

Performance Studies

Advanced GCE **A2 7873**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS 3873**

Report on the Units

January 2007

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Chief Examiner's Report

2556: The Language of Performing Arts

794 candidates entered this unit in January 2007. The session ran smoothly with few significant issues. Even though the mean mark remained the same as in January 2006, there was a noticeable improvement in the ability of some candidates to adopt an appropriate formal tone in their written commentaries. Even though this did not necessarily indicate an improvement in standards, it was gratifying to see written prose that was less in the style of a diary and more couched in academic times with appropriate conventions of third-person voice and incipient academic referencing.

One continuing issue concerned the choice of assessment tasks by Centres. The point has been made in previous reports concerning the need for the course team to plan carefully the design of these so that naturally occurring links between the art forms are maximised. This means, for example, that the juxtaposition of Ballet Russes, Stomp and Stanislavski would be unlikely to elicit strong working cross the art forms. Centres are reminded of the need for the tasks to generate material that is accessible to candidates, is not dependent on the study of practitioners and which has something (other than a theme) in common between the art forms.

2557: Contextual Studies 1

The entry for this unit was slightly lower than in previous January sessions and amounted to 419 candidates. Of these, over 90% were re-sitting the paper to improve on their June 2006 performance. As a result, whilst these candidates generally obtained an improved grade on their previous one, the performance of the cohort as a whole was no better than in previous years and, as might have been expected from the profile of this entry.

Candidates demonstrated the same strengths and weaknesses as in previous sessions. A perennial point made by examiners is worth re-iterating here, however and concerns the method of studying a work for a written examination. Given that the practitioners on the unit have changed infrequently, there is a ready collection of past papers for Centres to use with their candidates in preparing for the examination. Yet evidence seems to exist that many mid- and low-band performances were such precisely because candidates had learned responses to previous questions that, unsurprisingly, did not fit the exact questions asked on the paper. This, allied with difficulties in citing the work to its best effect, were the prime causes in producing only average results for many candidates.

2559: Community Performance Project

There were 419 entries for this unit. Although the overall profile of results was similar to previous years, slightly more candidates obtained an E or better but slightly fewer obtained an A grade than in January 2006.

The main point made by moderators was one made in several previous sessions regarding the need for commentaries to be clear in identifying the intended style in which the performance has taken place. There continues to be a predominance of discussions about performance venues and/or the content of the piece; style was

often something of an afterthought or, more worryingly, the piece appeared to have been devised without reference to an intended performance style with staff at the Centre then casting around for what might be been to be appropriate theoretical underpinnings. Brief, haphazard references to Brecht therefore abounded, as did random 'mentions' of other practitioners who might have been seen as giving theoretical context to the devised piece.

Whilst moderators acknowledged the difficulties in separating style, content and venue, this inseparability is itself a strength of good work, in that such candidates were able to think holistically about the ways in which community performance works: something to say, some people to say it to and a style in which to say it. There was still little evidence of improvement in candidates' understanding of such an approach.

2560: Contextual Studies 2

452 candidates sat this paper. Having seen such an improvement in standards in June 2006, there was a sense of disappointment that this was not sustained in this session. The main cause of this seems to have been the number of candidates who chose to write sequentially about the extracts they had studied rather than comparing and contrasting in order to explore the genre. Examiners were especially concerned that some everyday words used in the questions were so obviously misunderstood by candidates, the most obvious being the reference in question 1 to 'respect and contempt', which was taken by most candidates to be the same thing! One element of providing stretch and challenge at A2 is to assume an advanced working knowledge of standard English terms and question setters are encouraged to assume this in preparing questions.

There was an almost complete collapse of candidates studying the topic Politics and Performance since 1914. There were fewer than 30 responses to the questions on this topic. Indeed, 44% of candidates answered question 1 (Post-Modern Performance) and 30% answered question 5 (The Twentieth Century American Musical) which meant that almost three-quarters of papers were responses to 33% of the questions.

2556 - The Language of Performing Arts (Coursework)

Preparation of Coursework

Moderators reported that the majority of centres prepared their submissions well. Attention was given to administrative detail and this greatly aided the moderation process. Centres annotated the commentaries clearly but there were a significant number of centres who only wrote brief comments on the Coursework Cover Sheets (CCS). Where marks have not been awarded due to an inadequacy in the work, such as the uneven treatment of art forms this should be stated on the CCS so that the Moderator is fully aware of the decision made in awarding the marks.

Comments on the CCS should be cross-referenced to the candidate's text so that the moderator is able to see the relationship between marks awarded and the underpinning evidence. It is important that candidates who are resubmitting their work are clearly identified, particularly if they have undertaken different practical activities. If this is the case the centre needs to fill in a separate unit content and identify to which candidates it refers. Where several staff are involved in marking the coursework it is necessary for internal moderation to take place and for this to be evidenced by a signature on the CCS. It is not the role of the OCR Moderator to standardise a centre where no internal moderation has taken place. If it becomes impossible for the Moderator to agree with the rank order submitted by a centre then work will be returned and the centre asked to resubmit. A thorough internal moderation process can resolve this situation at an early stage.

Centres are reminded that the Specifications state clearly the structure that should be used for the commentaries. This structure is intended to facilitate candidates accessing marks. It is self-penalising not to abide by the requirements of the Specification.

Marking of Coursework

Moderators reported that the majority of centres followed the marking criteria in the Specification carefully. Where care was taken with annotation, comments on the CCS forms and Unit Content forms, the moderation process could identify where there were concerns over an aspect of the marking and provide clear feedback in the Moderator's report to the centre. Any areas of concern are listed below under the relevant marking criterion.

