of poor blocking and aimless wandering around the stage.
- candidates with facial piercings should remove them before the performance as a matter of health and safety. It was inconceivable that candidates should consider attempting a drama examination with a pierced tongue yet many did. Since this amounted to a self-inflicted speech impediment, replete with clicking accompaniment by the studs on their teeth as they spoke, it was hardly surprising that such candidates lost marks for poor vocal delivery. Let it be said again: a public examination is not the place for making a fashion statement.

## **Music**

Whilst there were many very accomplished music performances, there were also a large number of weak offerings, generally of songs by George Gershwin. Centres are reminded that there is no requirement to sing Gershwin songs: candidates who have difficulty holding a melodic line are certainly ill advised to do so. There appeared to be a tendency for Centres to think of singing as an easy option for AS with 'everyone can sing' being the underpinning philosophy. Examiners reported that a worrying number of candidates were unable to sing very well and that those who couldn't often added some jiggling around to their song in an attempt to take the examiner's mind off what he or she was listening to!

- music work needed more communication to make it more than just lacklustre karaoke
- some instrumentalists were still using a score to play their piece.

Some of the better singers still perform in a static fashion (as though they are performing oratorio).

- The worst of the music experienced this year was at a Centre which allowed someone who clearly did not want to sing and decided to use the piano. He clearly could not play the piano either! He attempted to play the melody and a bass line but came unstuck on numerous occasions. At the same Centre there was a guitarist (who had clearly learnt the piece in the same way) who merely played the melody – not that it was recognisable as a melody! These two were not the norm at this quite large Centre. Other problems in the Gershwin repertoire included nervous pacing, instead of purposeful use of the stage area.

- Examiners have reported a steady improvement in the quality of performance memory for both the devised and repertoire sections of this unit. It is clear that candidates have committed scripts, choreography, and notation to memory at a much earlier stage in the process allowing more time for refinement. Few students were found to be struggling for lines and most were fluent.

## DANCE PIECES

### *Christopher Bruce*

There was an increase in the number of candidates electing to offer a repertoire performance and this produced a number of interesting and varied performances. It was particularly interesting that a number of teaching staff at Centres had clearly taught their candidates the principles of how to reconstruct a dance without resorting to slavish copying of video work. Popular choices for study were the first and last solos from *Swansong*, which was itself the most popular piece studied. In addition, examiners reported that a number of candidates performed extracts from *Ghost Dances* with a few opting to perform part of *Rooster*.

Examiners reported that, where extracts from repertoire had been selected, candidates had been clearly advised to perform extracts appropriate to their ability and level of technique. It was also true that, in the case of weaker candidates, there was some sense of candidates simply memorising moves and going through them since they had not progressed beyond the worry of struggling to remember what came next and working hard to do it. In such instances, it showed.

There was some unhelpful blurring of the distinction between performing repertoire and producing original devised work, however. In particular, some weaker candidates often copied sections or motifs from *Ghost Dances* and then added a few of their own movements, rather than devising work in Bruce's style. In extreme cases, this was accompanied by the original music from *Ghost Dances*, which made the end result appear closer to repertoire.

Examiners reported seeing a good deal of work that purported to be devised in the style of Christopher Bruce. In reality, however, this was of more variable quality than the repertoire work. Centres are reminded that devising in the style of Christopher Bruce should not be an excuse simply to do anything. There were concerns among the panel of examiners that devised work in the style of Bruce was occasionally a little better than the vague suggestion of a circassian circle with a disco freestyle "because he's eclectic" – often complemented by the wild waving of a chair!

Interestingly, examiners reported that candidates were often knowledgeable about Bruce's technique in their pre-performance discussion, but this was equally often not thoroughly integrated into their performance. The main limiting features of the devised work was the actual choreographic content and lack of energy in its performance although contact work tended to be good, and this allowed candidates with weaker technique the opportunity to shine.

Ultimately, it was the ability to devise movement content in the style of Bruce that was the most significant differentiator between candidates since it was frequently the case that candidates were drawn either by thematic content that they thought (erroneously) to be reflective of Bruce, or by shallow aspects of the choreographer's work such as costume or characterisation rather than the distinctive choreographic elements.

There were many instances where the chosen issue prevailed over the dance work and some of these were tenuous in their relationship to Bruce's concerns. He has, for example, to date produced little in the way of comment on binge drinking, obesity or adolescent sleepovers yet these frequently emerged as the thematic content of the devised work. In stronger work, oppression of the poor in Developing World countries, political corruption, storms and natural disasters featured and these allowed much more scope for the direct political comment that typifies some of Bruce's work.

