

# **Performance Studies**

Advanced GCE **2560**

Contextual Studies 2

## **Mark Scheme for June 2010**

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**31-36 marks**

An excellent answer that shows a mature overview of the topic studied and clearly addresses the question set. The candidate is able to identify distinctive approaches in discussing contrasting aspects of performance material and to make sophisticated links between the art forms. Contrasting approaches are well defined and statements are supported by close reference to the works studied. The context of the genre is understood in depth and the answer demonstrates detailed understanding through a well-chosen range of examples.

**25-30 marks**

An accomplished answer that demonstrates some overview of the topic studied, makes comparisons and answers the question set. Aspects of the topic are discussed in detail and a range of examples offered, drawing effective links across the art forms. Whilst these are very helpful in supporting the argument, at the bottom of this band their significance may sometimes require further comment or possibly further reference. The significance of distinctive approaches of practitioners is commented upon but candidates performing towards the bottom of the band do not distinguish them fully. Contextual links are commented upon in some detail but these are not always fully supported by examples, illustration or reference.

**19-24 marks**

A competent piece of work that addresses the question set. The answer demonstrates an understanding of the essential features of the topic although detailed connections or contrasts between the work of practitioners are not fully developed. The depth of discussion is variable and not always supported by reference to works studied and the candidate needs to draw more out of them to establish stylistic and contextual links. Use the top mark of this band as a ceiling if there is scope for better use of the works studied. Use the lowest mark in this band as a ceiling for answers that evade the question set, but be open to rewarding evident knowledge and content on the topic.

**13-18 marks**

An adequate approach to the discussion that makes a number of useful points about the topic. The discussion is heavily focused on only a few examples with few connections between examples or across art forms that are insufficiently developed by the candidate. The answer is slightly pedestrian in moving from point to point and is variable in depth. Use the highest mark in this band as a ceiling for formulaic or generic answers. The question may only be answered by implication, although there are some valid points.

**7-12 marks**

A limited response that does not fully address the scope of the studied topic. Some aspects are explored but with a few basic, poorly-chosen illustrations or references to works. Contrasting approaches are dealt with, albeit superficially, but the answer may imply that there is little to compare or contrast between the work of practitioners.

**0-6 marks**

An answer that makes a few points but which does not deal with any of them adequately or in depth. The answer does not address the question and there are hardly any references to works studied. There is some factual accuracy but generic claims are made on the basis of very little supportive evidence.

**Quality of Language – 9 marks****8-9 marks**

Engaging writing with an assured sense of style. The prose is well structured and the movement between ideas is clear and fluent. Complex ideas are very well explained and expressed. There will be few, if any, errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**7 marks**

Fluent writing with a developing sense of style and an ability to move easily from one idea to another. Complex ideas are well expressed and errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are rare.

**6 marks**

Generally fluent writing with an emerging sense of style and well-structured sentences and paragraphs. Points are mostly relevant and are explained as the argument progresses. There are occasional errors of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

**5 marks**

The writing is somewhat matter-of-fact in style and the argument may stray away from the point; ideas are expressed clearly. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are present but not such as to suggest real weakness in these areas.

**4 marks**

Pedestrian writing, which expresses simple ideas clearly but is likely to be awkward when dealing with more difficult concepts. Spelling, punctuation and grammar do not obscure the points made but do require further refinement.

**3 marks**

Disjointed writing, which may confuse or obscure the meaning. Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are noticeable and intrusive, suggesting weaknesses in these areas.

**0–2 marks**

Poorly-expressed points with frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The writing has little or no sense of direction and its style is likely to undermine its content.