An increased number of candidates adopted an appropriate written style, accurately reflected (in most cases) in the marks awarded for Quality of Language. For unit 2556 Centres are reminded that the four pieces should not be thematically linked and should not be performances of pieces to be used elsewhere in the course.

Knowledge and Understanding

The majority of candidates focused upon the four performance pieces and avoided irrelevant discussion of previous lessons and workshops.

High marks were justly awarded to candidates who showed they understood the meaning of the technical language through the practical work that they had undertaken. In this exam session there were several instances of marks in the top band being awarded when there were serious inadequacies in the discussion of one

of the art forms. Sometimes this was due to the nature of the stimulus material given to the students, as evidenced in the Unit Content. It is important that centres choose a stimulus which is appropriate for the ability of the candidates and relevant to the art form.

For example, if candidates have never danced before, a response to a piece of abstract poetry may not be the best way of building their skills and the technical language to show their understanding of what they are doing. In this instance discussion can be limited by the combined lack of understanding of the technical devices used and the vocabulary needed to describe it. Where centres were successful was where a more straightforward narrative or musical stimulus was given and candidates learnt a series of skills and devices which enabled them to develop a response which they understood and were able to explain.

Marks should not be awarded in the highest mark bands if there is an inadequacy in one of the art forms or if there is insufficient understanding across the three art forms as a whole. This is obviously also the case if technical language is used incorrectly.

Tip:

Only award high marks when candidates demonstrate an understanding of the technical terms through practical application in all three art forms.

Understanding of the Links between the Art Forms

Moderators reported that an increased percentage of candidates discussed the links between the art forms as an integral part of the text. More centres are crediting genuine ability to discuss conceptual links between the art forms, rather than annotate examples in the commentaries where candidates simply mention two art forms in the same sentence. More centres are marking appropriately in the lower bands where candidates are allowing the reader to make the connections rather than explicitly pointing them out.

In an attempt to make links between the art forms some centres encourage or allow students to devise almost four integrated pieces, albeit with a bias towards one art form. The clear demand of the Specifications is that Dance, Drama and Music should each be dealt with separately so that skills can be developed in each before they are combined. As stated above centres should choose appropriate and discrete stimuli to promote skills and understanding in each of the three areas.

Tips:

- When devising practical tasks for candidates, Centres should consider how these might bring out the relationship between the art forms. It is best to avoid aspects of the art forms that are likely to divide rather than unite.
- Candidates should view the three performing arts as a set of skills and techniques that inform each other to communicate to an audience
- When teaching the discrete art forms always consider ways in which the art form can inform, support and combine with another to produce a heightened effect.

Understanding of Performance Process

Moderators reported that in this session more candidates adopted a formal, objective style rather than a chatty, diary-like approach. At times some candidates obviously have difficulty with this approach. For example, comments such as 'The two males advanced towards the three females of which I, alas, was one' were typical of a less structured approach. It was inspiring to read work which contained a real enthusiasm for the devising and a sense that the candidate was taking part in an artistic exploration where they learn to manipulate performance conventions. Inevitably a sense of the individual will come through but candidates are advised against allowing the work to become subjective and anecdotal. The mark of a thoughtful candidate, who has redrafted where necessary, is the ability to strike a balance between practice and objective reflection.

The Specification makes clear how commentaries should be structured and there are now few examples where centres allow candidates to submit work that is in effect four separate essays discussing each of the devised pieces. Successful submissions are those where candidates are guided to write objectively about the performance process showing that they clearly understand the distinction between *Improvise*, *Rehearse* and *Perform* and show clear examples from their practical work. Candidates who use bullet points should beware being superficial and leaving the reader to make many of the connections. Good use of diagrams and photographs can inform the text and make the meaning clearer. All too often, however, pictures were added as a decoration with a heading rather than with the intention of exemplifying the discussion within the text.

Tip: Candidates should write clearly and objectively, detailing the devising process with a selection of examples from each art form. They should ensure that creative decisions are explained and analysed.

Quality of Language

There were more examples of Centres marking accurately in terms of Quality of Language. Not only was there a recognition that standard technical terms should be spelt correctly, but there was also a concern for presentation, paragraphing and sentence structure. When candidates wrote in an informal style, the quality of discussion often became a list with sentences invariably starting with variants of 'We then did..' or 'Next we did...' It was refreshing to see more Centres taking care over the marking of this aspect of the criteria and recognising that candidates can often improve their marks by redrafting coursework submissions.

Tips:
Advice to candidates on written style: Write in a formal, objective style.
Explain points clearly and precisely.
Use technical language appropriately and clearly.
Proofread work and check presentation of the whole submission.
Make sure that there is a variety of sentence structure.

2557 - Contextual Studies 1 (Written Examination)

General comments

As in previous sessions, the majority of centres appeared to have entered candidates for this unit in the June session so that they can work on the two units, 2557 and 2558 at the same time. The overwhelming majority of candidates taking the unit this session were retake candidates and there was only modest evidence of improvement. Once again there was a range of responses with some exceptional work but also some very weak work. It was noted that there was a limited number of high top range candidates, itself a function of the large number of re-take candidates.

Many candidates planned their responses in detail which resulted in responses which were coherent and to the point. In a few notable cases, the plan was longer and of a better quality than the response itself! There were a number of candidates who constructed very sophisticated responses that showed a logical and progressive train of thought. Weaker candidates either chronicled the narrative story of the studied work with little understanding of the techniques and devices used to create specific effects. Mid- and low-band candidates often took the structure of the piece as the structure of their response. The very weakest responses offered no structure at all and jumped from point to point with no connecting argument or meaning and with little or no supportive evidence from the studied work.