There was also a worrying amount of mediocre work which used the study of Bruce as an excuse for showing street jazz sequences to music by contemporary pop artists currently in the charts. There were also some very weak pieces that were little more than disco dancing and totally failed to understand the sophistication of Bruce's work.

### ***Lloyd Newson***

Considerably fewer candidates studied the choreography of Lloyd Newson than studied Christopher Bruce. Hardly any of these were repertoire performances, the majority of candidates seeking to devise their own work in the style of Newson.

Some of the best work seen by examiners had exciting high energy movement, sometimes with occasional words and phatic utterances punctuating the work in the same manner that Newson uses language in his choreography. As with the work of Bruce, candidates were often able to talk intelligently about Newson's work in their pre-performance discussion with the examiner but there was frequently a mismatch between this and their technique, the result being that candidates' performance skills were so poor that assimilating complex ideas into a performance was fragmentary. At one Centre, for example, an eloquent discussion of 'total or physical theatre' degenerated in performance into a piece of weak drama with some awkward exaggerated movement.

There were three aspects of Newson's approach that were frequently mis-applied to devised work: the notion of pedestrian movement, the approach to risk taking and the desire to shock the audience. Each created its own specific problems.

The attempt at pedestrian movement frequently resulted in little or no development of motifs thus (ironically) creating pedestrian performances. For these candidates, their devising consisted of simple walking and gestures without little real sense of purpose or technique.

Many groups made it their avowed intention to 'shock' their audience but predictably achieved yet another reworking of hackneyed ideas. In an effort to spice this up there were examples of 'circus skills', which were not actually particularly skilful. It was a point well made by examiners that – in approaching Newson's work - no amount of ropes and trapezes can make up for a fundamental lack of ideas, energy, enterprise and skill. At the extreme, one Centre confused shock value with rolling around doing mud wrestling with very little actual movement content!

Many groups were reluctant to take risks and the use of crash mats told the audience in one Centre a lot about how 'dangerous' the performance was likely to be! Ultimately, however, there was too much concentration on the "risk" value of the subject matter rather than the "risk" involved in the physicalisation. Just being daring and trying to shock is simply not enough and invariably degenerated into student indulgence. Candidates need to remember it is an examination and their role is to demonstrate skills in their chosen art form and practitioner, not simply to have fun expressing themselves – although this is certainly a desirable by-product!

## DRAMA PIECES

### **Bertolt Brecht**

The majority of candidates performed extracts from plays by Brecht, most commonly *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage* or *The Good Person* with the occasional outing for slightly lesser known plays such as *Fear & Misery of the Third Reich*.

As in previous sessions, this was often very wooden such that examiners were often left with the impression that candidates really needed to see a good performance of their chosen play before attempting it. Script work in Brecht particularly suffered from lines learnt but no development on that. Meaning, moment and meter were invariably lost and the poeticism of the language seldom came across in performance. Candidates should remember that Brecht saw himself as an equivalent of Shakespeare and Goethe as a poet and, whilst the translations might be a little stilted in places, there still needs to be some emotional investment in the expression of the chosen role. It can be made clear in many ways that it is being acted, but candidates should certainly bear in mind that the V-effekt does not call for dull monotonous renditions of speeches.

Some of the strongest work was where candidatures had taken the time to incorporate the singing of the songs into the extract. A second area of good practice was where candidates had taken the trouble to exploit the comic potential in Brechtian repertoire. The sense of “fun” of which Brecht spoke came through in performances where the candidates had command of the text and were working it.

Candidates tended not to be very strong on gestus or working to types, preferring to use naturalism throughout. The most common problems with the performance of Brechtian repertoire were:

- performances that lacked life or characterisation, often with wooden dialogue which gave the impression of not understanding the meaning of what was being said, leading to lacklustre ‘by numbers’ renditions which were at best capable and at worst tedious
- candidates who interpreted lack of emotional engagement and detachment as bland and low-key characterisation where the opposite should be the case! As one examiner said, characters should be played with fun and gusto, and turned on and off in a second
- too much focus on placards that slowed the pace of performance, together with a reliance on other props; a tendency to march unconvincingly round the stage with signs hung with string round the neck
- irritating mispronunciation of words

Whilst there was some zesty, fresh and spontaneously humorous work that was a joy to behold, it was certainly in the minority. The weakest candidates were very under-prepared and this was painfully obvious as they stumbled through the text, forgot lines and made it difficult for other members in the group to perform.