## Genre and Question-specific Mark Scheme

### General Expectations

When considering the criteria for the marking bands, examiners should note the following expectations of this unit:

- There should be evidence that the candidate has studied three examples of the work of three different practitioners, one each of Dance, Drama and Music. Thus, nine works in all, but this is not necessarily a counting exercise, unless the candidate(s) are clearly in breach of the specification for this unit.
- There is an expectation of comparison and/or contrast across the works studied so that points can be made with specific example rather than generalities. Further credit could be given for relevant illustration, which is drawn from works beyond the prescribed three examples from each art form, providing it does not become just a list of works.
- There should be evidence of the scope of the area studied, a sense of overview that shows a confident knowledge and understanding.
- There should be evidence in the answer of how the art forms work together. This may not be all at the same time, but a balance and awareness of all three must be evident.
- The studied extracts should be used as a means to an end, to answer the question and explain the generic area under discussion. Methodical plodding through the three extracts of each art form would indicate that the candidate had not progressed from the work-specific approach required in 2557.
- Where appropriate the candidate can offer traceable influences upon the genre under discussion, but should not indulge in unqualified historical background merely for the sake of it.
- Similarly, where appropriate, the candidate should be able to make wider reference to the social, cultural and historical context from which the genre arose, in which the genre was nurtured and to which it made its own contribution.
- Use of appropriate vocabulary, terminology and other relevant practitioners.

### Post Modern Approaches to the Performing Arts since 1960

Given that this area is anti-form, defies definition, deliberately counters attempts to 'fix' itself, it is difficult to be specific about 'rules' or elements of which candidates should be aware and therefore evidence in their answers. However, there are some general characteristics, features in common practice, which we might claim are common and therefore identifiable, but it is unlikely that all of the works cited will have all of the following features:

- Anti-modern – no clear 'manifesto' or even identifying features except a reaction to Modernism thus giving rise to an ironic outlook blurring the boundaries between "high" and popular art, self-consciously ironic and eclectic eg Ballet with Street Dance, Berkoff's resetting of classical plays in the East End of London. There is no one knowledge, but a variety of "knowledges", overlapping relationships of discourses with the predominant and the avant garde.
- The end of History – the use of previous art, social, political personalities and movements as a source for reflecting the present and commenting on the past. The fragmentation of time, social structures, human experience, artistic style presented in an eclectic way.
- Re-cycling, refiguration, pastiche, parody, whether in the re-working of classical ballets and plays within a new highly fragmented society or the exploitation of recorded and electronic means to sample, re-use and make music.
- The creation and re-creation of iconic figures and concepts from the everyday and popular cf. Warhol's "15 minutes of fame"; linked to the consumerism of art and existence.
- Gender – the questioning of gender assumptions in outlook, clothing, reversal including the rise of "camp", "so bad its good" concept of art cf. Sontag's Notes on Camp '64.
- Value-free, a sense of having no pedantry, no definitive line, no structural, formal imperatives to follow and reflects the disappearance of "grand narratives", like Marxism, commenting on the consumer society and its products rather than trying to achieve the essence of universal existence inherent in modernism.
- Freedom from 'Meaning' – no more need for everything to mean something in a post-Freudian sense, hence Cunningham's rejection of Graham's emotionally charged gestural vocabulary for "Dance for Dance's sake".
- Sense of risk – obvious in the growth of physical theatre and dance, but equally present in experimental music and drama forms where the opportunities for a piece not to work by virtue of the disruption of the form are many eg Riley "In C" and Churchill's overlapping dialogue.
- Intertextuality – the witty, "intellectual joke" created by making quick unlaboured reference to other works within a piece, for the sake of it, for fun, for comparison for emphasis eg Vardimon's brief reference to Thriller amongst many in Park, or Bourne's nod to Hitchcock's The Birds in Swan Lake; the idea of Quotation across and from other forms.
- Playful response to the problems posed by the 'the Modern'. A sense of the ludic trickster at work which can be seen in the work of for example, Berkoff, Nyman, Innes and Morris.
- Manipulation and fragmentation of language (eg Pinter, Mamet, Churchill – use of the poetic – Bond, Cartwright) and form-fractured and dislocated non-linear timelines eg Top Girls, juxtaposition of the historical and the present.

- A larger scale perspective, a world picture, yet often created in an apparent random D-I-Y fashion or 'bricolage'; giving rise to the projection of Consumerism in arts and performance, the audience as consumer, the performance in the here and now and not purporting to be a contribution to a canon of work. Thus, Cage/Cunningham's Happenings or Events giving rise to site-specific performance. (Ironic, and characteristic of everything the Post Modern approach was working against, that we now want to seek out recordings of these as formative works on the picture today).
- Collaboration – for example, Cage, Rauschenberg & Cunningham; Glass, Childs and Wilson; Nyman & Jeyasingh; Churchill, Gough & Spink, Pinter and Clarke, Adams & Morris, Tavener and Random Dance – deliberate working across forms. Also collaborative/collective working within companies – eg Joint Stock, Wooster Group.
- An eclecticism in form and genre, often combining characteristics from different forms or sectionalised sharply juxtaposed works.
- The use of conventional forms within a new context: identification of formal structures and the purposes for which they have been used since 1960.
- The use of these earlier devices to establish security or to challenge audiences.

