

# Performance Studies

Advanced GCE A2 H548

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H148

## OCR Report to Centres

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**January 2013**

**HX48/R/12J**

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This report on the examination provides 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 specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## CONTENTS

### Advanced GCE Performance Studies (H548)

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## OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
Overview	1
G401/01 Creating Performance	2
G402/01 Performance Contexts 1	4
G403/01 Performance Contexts 2	15

## Overview

This was the final January A Level series to be held, and there were few differences in candidates' performance from previous January series. For the benefit of centres, however, the following trends are highlighted to enable candidates to prepare for future series.

### G401

There was little change in the quality of the work submitted for the written commentaries. However, the quality of devised performance work continued to cause concerns. The structure of many pieces was poorly conceived and the resulting performance work lacked pace and energy. This was often the reason for marks being reduced. The percentage of candidates re-sitting the unit was quite high at 58% but in many instances only the written work of these candidates had been revised. This meant that problems with the quality of the original performance were carried forward into the new submission.

### G402

Re-sit candidates accounted for 46% of the candidature.

The best responses were characterised by being able to set the work they had studied in the broad context of other works. This meant they were able to address the 'contexts' of the Unit title. Many candidates appeared unaware of the context of the practitioner about whom they were writing, able to discuss that practitioner only in his/her own terms. There was a small number of very able candidates who were also aware of works of other practitioners.

Some candidates were successful in applying the technical vocabulary learned for G401. However, there was an over-reliance on memorising lists of fingerprints and this gravitated against rounded answers, especially as not all such fingerprints apply equally to all works. The overall quality of written English had deteriorated. This was not only in terms of paragraphing, sentencing and initial capitals, but also in the spelling of technical terms, sometimes including words printed on the question paper.

### G403

Almost all the entries for this unit were from candidates sitting the examination for the first time. The standard of responses was poorer than in previous sessions.

Very few candidates considered the command verbs in the question they were attempting to answer. Questions requiring analysis often ended up as mere description; questions using the command verb 'discuss' required a discussion but often amounted to little more than an amble through the extracts studied. In this connection many candidates struggled to understand how to use examples effectively to demonstrate their understanding of the topic rather than citing pieces to show they had studied them. As in previous series, many responses tended merely to plod through the list of works rather than using them as examples to draw on. Several candidates cited no more than the title of the work, but this does not constitute a reference.

# G401/01 Creating Performance

## General Comments

Many of the entries this series were resubmissions and this affected the entry profile. Centres presented the work clearly so that Moderators could access both commentaries and DVD's with ease. Clearly annotated commentaries and supporting comments on each Candidate Cover Sheet (CCS) showed the centre's thinking. The moderation process considered the marks awarded by the centre and ensured that they were in line with the national standard.

## Individual Comments

### Commentaries

These were well structured and, for the most part, concise and objective.

Most centres awarded marks appropriately for Knowledge and Understanding. There were occasions when there were misunderstandings of technique yet the centre still awarded marks in the top band. Some centres also over-credited links between the art forms. Several commentaries were resubmissions and candidates had taken the opportunity to ensure a clear theoretical understanding to their performance work.

For high marks to be awarded for Understanding and Evaluation of Process and Performance a candidate's commentary needs to be concise, objective and analytical in its discussion. Too often lengthy commentaries containing narrative, anecdotal detail were incorrectly awarded high marks. The marking criteria clearly states 'ability to highlight the most significant aspects of the work'. Candidates often stated that Rehearsal was a time simply for repetition, to organise the lighting or select costumes. These comments are anecdotal and do not focus on the techniques required for performance, so cannot attract high marks.

Quality of Language is being marked more consistently with centres rightly commenting on length of submission, spelling, and expression. Presentation is also important and, if candidates have left space for a diagram or photograph which is then not included, this will affect the mark awarded. However there were still occasions where there was an awkwardness of expression or unnecessarily long sentences that the centre did not acknowledge and credited too highly.