There was relatively little devised work in the style of Brecht. That which was seen was highly variable. As with devised work in the style of Christopher Bruce, the problem was that many candidates tried to think of Brechtian themes rather than techniques and it was rare to find both handled well. One Centre had a number of candidates whose work was based on *Arturo Ui* where social issues relating to the power of individuals and big organisations were explored effectively. In general, though, devised work in this option was very variable with the worst examples being more like labelled soap opera than Brecht. Most such performances failed to capture the necessary bite.



### **John Godber**

There was a considerable increase in numbers of candidates offering performances of John Godber and in most cases they were able to demonstrate a strong sense of enjoying the work. The humour came through in particular, although this was often because of the strength of Godber's text rather than a result of what the candidates had done! The best performances tended to those that identify moments where Godber was being serious and were able to deliver them with empathy and in contrast to more comedic moments. For most groups, ensemble comedy proved challenging and the effective delivery of comic lines was frequently lost.

It was disturbing that some Centres appeared to have chosen Godber as they believed his work to be easier than that of Brecht (this was often couched in terms of accessibility). The evidence to support this view was frequently not apparent, however, and virtually all examiners pointed out that Godber's work might appear easy but is very difficult to master in reality. Most candidates who offered Godber had produced repertoire performances although there were sometimes difficulties here in terms of length of extract with a small minority of performances being well in excess of the specified three minutes. A number of examiners reported that, reluctantly, they had to stop candidates' performances where this was excessive.

*Teachers* was once again the most popular choice and there were several good performances of this and also of *Bouncers* and *Shakers*. There was also some suggestion that a number of Centres had tried to move away from these three and there were also a number of extracts from *Perfect Pitch*, *September in the Rain* and *Lucky Sods*. It was particularly refreshing to see Godber's later work being studied and performed.

Performances were often animated and lively but in the desire to achieve fast pacing, vocal clarity was often sacrificed, and this in turn meant that characterisation (which has to be achieved very sharply and swiftly with this playwright), was compromised, as well as situation and meaning in the dialogue. A misunderstanding of the word 'pace' emerged which seemed to mean 'speak very fast and get it out of the way!' In extreme cases it became a fast, physical romp with swearing and sexual innuendo.

The skills basis was therefore variable. Character interpretation was not always successful and in some performances candidates had been encouraged to 'over' multi-role and pass the roles around the group, the result being that it was unclear who was playing which role. Such confused practice has no precedent in Godber's work. There were also some basic deficiencies in a significant number of candidates' clarity of diction (with the text degenerating into a series of grunts and expletives), which together with poor blocking and the failure to use the whole body to perform undermined the nature of the physicality of the work. The use of blackouts probably exemplified the worst practice seen with the most extreme slowing the pace of the drama to a standstill. Part of the interest in the early work of Godber is the fluidity of the transitions between characters, places and atmosphere. Lighting can help, but at most cross-fades should be used: blackouts make for a halting continuity that works against the performers.

Devised work was considerably less effective and this confirmed that Godber's style is far more difficult to imitate than it would appear at first glance. Whilst the most able candidates were able to craft dialogue that was both funny and made interesting social comment, many pieces were simply not funny and relied on a series of in-jokes and playing to the audience. The weakest candidates seemed to think if they swore a lot and shouted off stage that was all that was required. By contrast with the often frenetic pacing of repertoire performances, devised work in the style of Godber often demonstrated slow pacing and a tendency to spell everything out. Before attempting devised work groups need to seriously ask why Godber is so successful at appealing to a wide audience.

## **MUSIC PIECES**

### **The songs of George Gershwin**

This was one of the most options in the Unit and produced almost exclusively performances of repertoire with the very occasional attempt at devised work. The range of songs offered was a little broader than in previous sessions and included most commonly, *Summertime*, *Fascinatin' Rhythm*, *I Got Rhythm*, *Somebody Loves Me*, *Let's Call the whole thing off*, *The Man I Love*, *A Foggy Day*, *They All Laughed* and *Nice Work*. Most performances were individuals although there was a slight increase in the number of ensemble performances. Centres are reminded that in an ensemble, candidates must **not** sing in unison but should each hold a different part.

As in previous sessions, this produced some of the strongest and weakest work and there was a significant percentage of renditions of songs from candidates who simply could not sing. They would have been better advised to choose a different practitioner or, in the case of those who played instruments, to have offered an instrumental version (completely acceptable within this Specification).

The strengths of the best performances were:

- tuneful, well-paced singing
- an attempt to physicalise the song rather than producing an audition piece
- a good deal of rehearsal with the accompanist using the actual piano intended for the performance
- a recognition of the comedic aspects of the lyrics and an ability to bring these out
- excellent, sensitive accompaniments, some of which were provided by other candidates as well as teachers.