**1 'Post-modernism values art for being imperfect, low-brow, accessible and disposable.' What evidence is there to suggest this is true in the performing arts since 1960?**

The focus of this question is on the significant stylistic features of post-modernism. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Focus on providing the evidence for a positive acceptance of this view. To disagree would be rather self-defeating. The question can lead into a number of 'approaches' as detailed above, and it is expected that some unpicking of the four descriptive words here will highlight key associations in the performing arts beyond the studied extracts.
- Clarify what they understand by PM in a performing arts context making reference to both the elements given above and the works they have considered.
- Interrogate the notion of PM as a pure arts movement, which of course it is not, but indicate an understanding of the ways that the performing arts reflect the ideas inherent in PM.
- Consider whether because of the approach which these words imply, there has been greater accessibility for instance to traditionally higher art forms. Bourne's *Swan Lake* would be a good example, but which also defies some of the other descriptive words here.
- Indicate the positive 'spin' that can be placed on these somewhat negative words and that there is an opposite view, which is also contained within PM.

**2 Identify and analyse the parallels between post-modern developments in dance, drama and music since 1960.**

The focus of this question is on the links between the art forms in post-modernism. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Focus on using the works studied to show the complementary developments within post-modern dance, drama and music ie isolating the 'characteristics' outlined above and how they are made manifest in the works they have studied.
- Address the notion of analysis, thus verbal language can work in layers, Churchill's *Top Girls* is a good example, in the same way that a choreographer will build ensemble work in duos and trios, not necessarily in unison, but working the same material just as Stockhausen in his later works uses an ironic 'cut and paste' repetitive approach, mixing high and low art at the same time.

**Politics and Performance since 1914**

This broader area is intended to widen the horizon of political performance and whilst sometimes that may not be deliberate in the case of companies, artists, practitioners, their work clearly makes meaning for others, which has political under or overtones.

Essentially, candidates need to indicate awareness of:

- The relationship between the art forms and the audience.
- The manner in which the 'politics' are expressed through the dance, music and drama. For some this will be obvious didacticism, for others the positioning is more subtle.
- The manipulation of an audience's expectations, opinions, values and world view.
- The use of influences from the past to give reference, weight and justification.
- The structural and presentational devices used to communicate ideas, eg ballad, epic form, documentary setting with film and information as the backdrop for action or dance.
- The use of humour and comedy, farce, satire and irony as a stylistic device to poke fun and to persuade.
- The use of allegory of and/or direct reference to political situations and figures.
- The use of exaggeration, repetition and scale.
- The type of 'norms' that the candidate believes are being challenged through the range of studied works.

**3 Identify and explain the use of history and tradition in political performance work since 1914.**

The focus of this question is on the cultural, social and historical context of politics and performance. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Focus on the way in which politics in performance tends to use historical parallels and/or traditional elements to illustrate points of view and warn future generations, – Oh What a Lovely War for example.
- Interrogate the different styles of use. 'tradition' could be interpreted very loosely; for example, commedia influence, folk dance, traditional story-telling techniques etc.
- Consider the nature of the humour, what expectation is made of the audience in this historicising process.
- Indicate a clear understanding of why performing arts practitioners use an historical/traditional view.