## Community Performance

Centres were obviously aware that the DVD is the primary evidence supporting the community performance and care had been taken in the filming of the performance as well as the identification of the candidates.

Centres were often generous with the awarding of marks for Devising. There was often little attention paid to the effect of the overall piece, the transitions, pace and contrast. This unit does require candidates to devise in all three art forms and high marks cannot be supported where one art form is absent or tokenistic. Candidates need to be able to devise a piece of depth where the art forms are mutually supportive in affecting the audience as intended by the chosen project.

High marks for Performance Skills should not be awarded unless the candidate is performing in all three art forms. Where there was a disagreement with the marks submitted, this was usually because the candidate failed to display the necessary technique across the art forms. At times

dance was interpreted as being little more than movement without employing a range of dance skills. Drama skills need to show the ability to consider body language and timing as well as gesture. On occasion vocal delivery was poor with little thought given to projection and modulation of either tone or pitch. Two centres submitted performance work based on Pantomime.

One centre had devised their own pastiche music and this fulfils the Specification in the requirement for all art forms to be devised. The use of existing songs is not recommended and rewriting a set of lyrics to an existing melody is not fulfilling the requirement of devising in music. Candidates need to be aware that their total performance persona is being assessed; not just skills of the three art forms in isolation.

# G402/01 Performance Contexts 1

## General Comments

Examiners reported some excellent responses which demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of practitioners and their contexts, all expressed in well written, accurate English.

The specification states that questions are focused on elements of performance, stylistic influences, structure and form or cultural, social and historical contexts. Each question had a focus and were not an invitation to write all a candidate knew about a given practitioner and fewer candidates fell into that trap this series.

Many candidates ended their essays abruptly. This may have been due to running out of time. Candidates are advised to plan both their thoughts and their timings. Good conclusions were summative and rounded referring directly back to the question – on occasion they summed up the argument that had been presented in the response.

A logical progression with good illustrations from works characterised the best answers. Detailed plans frequently helped to focus thinking and spider diagrams, mind maps or bullet points enabled the best candidates to develop a line of discussion of the question. In a minority of cases, plans were longer than the finished answers.

At their least successful, plans were merely a few scribbled thoughts or repeat of a formula given by teachers to answer any question - the 'generic' answer. This series saw fewer such one-size fits all responses, frequently stuffed with lots of biography and a few points about works. This generic approach often works against higher order candidates who are restricted from developing their own thoughts. The standard response prepared in advance can take little note of contexts or the focus of the question.

Where candidates employed at least some of the language of the performing arts learned in Unit G401, they performed markedly better, as they discussed illustrations from works and described practitioner traits by real evidence, rather than vague terms, like 'Bourne's squirly movement' or 'The Beatles' 'happy melodies were very popular'. Weakness was particularly marked when addressing elements of music.

However, an unexplained play quote, a few notes scribbled on the manuscript paper or matchstick men representing choreography do not replace descriptors of how the drama, dance or music carries meaning and/or a message through entertainment. Where candidates acknowledged that the works they studied were meant to be performed (live or recorded), then they were better placed to evaluate performance skills and tended not to produce English literature responses.

A large number of students struggled with practitioner fingerprints. Some used them as a template, which ignored the question. Others produced Godber essays without mentioning physical theatre, Newson essays without reference to contact improvisation or aesthetic, physical or emotional risk and Gershwin responses without touching word painting, for instance.

This series and the recent past have thrown up extensive examples of answers being padded with biographical detail and lists of works. There is no substitute for a thorough knowledge of the studied works and a range of relevant quotations and examples to back up statements in discussion. Repetition of one or two stated facts does not make a full answer.

The specification requires that choice of works for study must 'demonstrate broad trends in the output of the practitioner' and candidates should comment generally on 'the relationship between the work studied and the practitioner's output as a whole'.

Candidates who understood that practitioners may have produced other work, or that there are similar/contrasting works from the same or other eras that may illustrate a point, generally fared better.