There was evidence again that some candidates had been prepared for the exam by tutoring in past papers. Although this is recognised as an important teaching tool candidates must appreciate that the knowledge and skills acquired during this unit should be able to be applied to any question on that practitioner but that it is important to understand the thrust of the question so that the response can address the demands of that question. Although many candidates made a genuine attempt to address the question, there were still many who chose to ignore it or write a generic “cover-all” response that could fit any question. Many of these responses left the examiner to make the implicit links; these received little credit.

As ever, good responses made consistent reference to the question and showed a perceptive understanding of the techniques and devices being used. They were often able to offer shrewd insights and interesting standpoints that were fully exemplified using specific examples from the studied works.

Candidates lost focus when they did not show a clear understanding of the key terms that they were using. Either the terms were poorly interpreted, as in *Gestus*, or the definition was ignored, a frequent cause for concern in the Music responses. This lack of technical understanding was often evidenced through an over-reliance on examples cited but in many cases the examples were poorly selected or conspicuous by their absence. Some candidates seemed to have problems with such terms as *Physical Theatre* or *Verfremdungseffekt*, with many avoiding any sort of definition, thus creating problems in their responses. There was also an expectation that candidates would be able to show an understanding of the key terms used during Unit 2556, which surprisingly, many did not.

It is absolutely vital that candidates support their statements with relevant, clear examples from the practitioner's works. Sometimes examples were inserted in isolation with no relevant explanation linking them to the point being made and in some cases the examples used either did not support the statement or indeed actually contradicted it.

Once again, some candidates wrote very narrative and vague responses which, in the case of Dance, showed a surprising lack of movement material. It is recognised that the nature of particularly Newson's work lends itself to narrative responses but candidates still need to show an appreciation of the techniques and devices being used in a particular work. Some good responses included explanatory and annotated drawings which fully supported the descriptive passages relating to Bruce.

Musical responses generally had musical or pictorial illustrations of the points being discussed, although these sometimes appeared strained or underdeveloped. In many cases there was a suggestion that these rather formulaic responses had been pre-learned. It was also noted that many centres relied solely on one studied work. Although it is recognised that this may comply with the Specification requirements, it would be wise to look at more than one work in order to understand how the studied work fits into the body of the practitioner's work and how the 'focus' work is characteristic in terms of features seen in other works.

A small proportion of candidates had writing that was extremely difficult to decipher, thus interrupting the flow of the response. Weaker candidates struggled with the extended writing nature required by the examination and consequently wrote very little. There were many examples of misspellings of key words, practitioner's names, characters names, play titles, in particular *'The Caucasian Chalk Circle'* and *Brecht*. Punctuation and the misuse of capitals often posed a problem and many candidates lost marks as a result.

Question specific comments

SECTION A - DANCE

Christopher Bruce

Responses in this section tended to show some understanding of the fingerprints of Bruce's work but were unable to translate that understanding into an appreciation of the content and movement material that supports any ideas regarding Bruce's works. Terms such as *'ballet, folk, jazz and tango'* were used frequently but often without definition, explanation or exemplification.

- Q1 This was the more popular of the two questions. Strong candidates covered a wide range of points and were able to examine the stylistic characteristics, rather than merely list Bruce's techniques. Most candidates had a good knowledge of the studied piece and its stylistic traits. This was especially true when it came to describing what *'folk'* dance was and where it was used in the piece and to what effect. Often presumptions were made that the reader would know the work and fill the gaps automatically so ideas were frequently presented with no explanation. Weaker candidates simply told the story of the piece, working logically through the piece, listing some features but failing to make any connection between their use, the purpose of their inclusion or their significance in terms of the practitioner's work as a whole.
- Q2 Many candidates chose to ignore the Graham Technique of the question and focused instead on biographical detail. The question demanded that candidates should show an understanding of how Bruce's choreography has been influenced by his training. It was expected that candidates might include the features of his work but the focus of the response should be on the choreographic material and how Bruce uses different types of movement to create specific effects. Weaker responses were very narrative in approach and although they seemed to know what happened in the piece, and how Bruce trained, they were unable to connect this to movement material or stylistic traits. The inclusion of the word *'choreography'* was designed to steer candidate towards focusing on movement content rather than lists and storylines. Ideas taken directly from the *Student's Guide to AS Performance Studies* (published by Rhinegold Publishing) often appeared in isolation without explanation or exemplification. Worryingly, a significant number of candidates confused Martha Graham and Marie Rambert.

Works studied : "Ghost Dances" "Swansong" "Rooster"

Lloyd Newson

- Q3 Newson's concerns with the "pictures" that he creates on stage and their effect on the audience was central to the question; at the heart of the matter is his strongly held conviction that he does not create work unless he has something to say. The focus should therefore have been on the images created and the concerns Newson conveys through them to the audience. Some candidates seemed to struggle with the concept of 'images through movement' and concentrated instead on the 'social and psychological situations.' There was a surprising lack of discussion about Physical Theatre and Contact Improvisation with only the strongest candidates managing to give detailed explanation of the movement material that Newson uses to achieve his aims.

Q4 This was the more popular of the two questions. Although it was expected that there might be some element of retelling the 'story' of the work, the main thrust of the response was on the range of techniques Newson uses and to what effect. Many opportunities were missed in terms of the identification of movement material, with some candidates concentrating on the risky content in terms of taboo subjects.

The part of the question regarding how Newson's work challenges the audience's ideas of what 'dance' is was largely ignored. The strongest candidates were able to identify how aggressive, demanding movement material using lots of contact work and pedestrian movement combined with a violent dynamic is used within the work and to what effect. Few candidates recognised that some works, including new works such as 'Just for Show' use even more dialogue, drama and technical illusionist 'tricks' as well as much audience interaction to blur the lines between drama and dance, almost creating a new art form.