**4 'The only thing you can do is to keep on saying what you don't like about the society in which you live' (Arden). In what ways has performance in the twentieth century reflected this viewpoint?**

The focus of this question is on the stylistic features of politics and performance. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Focus on the way in which politics in performance offers opportunities to keep on giving the same message as indicated by John Arden's comment. There need not be total agreement with the sentiment expressed in the quote, for example, do some practitioners take a more active, strident view of the artist's influence? Are there other ways to object within a performing arts context?
- Interrogate the "societies" in which their exemplar practitioners lived and how they are saying what they don't like.
- Consider the consistency of message offered by practitioners in this area and the way this might have changed.
- Refer to their works/extracts, but probably more selectively than in Q3. Possibly not all their practitioners and works will offer outright critical perspectives, but may well raise questions for audiences to infer criticism.
- Indicate a clear understanding of how performing arts practitioners "say" what they "don't like about... society" possibly, but not necessarily in which they live eg Fela Kuti's attacks on the corruption in his own Nigeria, coupled with attacks on Thatcher/Reagan.

### The Twentieth Century American Musical

Again this is now a broader concept than previously considered and whilst it would be important to have a less prescriptive view of the first, and last, two decades, (Oscar Hammerstein II had already written several musicals prior to *Showboat* and there were some classic and highly influential songs written in the early part of the century), the main focus is likely to be on the most productive 50 year period in the middle of the century 1927-1977.

Key areas of response should obviously focus on:

- The Book and the new significance given to the plot, development of character, situation, and dialogue; the importance and exploitation of Romance and Comedy; the 'book' as the lead sheet for the whole musical, often determining the energetic pace, the structure, the all important sub-plot, mirroring and commenting on the central action; the mature balance between clever dialogue, rounded character, and engaging predicament for the audience so that none dominates, but all are necessary.
- The Lyrics of the songs and their dramatic purpose; the notion of progression within the lyric, or 'lyric ascension' where the song has a definite structured intention; different styles of songs, ballads, charm songs, 'list' and patter songs, 'torch' songs, entire 'music scenes', such as 'Tonight' in *West Side Story*, stand-alone songs or deliberate punctuation of the plot, as Sondheim in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*; the techniques of the lyricist in building songs, such as the use of rhyme, metaphor and structure.
- The Score and the importance of music within the musical: reinforcing emotion and dramatic expression, complementing the dramatic action and movement; establishing tone; capturing essential quality of a character, moment or setting an emotion through the use of leitmotif; setting and manipulating mood and atmosphere; as a transitional device between action and scenes, bridging and retaining flow through the use of segue. The importance of rhythm and melody, use of harmony and dissonance. Structural elements, such as the use of overture, opening or establishing number, mixes of songs, the underscoring, the score as a complete entity, rather than a collection of songs and entries.
- The Choreography, and the integration of dance as a structural element, replacing dialogue, establishing atmosphere, creating spectacle, progressing the plot and understanding of the characters; the distinction between functional or show dance and the use of movement closely related to complex rhythmic structures: the increasing importance of dance in the form and the milestones eg *Oklahoma!*; the variety and eclecticism of style drawing on ballet, vaudeville and burlesque and traditional folk and contemporary street and modern.

- 5 Trace the development of the American Musical across the twentieth century, making reference to the shifts in musical, dramatic and choreographic style and form.**

The focus of this question is on the development of style in the American Musical. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Be able to give an overview of the style at least between 1927 and 1980.
- Break down the changes in the individual art forms as they contribute to the development eg the later introduction of Dance, the milestone of Oklahoma, the popularity of the Dream ballet and the gradual dominance of choreography, often at the expense of narrative. Song and Dance becoming the show eg Liza with a Z.
- Similarly look at the book and its increasing centrality in the first half of the century, and the development of the musical score to symphonic proportions.

- 6 It has been suggested that the Twentieth Century American Musical is the artistic expression of the 'American Dream'. Analyse the ways the genre reflects this 'dream' in terms of culture, society and history.**

The focus of this question is on the cultural, historical and social context of the American Musical. The discussion is likely to be wide-ranging but knowledge and understanding may:

- Identify the importance of location, period, moral standpoint and the dramatic, musical and choreographic means by which the aspirations of and threats to the American way of life are expressed.
- Triumph of 'American' values of the honest, simple, homespun over evil in all its forms, thus use of folk and traditional music and dance.
- Characters drawn to exemplify the America to be striven and fought for.
- Use of 'dream' songs, dances and sequences.
- The change in tone from Musical Comedy as the century moves on – West Side Story-the Dream goes sour.
- Questioning themes within the musicals related to race, immigration, social class.

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