Centres are reminded that two equally marked questions are to be tackled, one is not more important than the other.

Where teaching by the PEE approach (point, example, explanation) was clear, it helped candidates. Middling candidates often relied on the narrative/structure of studied works to inform their answers entirely, with few illustrations from works. Weaker candidates sometimes repeated a few points to make a little appear to go a long way.

The use of previous exam questions in this unit is excellent teaching practice. However it should not encourage candidates to insert phrases from old questions to pad their answers without relevance to the current questions.

Like last summer's series, it's worth highlighting again that the sweeping generalisation is a prominent feature of many responses. If these are supported by close reference to works or related material, they may be appropriate. To simply state a term like physical theatre, psychedelic music or traditional ballet does not by itself form a discussion/explanation. It's expected that there is knowledge and understanding of form, structure, elements and contexts.

A handful of candidates still attempted two questions from the same practitioner, or wrote out one question but answered another altogether. In many cases, without the question number being written down, examiners had few clues as to which one was being attempted. The confusing of practitioners within a single response is becoming more commonplace, particularly Bourne and Godber or Newson and Godber.

A number of centres that choose either The Beatles or Gershwin appeared to have prepared candidates with fewer than 4 songs this disadvantages candidates. For example to take just one Beatles' album is very limiting as it is not typical of the entire body of their work.

### **Quality of Written Communication**

The main weakness overall was in the quality of written communication. The ability to answer two questions at AS standard eluded many. Stating the full question or repeating it at the end is not a replacement for a good opener and conclusion. Up to six marks per question (20%) are available for English, both grammar and style and the use of text-speak or computer jargon was evident in a number of responses.

A quotation from or about the given practitioner or by another related person is a good way to start, but only if it's relevant, apt and concise and leads into the discussion and is not left unmentioned in any way.

Some questions had two aspects to be addressed, and in those cases consideration of both parts was required.

A number of candidates spelled the names of practitioners incorrectly, had little or no grasp of paragraphing, failed to use correctly the key performing arts terms, had no knowledge of capital letters, punctuation marks and how to use the apostrophe. Many candidates seem to have been taught that a character or name ('Gail'; 'Brecht') must be within inverted commas.

Examples of poor basic spelling encountered this series included, 'Brett', 'Bhreht', 'Beltold', 'Brekt' (Brecht), Busby Berkeley often as 'Bugsby' 'Burkley' or 'Bubsley', 'Berkov' (Berkoff), 'Izadora Dunken', 'Najinski', Fred 'Ester', 'Aster', 'Astir' (Astaire) and 'Laben', 'Larbon' (Laban); also multirole, stereotypical and playwright were rarely correctly spelt. 'Over the top' was often used as a technical term in the context of acting technique appropriate for Godber's work. Often used but rarely explained were: 'dark lighting' when discussing Bourne's use of stage effects and 'dark humour' when discussing Godber's social comments.

Poor, vague or confusing style and expression was the hallmark of many candidates. By contrast, language that flowed over reasonably complex ideas, that used names, places, titles of works and quotes correctly, were well rewarded.

Candidates frequently used expressions such as 'alot', 'aswell' and 'infact' because they do not know they are wrong. Full and correct sentencing gain high marks. 'Etc' is not a recognised word, and it signifies an inability to come up with anything more meaningful. The use of first names for practitioners is not best practice. John is either Godber or Lennon.

There is no substitute for encouraging candidates to read around and about the genres they are studying to help broaden their vocabularies. Equally, teaching the there/their/they're, where/were/we're and piece/peace differences and the correct way to write practitioner, contemporary, Brecht, 'Teechers' and English ways of writing colours, theatre and programme are becoming essential in centres.

Finally, examiners find it helpful if candidates would leave a good gap between their responses to allow space for evaluative comments. Those using word processing are asked to double space and use at least size 12 font in their work. Those candidates who routinely produce near-illegible work should ask for word processing facilities in their centres.