Works studied: "Enter Achilles" "Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men" "Strange Fish"

SECTION B - DRAMA

Bertolt Brecht

- Q5 This question asked for a recognition that the characters in Brecht's works are quite ordinary, but by virtue of the situation that they have been put in, they are made extraordinary (for example, Grusha, Shen Te and even Ui) and that they represent the heroic struggle of the commoner to exist. Most candidates ignored 'the means by which' and answered the question by outlining the narrative, without referring to Brecht's techniques and often focused on the socio-political context of the studied work without using any specific dramatic textual references to support their ideas. Strongest candidates were able to identify the sense of episodic story telling which attempts to distance the audience but makes it hard for the audience not to build empathy with the characters' struggles.
- Q6 This response elicited some very strong responses. The V-effect is often translated as the Alienation effect in the sense of making something look other than what it is. Strongest candidates showed a clear definition of the V-effect and then systematically identified examples from a range of texts and connected back to the question. These candidates were also able to connect and suggest socio-political reasoning behind Brecht's decisions and to couple this with an understanding of the theatrical context. Examples used in these cases were often sophisticated and detailed. Weaker candidates became confused by the idea of 'alienating the audience' and interpreted this in a more contemporary sense of shutting out the audience, rather than creating a critical distance between the actor and the role, and between the audience and the characters and the play itself. Such candidates merely listed the features of the V effect whilst ignoring the 'making strange' effect and without any substantiation from a text.

Works studied : "The Caucasian Chalk Circle " "The Threepenny Opera"

John Godber

- Q7 This question elicited a lot of very personalised responses about candidates' own experiences in terms of practical work and narrative responses about Godber's life and experiences without identifying why Godber used particular techniques to capitalise on a small company of performers. Weaker candidates' responses lacked structure and were very formulaic, generating lots of 'everything I know about Godber'. Generally candidates seemed to struggle with the demands of this question, failing to recognise that Godber's use of a small company was in the early days a practical consideration because his background as a school teacher led to him understanding the need for economy of presentation and to therefore develop ways such as multi-roling which enabled him to create large casts of characters with a small number of cast members.
- Q8 The answers to this question were either very poorly or very well answered. Weaker candidates misinterpreted 'dramatic experiences' as 'life experiences' and concentrated entirely on Godber's own background, life experiences and professional experience without any consideration of dramatic influences and how they were reflected in his work. Such answers were very formulaic whilst the strongest candidates showed a wide knowledge of the history of theatre and focused on this first and foremost, detailing connections with Brecht, Berkoff, Shakespeare and Greek and Roman Drama. They were able to then move on to discuss Godber's work in TV and in schools and finally his Northern working class background. At each stage all ideas were exemplified using detailed textual references.

Works studied : "Teechers" "Bouncers" "Shakers"

SECTION C - MUSIC

The Songs of George Gershwin

- Q9 There was scope in this question for candidates to discuss the ways in which the later songs are more sophisticated than earlier Tin Pan Alley examples, including the use of more complex harmonies and melodies and the influence of other musical genres such as Blues, Jazz and Ragtime. Stronger candidates were able to identify specific musical features such as the chromatic complexity and melodic development in some of the songs. Many responses were weak, however, with many formulaic answers starting with a cursory acknowledgement of Tin Pan Alley style and then veering off into a learnt breakdown of 3 or 4 songs. The main issue was an inability to define what Tin Pan Alley style was which meant that weaker candidates were not able to substantiate how Gershwin's had developed from, and built on this.
- Q10 This was the more popular of the two questions but produced polarised responses: very good answers or poor answers. Candidates were expected to provide a range of references to the music and lyrics in the songs studied in relation to the particular 'ingredients' that they feel contribute to the success of the songs. Many candidates used examples from the lyrics rather than the music. These were not always fully developed and did not reflect technical knowledge and understanding. Strongest candidates used some form of annotation and highlighted what the music did on a certain word or phrase and what the intended effect of that technique was. Some candidates wrote about the music and lyrics being mutually supportive and the best candidates wrote about the concept of word painting and how if looked at in detail some of the words did not always make entire sense. Musical knowledge was sadly lacking in some cases and candidates rarely explained what they meant by phrases such as 'jazzy' or 'bluesy'.

Works studied : "Summertime" "The Man I Love" "Swanee" "They Can't Take That Away From Me" "I Got Rhythm"

Steve Reich

- Q11 It was expected that candidates would make significant reference to the range of non-Western influences in Reich's work and that specific examples would be provided to support the answers, which may be provided as musical notation or descriptive narrative. Few candidates attempted this question but on the whole, those that did gave limited responses, identifying a few influences but not really being able to show how these worked in the music. Many candidates seemed to not fully understand the term 'non-Western music' and ignored Reich's early fascination with African drumming, Gamelan and his own experience as a percussionist. There was considerable scope for discussion of his use of repetition which forms the structure of African drumming, alongside the shifting rhythmic patterns that combine to create complex rhythmic structures and augmentation.
- Q12 The strongest candidates were able to focus their responses to address the use of instruments and voice in the studied work/s. They were able to identify the fundamental importance of rhythm in Reich's work as well other elements such as melody, harmony, timbre and texture and how they are used in the studied work to create a specific effect. Best candidates used diagrams to help them to clarify the points made. *Different Trains* elicited some excellent responses with candidates able to work systematically through the instruments used and how they then connected to the use of voice. Weaker candidates struggled with the musicality of the pieces and found it hard to identify the various elements being used. Learnt, formulaic answers did not really address the question.

Works studied : "Different Trains" "Clapping Music" "Three Tales"

2559 - Community Performance Project (Coursework)

The comments made in the report for unit 2556, concerning the presentation of coursework, also apply to this unit.