The weaknesses of the least impressive performances were:

- inability to sing in tune
- weedy singing voice
- lack of breath control
- key of the song was too high or low and needed transposing, particularly where backing tapes were pitched too high for candidates
- little dynamic change between verse and chorus
- lack of eye-contact or interaction with the audience
- a sense of relief at the end of the performance
- lumpy, clod-hopping accompaniments that drowned the singer
- poor microphone technique that hindered performances rather than enhanced it
- making up time by adding a dance break or awkward acted moments in an instrumental in the song.

The performance spaces selected for the performance of these songs varied enormously. There were some excellent performances where staging had been carefully considered and was inventive and creative. The majority were well thought out, often recreating a cabaret or a club. At the other extreme, there were some performances in appallingly cluttered music classrooms where the space available was entirely inappropriate and allowed no room at all for the candidates to move.

The better performances also considered costume and there were fewer performances from candidates dressed inappropriately. Performances which felt like a graded music examination tended to score low. For example, several candidates appeared not to understand the context of *Summertime* and sang it with no sense of performance at all. Often such candidates had good vocal technique and their presentation mode was obviously overlooked by the Centre

because their vocal technique was so good. Inevitably, though, such performances did not engage an audience and would have been better suited to radio.

The small number of devised performances based on Gershwin's songs were polarised in terms of their quality. The most successful were based around chord structures and melodies that reflected those used by George Gershwin together with well-crafted, witty lyrics. The weakest simply took the theme of love and produced slow ballad-like offerings that could have been inspired by any of a hundred contemporary songwriters. These usually failed to indicate any study of the construction of Gershwin's songs.

### **Steve Reich**

Fewer candidates studied Reich than Gershwin and, given the comments made above regarding the quality of some of the singing encountered, perhaps many would have been better advised to study Steve Reich instead. Those that had offered Reich tended to have devised their own material although there were occasional performances of *Clapping Music* and *Music for Pieces of Wood*.

The majority of the work seen was of a competent or good quality with few candidates misunderstanding the nature of Reich's music. In particular, there was a fair understanding of the use of phasing, the approach to integrating speech rhythms, the way in which rhythms are built up and, of course, the fundamental significance of short repeating motifs.

The ease with which candidates may combine live and sampled sounds made Reich both accessible to some candidates. Some groups were able to sample with their mobile phones and to download straight to a computer, allowing them to work in the same that Reich did in *City Life*. Discussions prior to performances have revealed a mature understanding of sophisticated composition techniques by perceptive but not necessarily musically trained students. At its best there is a parallel between the trust and creativity experienced in devised Reich and DV8.

## 2561 - Student Devised Performance (Practical Examination)

### **Approach to using commissions**

Some improvements in approaches to using Commissions and this accounted for a modest increase in numbers of candidates achieving the highest grades on this unit. There were fewer examples of candidates misunderstanding the nature of the commission and using it simply as a starting point. However, there were still a considerable number where research was skimpy and the first ideas thrown up by the internet were the ones stuck to. An extreme example was where a group had taken the commission of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, but on being asked who wrote the original story had not a clue!

The concept of researching a commission improved a little this session and this contributed to a slight improvement in the standard of the work presented in this unit. However, there was a noticeable lack of research into the commissions by a significant number of candidates. In a worryingly high proportion of cases, scant programme notes were received before the examination and on the day did not contain enough detail. As a result, a number of candidates had little to comment on in the interviews and this lack of awareness of intention often showed in their performances. At the other end of the scale, examiners were impressed by the depth of research and the quality of the programme notes, which was matched by skill and originality in performance. Additionally, it was gratifying that a good number of groups were able to use the knowledge they had gained in Contextual Studies 2 to inform their research in this unit.

The most popular commissions were *Butlin's*, *Still I Rise*, *Martha Graham-Letter to the World*, *Cole Porter*, *Marlene Dietrich*, *Not Waving but Drowning*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Glyndebourne*.

#### **What the examiners said, in their own words:**

'The sense of adventure and fun is there, and the problem in some cases is to temper the natural enthusiasm to create and be innovative with the realisation that this is an examination and if the candidates do not demonstrate skills that will gain marks, they waste two years of study.'

### **COMMISSIONS**

#### **1. Pieter Bruegel – Peasant Wedding Feast (The Art book p.71 Phaidon Press ISBN 0 7148 3627 7)**

This was attempted by very few candidates. The best pieces were an investigation of the various characters within the painting with some interesting approaches to the creation of intense physical closeness in a celebration. These were generally well researched with plenty of images from the picture.