## **SECTION A**

### **Matthew Bourne**

#### **Q1**

The focus of the question was stylistic influences. The question asked for Bourne's background and experience, so, unusually, a certain amount of biographical information was likely to be useful. Candidates who were able to show how his background influences became evident in his work performed better.

Most candidates recognised that it is a diverse range of influences of which there is evidence. From cinema/film noire, musical theatre, the West End, sets and costumes, his training at Laban, his learning from Duncan, Cunningham, Graham and Ballentine, his comedy, psychological drama, his erotic approaches, gender issues and his challenging the norms of ballet, all showed good knowledge and understanding.

Lea Anderson, Busby Berkeley and the BBC4 documentary featured in many answers. The Astaire ability to incorporate naturally pedestrian movement such as walking into stylised dance was well discussed by several candidates. The horror genre appealed to Bourne, referenced in *Sleeping Beauty*.

Top answers showed how the choreographic and dramatic elements are seen in specific passages; weaker ones relied on purely narrative approaches to the plot and some characters. The best answers realised that collaboration is as much an influence as any other and is very evident in most pieces.

Terms such as 'ballet, contemporary and social' were used frequently but without definition, explanation or exemplification.

Most popular works were **Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty, Car Man and Swan Lake.**

## Q2

This question focused on cultural, social and historical context. Many candidates relied on a purely narrative response. Several candidates explored high/low art and postmodernism, suggesting they were working on G403 approaches as well as G402. They were the stronger for that.

Comparisons between traditional ballet and contemporary dance were considered, along with the use of folk and social dance. However, the key aspect was how all his work appeals to contemporary audiences often by removing the elitist tags and those candidates who appreciated what appeals tended to produce better responses.

Revisualising of classics, modernising dance styles, using what was appropriate from the past, eclecticism, dramatisation/story-telling, colourful characters, lavish lighting/sets/productions, themes which chime with the contemporary zeitgeist and comedy all bore some discussion in this question. To simply list the points was not sufficient.

Some were confused by the idea of reworking a classic, merely stating it without much discussion of what it meant.

It was usually felt that young people prefer a spectacle and the film connections were highlighted as being most appealing to general audiences. The vampiric imagery of *Sleeping Beauty* and the recent *Twilight* series were successfully drawn in some cases.

Most popular works were **Nutcracker, Sleeping Beauty, Car Man, Edward Scissorhands and Swan Lake.**

Shobana Jeyasingh

## Q3

The focus of this question was stylistic influences and it was necessary to know something about Jeyasingh's time in southern India and Malaysia, her degree in Shakespeare studies and her MA in Renaissance Studies reflecting interests in literature, language and history.

The cultural diversity of London at the end of last century and start of this was also drawn on by the better responses. All had some knowledge of contemporary Far East dance styles and the fingerprints had been generally well taught.

Individual responses on how the obvious influences became interpreted through specific works were welcome. Where there was only narrative description with little or no attempt to use dance terminology, answers were less successful than where candidates used the language of dance to describe and discuss.

## Q4

This question focused on structure and form. The plotless, fragmented, multi-layered approach that is postmodernism is recognisable in much of her work. It is difficult to separate out her themes from her structure.

The question posed a particular viewpoint, and it was equally possible to agree and/or disagree with it, provided evidence was cited from studied works.

*Faultline* was the most widely used piece.

Lloyd Newson

## Q5

The focus of the question was stylistic influences and this permitted reference to his Australia/psychology/social influences on him as a person. The dance influences came from references to Pina Bausch, Steve Paxton, Cunningham, Graham, physical theatre, verbatim theatre and the broad range of social issues, where theme dictated dance content.

In many responses, a list of influences was offered, but with little explanation of what they actually meant and how they are seen in works. The most common examples of influences were film and television through the use of dialogue, atypical dancers who can act and his time at London Contemporary where he encountered pedestrian movement.