For the Community Performance Project, candidates are required to devise a specific performance arising out of, and for performance within, their local community, in an identified style, for a specific audience. High marks were therefore awarded to those candidates who complied with these requirements. Conversely, moderators reported that there were several instances where an adjustment had been made to the marks awarded because the choice of project, style or venue was not appropriate to the task.

Successful projects ranged from the conventions of a Medieval Pageant to a piece of street theatre inspired by the Miners' Strike of the 1980s. Both of these were directly relevant to the local community and a suitable venue was chosen for the performance. The Medieval Pageant was appropriate because of the architecture and heritage of the town where the centre was located. More universal topics, which are not location-specific, are not appropriate. Centres should consider carefully the choice of project. Centres are reminded that OCR is happy to advise upon proposed project and it is advisable to seek advice beforehand if there is any doubt as to the suitability of any aspect.

It was disturbing this session to come across one group of candidates who had devised a fictional event themselves and then creates a piece of performance around this. This inevitably led to a significant adjustment to the marks awarded. Centres are reminded that the venue for the final performance should not be their own school or college but an appropriate venue within the community. This is to increase the element of 'risk' in that there is only the quality of the performance to persuade the audience to remain and watch.

Knowledge and Understanding

There were more examples of candidates stating their project and the intended style at the start of their commentaries and the performing style. The mere mention of practitioners is not enough to be awarded marks. A specific performing style needs to be adopted which is appropriate and relevant to the project. Marks are awarded for the Knowledge and Understanding of the performing project, the style and how the art forms have combined to produce the final piece of performance. Pieces of -essentially narrative - drama with either dance or music added to a single scene were insufficient to allow candidates access to all the available marks.

Tip:

Ensure that the style, venue and content are made clear at the start of the commentary and that these are reinforced by the information provided by the tutor in the Unit Content.

Ensure that there is a balanced discussion of the art forms used.

Evaluation of Performance Process

Candidates were rightly awarded high marks when the style and the performance project were stated clearly, both then being referred to as showing the creation of the piece and the development of individual characterisation. Adjustments were made to marks where candidates discussed the piece in a vacuum, as a separate unit distinct from the intended style. Candidates

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who simply give a narrative description of the piece, scene by scene, could not be awarded high marks. Examples of good work showed candidates writing in an evaluative manner about performing decisions, how these related to the chosen style and the intended effect upon the audience. Discussion of practitioners and influences should be relevant to the performance style and research that has been undertaken on this.

Tip:

Candidates must write objectively and take care to explain their devising decisions against the stated aims of the piece and in the context of its intended style.

Evaluation of the Success of the Performance

More candidates were able to evaluate the success of the performance against their stated aims at the beginning of the commentary and alongside the stated style. This was a welcome improvement since there is the potential here for the candidate to lose marks if evaluation consists merely of a subjective paragraph in which the candidate states how he or she felt the performance went. During a performance it is the control of techniques and skills that is important and high marks have justly been awarded to commentaries where candidates were able to use this language to evaluate the final performance.

There were a few instances this session where the piece was performed several times in different venues and to different audiences. This is inappropriate for this unit and it prevented the candidates obtaining high marks since the point of the exercise was to encourage a comparison of different performances. Since it is the intention that performance work for this unit should be audience- and venue-specific, candidates should discuss the success of their devising once, rather than comparing how different audiences reacted and how the performers had to adapt to different venues.

Tip:

Candidates should write objectively in discussing the control needed to produce the desired performance effect.

Quality of Language

The comments for unit 2556 are also relevant here, with the additional point that there is an expectation at A2 of increased facility in handling technical vocabulary and in adopting a reflective, evaluative style.

2560 - Contextual Studies 2

General Comments

The January session usually attracts a smaller number of candidates than the June session and this was reflected again in the number entering this year. Just over 450 candidates responded and of those only 5% answered questions in the Politics and Performance area with the other 95% split evenly across the two other options.

After the very positive start last June, there were fewer high level examples this time, but an improving focus on the area studied rather than the practitioners and their works. Centres are reminded again that, whilst there are practitioners and works specified, the approach taken to this unit should have the area studied as the principal focus throughout.

Tip:

A possible approach may involve: determining the significant aspects of the genre within the time-span indicated, identifying why the practitioners and works are appropriate to represent that area, interrogating the ways they exemplify, or perhaps vary from, the main lines of enquiry of the area, all before the teaching sessions begin. All too often it would appear that centres are merely using the generic area as a title under which certain practitioners and works are studied. This is not the intention and candidates will benefit from that wider contextual view being taken throughout all the teaching.

There were still a large number of candidates who plodded through works one by one offering brief comments with a stock list of references. In some centres the same essay plan was delivered slavishly irrespective of the question. These answers were devoid of comparison, made few if any context references to the genre as a whole and consequently could not achieve much beyond 4th criteria band.

Tip:

When identifying possible reference moments, words, techniques, quotations in the extracts, make sure that there are a number from which candidates can select. This avoids the examiner reading the same few examples appearing across a whole centre's entry. Also look for possible comparison or contrasting examples, within the works studied and beyond, that candidates can use judiciously to amplify their answer and indicate both their knowledge and understanding of a point they are making about the genre area studied.

These 'formula' responses can help those who may feel insecure in the written examination situation, but as has been said before, often limit the candidates capable of achieving higher grades. Particularly as many ignore the question asked in the headlong rush to write down the general answer they have learnt. Quite a number of candidates this time either mis-read or only partially read the Question.

Tip:

In order to ensure that candidates address all parts or aspects of a question, have them practice identifying key words in practice questions and then using these as the initial 'legs' of a planning 'spider' diagram. This helps also to keep their focus on the question in their plan, rather than using practitioners or art forms at the centre of the 'spiders'.