#### **2. Barbara Morgan – Martha Graham: 'Letter to the World (Kick) (The Photo Book p.329 Phaidon Press ISBN 0 7148 3937 X)**

The picture was by Barbara Morgan, of Martha Graham performing a dance which used the poetry of Emily Dickinson. The dance work in a number of pieces used images from the photograph and were built on Graham technique often involving beautiful dance tableaux to draw focus to this and really show the connection to the commission. This was not always taken through into the work in other art forms, however. Candidates often made reference to Emily Dickinson (through the script) Barbara Morgan (through the use of tableaux) and Martha Graham (through the style of dance). As ever, a minority of pieces appeared off message. This varied from the obscure off-message "Martha Graham always

felt different - just like all these other teenagers with problems.....” to one example of a sophisticated multi-layered approach which took key ideas and developed them through physical theatre, dance music, light and shade created by fabric as in *Lamentations*.

**3. Tony Ray-Jones – Glyndebourne (The Photo Book p.373 Phaidon Press ISBN 0 7148 3937 X)**

This was a popular choice but one easily distracted into areas only tangentially connected to the photograph. There were some very well integrated pieces of work based on this commission where the juxtaposition of the human beings and their preoccupations against the day to day needs of the cows had been explored to amusing effect.

Few attempted to develop the operatic possibilities (and many seemed unaware of the connection between Glyndebourne and opera!) but most looked at where the original had been created in Ray-Jones ideas of Britishness. In one extreme case, the candidates could not even pronounce it properly – “Glin-de-bon” as one candidate had it.

Nevertheless, there were some very sophisticated interpretations, incorporating the cows in physical theatre mode, ‘60s influences, generation gaps and change today, Pinteresque absurdist dialogue developing directly from the image, other photos of peculiar juxtapositions. In general, examiners reported that this commission required a disciplined approach to ensure that something of the commission remained.

**4. Stanley Spencer – Saint Francis and the Birds (The Art Book p.441 Phaidon Press ISBN 0 7148 3627 7)**

Few pieces were seen based on this commission. Those that were presented dealt with themes such as autism or relationships, perhaps using bird imagery and movement.

**5. Henry VIII and the English Reformation**

This proved popular in Church schools (although not exclusively so), often with some very interesting and imaginative results. Mainly demonstrated some excellent research which avoided the obvious pitfalls and left candidates with the satisfaction of a fine performance and a much clearer understanding of why they were at a denominational school.

At the other extreme, some groups of candidates were encouraged in the use of elaborate costumes, rather than developing physicality and characterisation. One ‘student rag’ response stuck to the basic story but used immature humour throughout. It was under rehearsed and tedious in the extreme, but was not unique in becoming embarrassing in places: ‘I’m ‘Enery the eighth, I am, I am ...’.

**6. Abraham Lincoln’s campaign against slavery**

Whilst the worst pieces meandered around some rather vague ideas about slavery, the best pieces were insights into the slave perspective of what might be possible with freedom. One very strong piece used all the different skills of members of the group and traced the roots of slavery from Africa, involving African songs, and interspersed this with Lincoln’s speeches on slavery and the effects (both positive and negative) on the black people of America. Some of the dialogue was occasionally trite, but generally was focused and as the piece had a very clear structure it gave it direction throughout. Thorough research was undertaken, and the devising of music, drama and dance was equally shared amongst the group.

## 7. The first Butlin's holiday camp opens in Skegness in 1936

This was by far the most popular commission although some candidates mistakenly focused on the life of Billy Butlin rather than the holiday camps themselves.

It would be hard to overestimate the importance of Butlin's as a social phenomenon in the UK. Its clear impact on the vacation habits of the British population since the 1930s were carefully enshrined in the pieces of a number of candidates, recognising of course that the present-day experience is radically different from that of the campers of 1936.

The range of pieces seen was huge. Some tended to use rather tame ideas, in terms of the historical, or latched on to one idea, the Beatles playing there, for example and over work it at the expense of the commission. Others saw the potential for comic business and the darker side of comedy in the early days of struggle, Billy Butlin's alleged philandering tendencies, the enforced jollity of the staff and the grotesque caricatures of seaside landladies.