Taboo subjects such as gender, psychology and homosexuality were significant where used to demonstrate actual works in the language of dance and drama. The expression of themes, messages, commentary through movement was evident in the top answers.

Some candidates focused on risks, which was the subject of a previous question, and the issue of relationships also featured. However, candidates did better to analyse style as shown in chosen works.

There was a notable lack of discussion about his working methods and collaborative approach and candidates rarely mentioned his response to drama and music as an influence.

*Enter Achilles* and *The Cost of Living* were by far the most popular works.

## Q6

The focus of this question was cultural, social and historical context. The further focus was 'relationships' and the best answers considered both men and women equally. Attitudes towards the opposite and same sexes, the media, disability, Islam and abuse of various kinds were all discussed.

Many candidates focused on male relationships, particularly through *Enter Achilles*, at the expense of consideration of female ones. Few candidates had considered the wider social, historical and social contexts of the works.

The tyranny of groups was discussed with reference in particular to *Enter Achilles*, as was the male pack mentality and how gay men are treated by homophobic heterosexual men. Candidates who concentrated entirely on this piece often made token reference to women's roles.

It was the way relationships were treated through dance/drama elements that separated the top answers from the rest. His physically demanding movement, audience challenges, improvisation/experimentation, song, dialogue and soundscapes were relevant.

A few candidates developed a feminist approach in discussing male attitudes, citing misogynist perspectives especially in *Enter Achilles*, the rope and blow-up doll scenes particularly. How men treat men and how they treat women were equally seen in the best responses.

The most popular work was **Enter Achilles by far, with references to Can We Talk About This, Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men, Strange Fish and The Cost of Living.**

## Section B

### Caryl Churchill

#### Q7

The focus of the question was on stylistic influences. It quite specifically identified 'dramatic influences', so candidates were clearly invited to use the elements of drama in describing Churchill's work.

Brecht topped the list of influences, with varying degrees of success, especially epic theatre and episodic structure. There was some reference to didactic theatre and linear time frame. Most were unable to come up with other ways in which Brecht inspired Churchill's work.

Artaud also featured as a dramatic influence, though some candidates were unsure just how she was affected by him. Margaret Thatcher was a main influence on her writing, according to some candidates, if not her dramatic influences.

Structural devices were sometimes described well, languages, characters convinced of moral superiority, current socio-political issues and songs also came in for some effective treatment. The feminist angle was well explored by top candidates.

Some interesting allegory and analogy found in *Cloud Nine*, experimental language in *Blue Kettle* and settings and times in *Cloud Nine* and *Soft Cops*. Collaboration came up as a dramatic influence too, with Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock mentioned, if not always explained. Many ignored collaboration and rehearsal techniques completely.

The postmodernist connection with Churchill was also analysed in some of the broader, deeper responses. This was useful in explaining timelines and historical/allegorical processes to change/dislodge audiences' perspectives.

The use of precise, even if sometimes overlapping, dialogue came from her training as a radio dramatist, and this was picked up by many of the top candidates in considering a range of influences.

Most popular works were **Top Girls, Cloud Nine and Vinegar Tom.**

#### Q8

The focus of the question was performance techniques. The influence from Brecht, the collaborations, the overlapping language and other dramatic devices, the dramatic elements employed all contributed to the best answers.

A few candidates seemed unaware that the studied plays were written to be performed, while a minority had not considered what acting skills might be called on, confining their judgement to 'learning the lines'. At the top end, some very perceptive insights were given on what it is like to realise text into performance.

Most candidates resorted to narrative without explanation, though a few suggested workshop development and getting into character as being relevant to the answer.

Some understood that language plays a part in the actors' challenges. A few referred to collaboration as part of the performance process but many ignored it and her rehearsal techniques completely.

Most popular works were **Vinegar Tom, Top Girls and Seven Jewish Children.**

## Athol Fugard

### Q9

The focus of the question was structure and form. The fact that characters tend to go on a journey of some sort was a lead in to dealing with the time, place and action part of the question.