However, all candidates seemed to understand that all three art forms need to be covered within the answer and many were fluent in moving across them, which helped give reassurance that the candidate was comfortable in discussing the Performing Arts as a whole. However, there appears

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to be an increasing discrepancy in the way that the art forms are considered and the concomitant knowledge and understanding evidenced in the answers. In a number of centres, it is clear that the dance extracts are being considered from a movement vocabulary, dance structure, kinetic image, form and style point of view and candidates can offer movement detail from the extracts they have considered to illustrate points about how different practitioners may approach dance and how it contributes to the overall area being studied. This is not consistent across all centres, but centres would do well to emulate this practice. The weakest aspects of dance discussion are where the candidate merely discusses the “meaning” or issue behind the dance or simply narrate without any movement detail at all.

In music, it is also in particular centres where candidates have obviously been led to understand what makes the music of the particular studied area distinctive, using musical terms and detailed examples and how things changed across a particular time-span. Candidates may well discuss instrumentation, which is useful, but ideally, there should be an understanding of what difference, musically, that particular instrumentation makes to the piece, and the musical impact of that experimentation. Too often, particularly in the American Musical and Politics and Performance, the lyrics are discussed as the ‘music’ rather than any engagement with detail in the art form.

Probably the weakest area altogether is drama, where often the nearest many candidates get to discussing drama in any detail is through references to characters and language. In the former, weaker candidates discuss them as real people, in the latter; it is the ‘colourful’ quotations that occur over again with little indication of why they have been included. Clearly, understanding the use of character and language are important areas of comparative study, but often within the American Musical these are absent altogether, replaced by narrative or extended discussion of the lyrics.

Tip:

In the American Musical gather some examples together of how the dialogue works with the underscore, using character motif, punctuation and emphasis. Identify how the tension is built in certain example scenes and how the songs are placed to work with the dramatic and emotional temperature. In order to do this it is important to look at the libretto of the show rather than rely on the, often different, film versions.

Centres would benefit from revisiting the basic technical vocabulary of unit 2556 and identifying further relevant technical terms within the art forms and how they are applied in the works studied. The importance of enabling teaching staff to have time to share and develop their knowledge across all three art forms for the benefit of candidates cannot be emphasised enough.

Unfortunately, the marks for Quality of Language do not appear to be improving. Names of studied works, practitioners, technical terms continue to be mis-spelt, which betrays a lack of care and consideration in the preparation for the examination. Marks are needlessly lost on this together with the usual careless errors. This session examiners also particularly noted more candidates than normal whose work was illegible. Obviously, no matter how good the answer, if it cannot be read then the marks cannot be awarded. Candidates who have suspect handwriting identified in practice answers should be encouraged to take more care over presentation in order to achieve the result they deserve.

Finally in the interests of improving the mode of expression on the paper, candidates should avoid using phrases such as “the practitioners/works I have studied”, and expressions such as “the Beatles are my music practitioners”. To reinforce what was stated at the beginning of this section, what the candidates should understand they are studying is Post-Modern Approaches, American Musical or Politics and Performance. The practitioners and works are a means to that end.

Question Specific Comments

Q1 44% of candidates answered this question.

This was the question that a majority of candidates attempted, but the degree to which it was answered varied considerably. Many chose to ignore the notion of “contempt”, or thought it synonymous with “respect” (see comments above about considering all aspects of the question). A considerable number merely saw it as a “catch-all” question that could be responded to with either everything they knew or with planned essays based on June 06 questions with little attempt to tailor the response to this question. The bulk of the highest scoring answers had given themselves time to think through a safe, if somewhat stolid, point-by-point approach with examples and some reference to the question and this brought the majority of results.

Some candidates were very confused about what intertextuality involves. Some felt that it referred to any reference at all, confusing it with ideas of adaptation, where a work in one form is re-worked in another, for example, Berkoff’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” or “Metamorphosis”. Re-configuration, on the other hand, is usually applied to re-workings of pieces in the same form or near enough and Bourne’s “Swan Lake” and “Nutcracker” would be examples of this.

Intertextuality refers to brief references to words, images or moments that are sufficiently “known” that they have a cultural currency which then makes them available to be re-used, in the same way that we use short French or Latin phrases in English for effect. Whilst it has become fashionable and identifiable within postmodernism, it is a technique that has been used in the arts far longer than the last 50 years. Composers, playwrights, poets, painters, novelists and choreographers have all seen the potential of offering a ‘nod’ to another, in the interests of illuminating, expanding, amplifying their own work or just as a compliment. So, Bourne’s momentary reference to and acknowledgement of imagery from Hitchcock’s “The Birds” as the swans gather menacingly over the bed-head in “Swan Lake” would be a good example. Similarly, both Godber and Vardimon’s brief references to the dance from Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” in “Bouncers” and “Park” respectively would also be appropriate examples but the Beatles use of newspaper articles for the lyrics of “Day in the Life” is more an example of quotation.

Q2 3% of candidates answered this question.

In the few answers to this question the idea of *pastiche* was more frequently understood but many clearly had difficulty with *parody* and the idea of *quotation*. These are key terms and approaches that are likely to appear in questions again. The weakest responses came on *quotation*, which was probably the easiest notion (see comments above). Perhaps, some read more into the word they knew best and then presumed it must mean more than they thought, so ignored it. Of the few that answered this question, only one was strong, secure in the idea of parody and pastiche and referenced well. Even with this candidate it seemed to dawn on them about half-way through the answer that “quotation” wasn’t that difficult, merely a very obvious way of using material both in creative reference but also as the base material, whether that be from the Tibetan Book of the Dead or the Malleus Maleficarum.