Weaker pieces tended to use the 'talent contest', the 'knobbly knees contest' or 'Miss Butlin's' to include short solo moments to show of abilities, but these had little to say about the commission. One piece itself bordered on a variety show! The camp was opened in the first ten seconds, then closed and turned into a military camp in 1939. There was lots of marching and shouting in American military style with oppressive behaviour involving odd underwear; then a rapid cut to Benny-Hill-type running around to the Benny Hill music; some in-the-style-of-Lea Anderson lying on beaches and turning over in unison, more Benny Hill, then some odd reference to the Beatles, who apparently met Ringo there; lots of marching and shouting, then a finish. This was perhaps the best example of how not to devise a piece from this commission! There were also some highly unfocussed renditions, most of which were either narrative or impossibly fragmented, attempting to include all sorts of peripheral issues (e.g. Billy Butlin and South Africa with a jungle animals scene) that left their audiences somewhat perplexed.

A much stronger piece demonstrated research into the 1936 publication *Rules for Redcoats* and a list of what was available for entertainment for one day. Another piece built on Godber's style using multi-role playing to move effectively between Red Coats, families and cleaning staff, allowing the candidates to show a real range of performance skills. One group produced a very original piece using Lea Anderson and Berkoff techniques. The ramifications of this first type of camp and its effect on a family were juxtaposed with the ultra-happy Butlin's staff, and multi-role-play was enhanced by the fact that the mother in the family was played by a (large) male and the father by a (small) female.

## 8. Lech Walesa and the Polish Trade Union movement in the 1980s

The level of interest in the history of the 1980s was disappointingly low and few candidates selected this commission. One piece took the idea of an allegory with the trade union Solidarity within a film crew. This had potential, but got rather lost in the glamour and fame of film and stardom.

## 9. Maya Angelou – Still I Rise (The Nation's Favourite Poems of Celebration p.179 BBC ISBN 0 563 48824 7)

This was a very popular choice. There were many animations of her life, especially the seedier sides which sometimes degenerated into maudlin investigations of prostitution and drugs. Too many got stuck on her life story, particularly the theme of abuse. Very few focused on the idea of challenging racial /social stereotypes and 'rising'. There were

several disappointingly narrative and obvious pieces that simply trawled through Angelou's life story in a haphazard way omitting much of what drove her to write and what she stood for. Yet the commission was also successfully used as a vehicle to explore assertiveness, racial, gender and resilience in different time frames. There were inevitably some rambles through racist oppression, whilst some used it as a vehicle for any individual struggling against circumstances.

**10. Wendy Cope – Song (The Nation's Favourite Poems of Desire p.79 BBC ISBN 0 563 48834 4)**

Given the popularity of Wendy Cope's poetry in previous sessions, it was surprising that this commission was virtually ignored with no examiners reporting examples of strong or weak work derived from it.

**What the examiners said, in their own words:**

'There is a strong tendency for candidates to choose commissions on the basis of their content rather than their potential to demonstrate a wide variety of skills and approaches across the art forms. This detracts from the 'synoptic' nature of the assessment.'

**11. Wilfred Owen – Strange Meeting (By Heart: 101 Poems to Remember, edited by Ted Hughes p.86 Faber ISBN 0 571 19263 7)**

Candidates who were familiar with Joan Littlewood's *Oh What a Lovely War* seemed drawn to this commission and had the advantage of being already familiar with something of the social and historical background to the poetry of Wilfred Owen. That said, the appeal of this commission extended far beyond this and a good range of candidates took *Strange Meeting* as their commission. Other candidates researched the use of the poem in Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*.

The most successful pieces used lines from the poem as a structural device and there were many examples of strong work that took this approach. A number of pieces were set in the trenches and this provided some inspired use of levels and, on occasion, set design. One very strong piece represented the trenches effectively by playing a scene in English in one trench and then moving across to the other side and repeating the whole scene in German; this was very effective in performance.

Some candidates gave themselves a problem by focusing on Owen's overall message – "my subject is war and the pity of war" rather than direct focus on the poem. A few groups decided not to have a 'strange meeting' at all but just 'to do war'; this subversion of the commission did not help them.

**12. Stevie Smith – Not Waving but Drowning (By Heart: 101 Poems to Remember, edited by Ted Hughes p.95 Faber ISBN 0 571 19263 7)**

Although a popular commission, Stevie Smith's most well-known poem often received banal treatments with many flashbacks of tortured lives and deaths-by-water! Only the most disciplined and sophisticated could retain connections with the commission. Too many used this as a way into weedy teenage psychotic-angst pieces that had limited shelf life and interest.

This commission yielded (rather surprisingly) a number of themes such as bullying and depression although there was some sophisticated abstract work by a few Centres in which the art forms were carefully integrated to investigate the main themes of the poem.