Actual time and flashbacks featured prominently and the various discussions on linear process were generally well informed. The classical adherence to the unities was identified by just a few.

Perhaps more than most texts, more candidates will have seen a Fugard play on DVD rather than in person. This should not prevent few characters often on margin of society, bare sets, few props, physical intensity and the political viewpoints from becoming clear to them and thus worth discussing. Candidates should have studied Fugard's work as a dramatist, not as a writer of English literature.

Most popular works were *Boesman and Lena*, *No Good Friday* and *The Island*.

### Q10

The focus of this question was stylistic influences. Brecht topped the list and the best answers related Brechtian devices (distancing, closeness of audience, presenting politics), but Grotowski had a place too, with his Poor Theatre concepts.

Personal struggles, few props and bare sets, marginalised characters and the effect of apartheid on people were cited by examiners as notable and generally effective.

The best quoted from their chosen play with purpose and a degree of accuracy. The weakest resorted to telling the plot without explanation of what might have helped create it and the characters to people it.

Most popular works were ***Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and *Boesman and Lena***.

## John Godber

### Q11

The focus of the question was structure and form. Brechtian influences with episodic, flashbacks, epilogues, direct address/4th wall, unity of time, multi-role, locations and intensive dialogue all being cited variously as examples of form used.

Stereotypical characters and language were also called as evidence in some discussions. Some recognised Greek theatre and choruses as examples of form. The most frequent example of distancing effect was from *Bouncers*: 'you're about to watch a play.' and putting the kettle on 'as it's the interval'.

The pace part of the question was essential to be addressed to secure higher marks. Short scenes, often truncated dialogue and physicality were among those angles cited to explain the pace. Those candidates who grasped that often did so because they had seen or participated in a live performance and acquired a sense of pace and tempo.

A few focused on iambic pentameter in *Bouncers* which 'created rhythmic timing'. Quick changes, rapid transitions between scenes and characters and the contrasts on monologues all helped to inform the better candidates.

The influence of writing for television was picked up by most candidates, and the top ones showed how that helped to develop pace and timing. Few costumes, upbeat music and sharp transitions were also referenced well.

Of all the questions, this was the one which led most candidates to narrate action with no discussion and repeat ‘this helped drive the pace of the play’ as a substitute for evaluation.

The most popular works were *Teechers*, *Bouncers* and *Shakers*.

## Q12

The focus of the question was stylistic influences. Again, Brecht came out as a popular example of influence, with a range of examples about direct address, social/political commentary and stereotypical characters.

Many credited Berkoff with the exaggerated mime, episodic structures, the dark humour, stream of consciousness and coarse language, while Chekhov and Pinter also were credited as influences.

Most candidates agreed with the assertion that the drama teaching period was the most important influence on Godber, especially if they had studied only *Teechers*. Then, there were often accounts of characters rather than relating them to how Godber may have reflected his experiences.

Some disagreed with the statement citing other influences from his working class background, lack of money, sport, miners, use of vernacular and television writing. Either way, a good discussion was rewarded when it used a range of illustrations from studied works.

A large number of candidates had been taught sweeping generalisations about miners and the Thatcher government. Others gave a balanced view of the political scene, the private and public education system and how much influence they had on the writer-observer, Godber.

Some thought that ‘luv’ was a sufficient indication of ‘northernness’ and others that all northerners were/are working class.

The most popular works were **Teechers, Bouncers, Shakers and Lucky Sods**.

## Section 3

### John Adams

## Q13

The focus of the question was cultural, social and historical context and so required some discussion of just how diverse American culture is. Religion, landscape/geography, politics and terrorism, ethnicity/mixed races and historical referencing to slavery/equal rights were cited among the better responses.

Musical elements needed more than a nod in order to explain the diversity of Adams’ work as well as the culture he draws from. Weaker candidates confined their responses to a narrative of the plot or generalised themes, rather than grasping the fact these are pieces of music.