Q3 2% of candidates answered this question.

There were few responses to this question, some answered well while others were weak, lacking any evidence of conviction. Few challenged the notion that ‘truth’ was necessary or saw it as relative to the practitioner’s point of view and several worried the notion of whether the work they had studied had ‘truth’ or not at the expense of discussing politics and performance. Candidates by all means can discuss their interpretation of the question, but need to keep a firm focus on how they are going to answer it. The best answers were

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less concerned with whose truth it was, but whether there was any sense of the political - the *revolutionary* - involved in it. One candidate dismissed the idea of performance and truth altogether by suggesting that "... if theatre involves the willing suspension of disbelief (Colridge)(sic) any discussion of the truth is pointless" and went on to make a strong argument for all performance encouraging question and challenge if not quite revolution.

Q4 3% of candidates answered this question.

Again, this question provided a wide mix of answers, from the substantial to the weak. Centres should encourage candidates to realise that this is A2 level and that they should avoid the simplistic, for example '...play is about powerful women seeking power, marlene is margret (sic) thatcher'. This kind of bald statement is all too common and besides correction also needs some explanation. One of the points that Churchill raises in "Top Girls" is that Marlene has achieved success at the expense of her humanity, whether that has resonance with Thatcher is possible, but is no more than a by-line to discussion of the drama and the stance of the piece.

A point on Politics and Performance, in general, relates to rather too subjective responses with candidates getting lost in personal opinion, examining the practitioners rather than seeing them in a wider political context.

Q5 30% of candidates answered this question.

Responses to this question tended to be good on *trace the development*, but less so on the *style and form* aspects of the question. Middle to low band answers offered description rather than analysis in a question that offered the opportunity to indicate Knowledge and Understanding of the basic shifts in the form.

There are still mentions of burlesque, vaudeville, operetta and revue with few indications of the contributions that they made. Fortunately, however, what could have been a gross indulgence of irrelevant background in answer to this question was avoided and clearly centres had heeded the comments in the last report. Use of the background material associated with this area was more tempered.

There were a number of poor time management situations with the dance practitioner, usually Fosse, tagged on at the end as an afterthought, rushed, incomplete and just not convincing in terms of Knowledge and Understanding.

Centres are referred to the comments above about the approaches to the analysis of drama in this area, but the following, which also illustrates the tendency to fall back on clichés without sufficient explanation, is a good example "... characters are simple and ordinary so you can identify with them..." This candidate in the next sentence started discussing "The King and I".

Q6 18% of candidates answered this question.

Middle and lower band candidates did not understand the term 'book musical' and surprisingly many failed to focus on the story element of the question. There could have been concern about this question that it might encourage more narrative than analysis, but few if any fell into the narrative trap perhaps indicating a more sophisticated (A2) understanding of the requirements.

The best answers focused on key moments in the 'story' to demonstrate the *distinctive contributions*. Others had the same moments but failed to make the same impact. For example, many referred to the significance of De Mille's dream ballet in Oklahoma, in that it

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influenced later musicals (without much detail as to how), but failed to say how it progressed the 'story' of the piece.

In some answers references to social, cultural and historical context became an end in themselves rather than as supportive of points being made about areas of work in the Performing Arts. "The Depression" is one of the frequent victims of this with often considerable confusion as to what it was, when it was and what was going on, or not, on Broadway. The context should support the expression of Knowledge and Understanding of the area of performance being studied not be considered as a separate subject.

A guide to practitioners and works offered for the examination of the revised unit – updated Jan 07

	Dance	Drama	Music
Post Modern Approaches since 1960	<p>Alston-Soda Lake, Pulcinella, Overdrive</p> <p>Anderson-Flesh & Blood (both versions), Cross Channel, Car, Perfect Moment, Spectre de la Rose, Double Take, Lost Dances of Egon Schiele, Jesus Baby Heater, Yippee</p> <p>Bausch—as below</p> <p>Bintley-Still Life/Penguin Café, Hobson’s Choice, Flowers of the Forest,</p> <p>Bourne-Swan Lake, Edward Scissorhands, CarMan, Nutcracker, Drip</p> <p>Clark-Because we must, Prospero’s Books, Current/See</p> <p>Davies-Wyoming, 88, Bird Song, White Man Sleeps</p> <p>De Keersmaeker-Achterland, Rosa, Rosas danst Rosas</p> <p>Grupo Corpo-Bach, O Corpo, Lecuona</p>	<p>Berkoff-The Actor, Metamorphosis, Greek, East, Decadence, Belgrano, Trial, Salome, Dog, Oedipus, Harry’s Christmas, Messiah, West</p> <p>Brenton-Churchill Play, Skinny Spew, Saliva Milkshake</p> <p>Churchill-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, Drunk Enough, A Number</p> <p>Crimp-Attempts on Her Life, Country, Misanthrope, No-one Sees the Video</p> <p>Forced Entertainment (Etchells)- Club of no Regrets, Pleasure, First Night</p> <p>Kane-Phaedra’s Love, Crave, Blasted</p> <p>Kaos Theatre-Titus Andronicus, Moll Flanders, Alice</p> <p>Pinter-Homecoming, Birthday Party, Caretaker</p> <p>Stoppard-Arcadia, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead, Real Inspector Hound</p> <p>Wertenbaker-Our Country’s Good, Love of the Nightingale, Three Birds</p>	<p>Adams-Nixon in China, Ceiling/Sky, Chamber Symphony, Death of Klinghoffer, Transmigration of Souls</p> <p>Andreissson-De Stijl, Man/Music/Mozart, Hoketus</p> <p>Beatles-Please Please Me, Help, Revolver, Sgt.Pepper’s, White, Magical Mystery Tour, Abbey Rd, Hard Day’s Night</p> <p>Bonzo Dog-Chronology Vols.1, 2 & 3</p> <p>Bryars-Squirrel and the Ricketty Rackety Bridge, Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet, Sinking of the Titanic</p> <p>Cage-Voiceless Essay, Europera 5, Roaratorio</p> <p>Cook-Let them Eat Bingo, Gutter/Stars, Long Way Baby</p> <p>Glass-Music in Similar Motion, Strung Out, Company, Einstein on the Beach, Pawaqqatsi, Violin Concerto, Symphony II & 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>Gorillaz- Demon Days selection</p> <p>John-Lion King, Billy Elliot, Madman Across the Water</p> <p>Nyman-Piano, Draughtsman’s Contract, Decay Music, Libertine, Ogre</p> <p>Radiohead-Hail to the Thief, Pablo Honey, OK Computer</p> <p>Riley-In C, Rainbow in Curved Air, Persian Surgery Dervishes</p> <p>Sex Pistols- My Way, Anarchy in the UK, C’mon Everybody</p> <p>Shostakovich-Lady Macbeth, 5th Symphony, 8th Quartet</p> <p>Stockhausen-Gruppen, Klavier Stucke, Kontakte</p>