The best pieces for this commission (relatively few in number, sadly) investigated, unsurprisingly, the poem in detail in terms of its metrical construction, its subject matter and potential characterisation. The scope for imagery of the sea in both dance and music that the commission offered was evident in a few pieces. A number explored the notion of who it was that had drowned and some of these were reinforced by the research that accompanied it.

### **13. St George and the Dragon**

In the context of the recent resurgence of interest in England of the celebration of St George's Day on 23 April, this commission proved fairly popular. Whilst there were a large number of speculative stories that painted George as a variety of heroic types, parallel stories predominated such that examiners reported that many candidates seemed to have been led to believe that the only way to get a good mark was to produce a parallel story! This was far from the truth and many who had taken this approach were simply formulaic. There were, however, a number of interesting and original approaches.

One thoroughly researched 'St George play' had music and song, physical theatre and clowning and a verse-driven script that showed sophistication as well as a clear understanding of audience sensibility. This was a professional standard piece displayed the skills of the performers to the full. Another equally interesting example managed to find a variety of versions of the story and use these as the basis of a composite approach. Yet another made imaginative use of dance to create the dragon out of their bodies in a motif that was both powerful and frightening. One, very well done piece, used the story as a metaphor for recent events in Iraq to produce a fine and sophisticated piece.

A very original way of portraying the story in the style of a mummer's play was a most successful interpretation by one group. The use of the styles of the practitioners studied was evident and the performance showcased the performance skills of all the candidates without straying from the commission. Another group produced an outstandingly original interpretation using technique based on Lea Anderson and Berkoff. The parallel between the original story and sexual harassment in the workplace could have been cheesy but the stylised forms used and seamless transitions between dance and drama lifted the piece to very high levels. Inevitably, some candidates failed to do any real research and were satisfied with the trusty Internet and a few vague preconceptions about a man called George who they thought might possibly have existed once...!

### **14. The Emperor's New Clothes**

This was one of the most popular commissions and one most frequently influenced by the Hansel & Gretel piece on the 2004 INSET DVD! Many used allegorical parallels to a range of contemporary morality tales.

Many pieces were limited to a retelling of the story interspersed with some kind of modern parallel – one using the Prime minister as a central figure in a media make over programme. Far too many candidates were immediately drawn to situations of models considering makeovers and changing their image. These were inevitably weak since they demonstrated virtually no connection with the commission.

A worryingly large number of performances simply retold the story with a variety of twists, usually on the theme of con men. Mercifully, no one actually persuaded their emperor to perform naked, although a disturbing number of groups revealed they had considered it seriously and examiners were made very aware of how close they had been to being forced to witness a strip show. Centres are reminded to ensure their candidates recognise that such approaches are entirely inappropriate for a public examination. The most common theme from the story was the excuse for duping someone. The reasons for this were often, however, little to do with the story. One group made a rambling journey



through post-modernism, playing various artists and chat show hosts, intending to represent their vacuous lifestyles with little else to say. Another Centre had a similarly 'empty' message based on the fashion industry. A third Centre managed to raise a similar idea of management in the fashion industry to a more sophisticated level where body image became the issue and 'large' became the fashion. One very well done piece used the story as a metaphor for George Bush and America's invasion of Iraq.

#### 15. The Story of the Mahabharata

The intricacies of the story had been well researched and students had gained a lot from the contact with another culture. This was handled sensitively and although Indian music was used and quasi Indian costume there was no attempt to pretend-to-be-Indian and a welcome understanding that this would have been inappropriate. The morals of the stories and the themes of conflict were well handled.

#### 16. The myth of Daedalus and Icarus

At its best, this produced some very creative work on Greek Theatre, using masks and very physical styles, the story being developed through choral speaking and animal characteristics. At its weakest, though, it became an opportunity to dress up in togas and which at worst resulted in something vaguely reminiscent of *Up Pompeii*.

There were some excellent pieces which made use of a Greek chorus and added a lot of humour to the telling of the detail; it also allowed for strong musical theatre pieces with interesting characterisation. One example produced a lively piece that interwove a modern mafia situation as a parallel. This was a little forced and thin and less convincing than the "Greek" telling of the myth through rich choric stylisation. Modernisations of the tale, however, were less frequent and sometimes went too far away from the commission.

One beautifully constructed piece involving physical theatre and 'stomp'-style rhythms. This was subtle and contained obvious humour blended with pathos: the whole story of the labyrinth and the invention of the saw, and a stunning moment when Icarus realises his wings are about to fail, when a single feather is dropped above him, to float down before his eyes. Another very striking piece was imaginative in its use of a promenade performance and the fact that it was almost completely danced with original music and some mature dialogue.