Some candidates successfully referenced classical music on one hand and minimalism and Glass and Reich on the other to show the significance and originality of his musical creativity.

Most candidates focused on political aspects, with *On the Transmigration of Souls* and 9/11 being the most popular. *Nixon in China* and *The Death of Klinghoffer* presented rich opportunities for candidates to focus on politics in the broadest sense. *Shaker Loops* produced more musical knowledge and understanding and *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* combined natural catastrophe with socio-political happenings.

#### Q14

The focus of the question was performance techniques, and required candidates to understand that they had to discuss how performers approach Adams' work.

The better responses recognised the challenges faced by various, mainly orchestral, musicians. They also used the language of music and its elements to describe what is in the studied works. Most grasped that the voice is also an instrument, but not all did.

The challenges particularly were shifting of melodies and rhythms, repetitions, intonations/timbres and lack of specific composer instructions as in *Christian Zeal and Activity*.

*Shaker Loops* was the most used example, but less well-known pieces like *Harmonium for Large Orchestra* and *Short Ride on a Fast Machine* offered well taken opportunities to discuss real musical challenges. The best answers referred to more than one work.

#### The Beatles

#### Q15

The focus of the question was performance techniques. The question suggested a broad approach about recreating the sound and style, which included songs, lyrics, clothes, contemporary issues, drugs, sex and current technology. The best answers acknowledged that today performers have more advanced technology than The Beatles had and do not have to come from Liverpool or take drugs to play Beatles' songs.

However, the question specified 'musical challenges' and those responses which carried no musical elements or knowledge and understanding of music form did less well. A full range of The Beatles' musical evolution from early skiffle/rock 'n' roll to the hippie, drug-inspired, technologically innovative music of the 1967-70 period were available for contrasts and comparisons. Only the very top candidates took advantage of those availabilities.

Performance skills often referred simply to 'easy to perform' songs, like *Please Please Me* and *Love Me Do*. Most candidates did not differentiate between 'sound' and 'style'; many failed to talk about authenticity of The Beatles at all.

A reference to tape loops, backwards tapes, placing of microphones in drums and unconventional places plus use of snippets of speech interspersed in music were all valid points to make. Whether today's artists could recreate those sounds was a matter of discussion, especially in the light of contemporary 'faking' technology.

Whether recreation is mere echoing or a realistic recreation of talent, was also part of the debate that the question opened up. The lyrics they came up with also merited discussion in the light of the question.

It would appear that more than one centre had confined their teaching to a single album - Sgt Pepper's. This was self-penalising as taking even four songs from that collection failed to reflect the wide diversity of styles and sound of the group across their years. One centre appeared to have encouraged candidates to begin their responses with exactly the same quotation which was made effective in only a few instances.

Most popular albums were **Sgt Pepper's, Rubber Soul and Revolver**. Specific songs were **Eleanor Rigby, When I'm Sixty-Four, Penny Lane, Strawberry Fields Forever and Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds**.

#### Q16

The focus of the question was stylistic influences and this was a straightforward invitation to engage with the evolution of the band from the late 1950s, The Quarry Men, through early Beatles and Liverpool into the supreme experimenters of creative music they became by the late '60s.

Mention needed to be made of Elvis Presley, Rolling Stones, Phil Spector, Buddy Holly and Bob Dylan as influences which affected Beatles' styles in music and appearance, as well as youth culture/rebellion. Equally their encounters with Indian culture, music and drugs generally were part of their journey, although to assert that 'they were all on drugs' was over simplified and inaccurate.

Few answers demonstrated how drugs actually manifested themselves in specific songs. *Eleanor Rigby* was fertile ground for occasional good responses on how its story of loneliness and desperation is reflected musically. One usual example of other ingredients mentioned was unusual Instrumentation ( eg Harrison's experimentation with the sitar), but few candidates mentioned overdubbing, multi-tracking, reverse tracking, drug influences resulting in unusual sound effects, narrative lyrics, darker lyrics, orchestration and orchestral instrumentation or songs identifiably different from each Beatle

The most effective responses traced evolution through the lyrics and also described songs in terms of musical elements and the range of instruments they used way beyond three guitars and a drum kit. Musical arrangements, such as on *She's Leaving Home* and *Eleanor Rigby* were also worth referencing.