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<p>Politics and Performance since 1914</p>	<p>Ailey-Revelations, Cry, For Bird with Love, Blues Suite, Witness Bausch-Bluebeard, 1980, Nelken, Viktor, Café Müller, Windowcleaner, Palermo Palermo, Rite of Spring, Nur Du Candoco-Sunbyrne, Phasing, Sour Milk, Outside In, Shadow, Jeyasingh-Romance with Footnotes, Surface Tension, Exit No Exit Jones-Fever Swamp, Last Supper, Still/Here Ludus Dance-Zygote, Clash, Sold, Perfecting Eugene Union Dance-Permanent Revolution V2R, Dance in House, Dance Tek Warriors, Sensing Change Vardimon-Therapist, Tete, Park VTOL-Where Angels, Without Trace, Snowball Effect Wigman-Witch Dance, Farewell & Thanksgiving, Shifting Landscape</p>	<p>Banner Theatre-Burning Issues, Migrant Voices, Free for All Berkoff-Belgrano, East, Requiem for Ground Zero Boal-Image, Forum, Invisible Th. Bond-Saved, Lear, 11 vests, Inland Sea, War Plays Brenton-Greenland, Iranian Nights, Ugly Rumours Cartwright-Little Voice, Road, Two, Bed, Hard Fruit Churchill- as above Daniels-Masterpieces, Gut Girls, Esme & Shaz Fo-Can't Pay, Won't Pay, Accidental Death, Boniface VIII, Pope & Witch, Trumpets & Raspberries, Mistero Buffo, Virtuous Burglar, Open Couple, Hunger of Zanni, It Happened Tomorrow, Elizabeth, One Was Nude & one Wore Tails, Same Old Story Fugard-Coat, Sizwe Bansi, Island, Master Harold, Valley Song Hansberry-A Raisin in the Sun, Les Blancs, Drinking Gourd Littlewood/Th.Workshop-Hostage, Taste of Honey, OWALW Pinter-One for the Road, Party Time, Mountain Language Russell-Our Day Out, Educating Rita, Blood Bros</p>	<p>Bragg- England half English, Back to Basics, Talking with the Taxman, Workers' Playtime, Must I Paint you A Picture? Clash-London Calling, Give 'em Enough Rope, The Essential Clash Dylan-Freewheelin, The Times they are a'changin', Bringing it All Back Home, Another Side of, Slow Train Coming Guthrie-Dustbowl Ballads, Asch recordings Vols I,II,III,IV Johnson (The The)- Infected, Mind Bomb, Naked Self Marley-Exodus, Burnin', Rastaman Vibration, Songs of Freedom, Natty Dread, Catch A Fire, Uprising Masekela-Promise of a Future, Tomorrow, Black To The Future Shostakovich- Symphonies 5, 7, 8, 10 & 11 U2-Joshua Tree, War, How to..Atomic Bomb Weill-Seven Deadly Sins, Mahagonny, Threepenny Opera</p>
<p>The Twentieth Century American Musical</p>	<p>Fosse-Sweet Charity, Cabaret, Pajama Game, Chicago (often the wrong version), All That Jazz, Pippin Robbins-West Side Story, Fiddler, King & I</p>	<p>Hammerstein-Showboat, Oklahoma, Sound of Music, King & I, South Pacific Lerner- My Fair Lady, Paint Your Wagon, Camelot, Brigadoon, Sondheim-Sunday in the Park, Sweeney Todd, Into the Woods, Assassins, Company, Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Gypsy</p>	<p>Bernstein-West Side Story, Candide, On the Town, (Wonderful Town),Trouble in Tahiti Loesser-Most Happy Fella, How to Succeed in Business, Guys & Dolls Porter-Kiss Me Kate, Can-Can, Anything Goes Rodgers-Carousel, Sound of Music, South Pacific, Pal Joey, Babes in Arms, Connecticut Yankee, On Your Toes, No No Nanette Sondheim-A Little Night Music, Into the Woods, Company, Sweeney Todd, Follies, Passion</p>

Advanced GCE Performance Studies (3873/7873)

January 2007 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	39	0
2557	Raw	100	81	71	61	51	42	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	39	0
2559	Raw	100	81	72	64	56	48	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	39	0
2560	Raw	100	39	34	29	25	21	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	39	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
3873	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7873	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
3873	0.0	12.2	49.0	77.6	95.9	100.0	50
7873	42.9	57.1	71.4	100.0	100.0	100.0	7

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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