The attempt to create a political piece centred on the Blair / Bush / Iraq parallels did not work at all. There was generally a tendency to try to subvert a number of commissions to fit that theme.

#### 17. Marlene Dietrich

There was some very well-researched work here, discovering more than just an iconic film star. A popular choice, although there was a tendency to produce biographical work which integrated slides, power point or extracts from her films. There were some quite dodgy accents in places! Better pieces had something to say about a part of her life rather than repeating the same old details. The best pieces benefited from thorough research. This involved tracking her life using the details of both her obsession with her image and her private horror of becoming ugly.

Examiners reported that many candidates fell into the trap of focusing on scandalous events in Marlene's life and produced very superficial pieces which were only loosely related to the commission. This was to some extent a problem with all of the pieces based on the lives of famous people but was especially obvious in this instance. There were, therefore, many examples of candidates retelling Marlene's life in a not very imaginative way.

Cabaret was used extensively in this commission, not surprisingly, although a few pieces excelled in combining dance, music, and satire to explore her relationship with Germany, especially in the Nazi period. One very fine example use Expressionist make-up (reminiscent of Otto Dix's images of decadent Berlin between the wars) dance and song sequences to introduce scenes, complete ensemble approach with disturbing figures staring at the audience through chorus kick-lines, two Grosz-like painted panels based on MD, all contributed to a fine piece of performance work.

There were also some very superficial performances that failed to fully explore this complex character. Ideas based on lesbian relationships with scantily dressed characters in undefined roles became mixed with "Cabaret" and "Chicago" story lines. There were many important and substantial characters around Dietrich but few candidates were able to discover them. It seemed to the examining team as if everyone wanted to play Marlene and there was evidence of some candidates appearing to hang around aimlessly in mid stage waiting for their turn!

#### 18. Margot Fonteyn

Despite the enthusiasm with which a number of candidates approached this, hoping no doubt to show off their dance skills, much of the dance work was weak with only the occasional strong example. Again, there was ample evidence of research but much of it dissolving into predictable life stories and lacking the technique and performance skills required to make the work come to life. At the worst extreme, one group totally ignored the commission, using it as a springboard for a piece on creative madness and icon worship.

#### 19. Tony Hancock

The comedy of Tony Hancock seems increasingly to occupy a different world and many candidates struggled to see exactly what was funny about it. That probably accounted for the number who made little attempt to engage with his comedic techniques and focused instead on events in his life. In the main the work was consistent and predictable – the public and private lives of Hancock as seen through the women in his life.

#### 20. Cole Porter

Whilst this commission produced some strong musical work, too many of the pieces took this as a good excuse to do "the Musical" (any musical!), preferably about a rags-to-riches story issuing happiness by working in a chorus line and being spotted by someone! Some pieces went so far off the commission track that Gershwin appeared more than Porter and the piece therefore became an excuse to re-run some songs from the previous year's AS work.

Some groups used strong musical theatre skills to interpret the commission in an original style and to incorporate a good deal of research work. The most common theme, however, was the investigation into Porter's relationship with his wife and the problems that his homosexuality might have caused, with conflicting relationships with his gay lovers. Although speculation, this was sometimes handled sensitively and sat well in a piece which had many well-researched references to his life and career. At other times, this degenerated into a series of pantomime sketches that did little justice to the social complexities of the times in which Porter lived.

#### **What the examiners said, in their own words:**

*'I love the creativity that the subject promotes, perhaps most of all in this unit, if and when the students really "take off". Creativity seems to be "back on the agenda" in education, especially through the thinking of gurus like Guy Claxton and John West-Burnham. Long may it thrive.'*

**Advanced GCE Performance Studies (7873)  
Advanced Subsidiary GCE Performance Studies (3873)**

**June 2006 Assessment Series**

**Unit Threshold Marks**

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2556	Raw	100	80	71	62	53	45	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2557	Raw	100	78	68	58	49	40	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2558	Raw	100	79	71	63	55	48	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2559	Raw	100	79	71	63	55	47	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2560	Raw	45	39	34	29	24	19	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2561	Raw	100	81	72	63	54	46	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

**Specification Aggregation Results**

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
<b>3873</b>	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
<b>7873</b>	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
<b>3873</b>	8.3	29.2	58.7	82.8	95.3	100.0	2893
<b>7873</b>	8.3	31.7	65.5	90.1	99.1	100.0	2267







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

**OCR Information Bureau**

**(General Qualifications)**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [helpdesk@ocr.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://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 2006