Some candidates brought in Beatles' film experiences, particularly with *Help!* to show how their songs were used in different settings, though this was a stretch from the question.

Pacing and speed were often discussed as an influence in the complexity of various melodies. In one centre the answers were structured by using the language of performing arts for each point, which proved quite effective.

The most popular songs by far were from *Sgt Pepper's*.

#### George Gershwin

#### Q17

The focus of the question was stylistic influences and the idea that they were 'lasting' nudged some candidates into showing how successful, deep-seated and part of musical culture most of the compositions were. References to contemporary performances were valid.

The significance of Tin Pan Alley had to be acknowledged to secure a higher mark, as the question demanded understanding of the culture and power of the New York publishing establishments with their trademark 'tinny' sounding pianos. Many referred to it as a place where music was written, quite simply, so they rather missed the focus of the question.

The most effective responses described songs through both lyrics and musical elements, pointing out basic structures and showing how they can be performed. Some understood that lyrics were memorable, without being able to explain why.

Few candidates mentioned Hollywood musicals, Broadway, the Roaring '20s, the Great Depression, escapism, prohibition, celebrity fashion and glamour or cinema and even fewer how these influences manifested in the songs studied.

The 32 bar melodies divided into four phrases of eight bars each, normally AABA was one aspect; to use the vocabulary of music (rhythm, timbre, texture, harmony, melody at least) was also required. Generally, musical analysis was rarely employed.

That Gershwin wrote for a variety of genres besides musical theatre was recognised by many answers. Blues notes linked to African-American style, jazz from Dixieland were also referenced by some candidates.

Some knew that the music written by George was before the lyrics were added by Ira, the matching rhythm of words and music, moments where significant changes in emotion take place, manipulation of pause, rubato, verse use, blues notes, chromatic notes, ascending and descending scales, typically pentatonic but only a very few candidates were able to pinpoint precise moments of the use of each in Gershwin's songs.

Most candidates took the question as an opportunity to talk about all his stylistic influences, some ignoring TPA entirely, whilst offering some clear detail on Gershwin's biography and training as influences.

While the specification asks for at least 4 songs as many are very short candidates who described more than the minimum tended to do better.

The most popular songs were **I Got Rhythm, Fascinating Rhythm, They Can't Take That Away From Me, It Ain't Necessarily So, Swanee, The Man I Loved and Summertime.**

### Q18

The focus of the question was cultural, social and historical contexts. The term 'melting point' was understood by the majority of candidates, while a few failed to refer to it at all, and so limited their responses. The cultural mix of the USA and the huge musical diversity it brought needed describing through the Gershwin songs.

The same remarks about a few songs apply as for Question 17, as do the points about only some candidates using the language of music to discuss the question thoroughly.

There was a large number of generalisations, such as '*Summertime* is about black culture', with no further discussion and expansion. The blues, African-American culture, American lifestyles, Tin Pan Alley were possible areas for explanation together with classical music, Hollywood musicals, Broadway, the Roaring '20s, the Great Depression, African America(ns), escapism, prohibition, celebrity fashion and glamour or cinema and how these contexts might have manifested in the songs studied.

Many candidates focused on lyrics rather than music.

The most popular songs were **I Got Rhythm, Fascinating Rhythm, They Can't Take That Away From Me, It Ain't Necessarily So and Summertime.**

## G403/01 Performance Contexts 2

### General Comments

There was a broad range of responses in this series and some very high-scoring answers that indicated some excellent knowledge and understanding of their chosen topics. However, the questions on this paper are intended to examine the study of one of the four available topics, not specific works or particular practitioners. Responses should offer a convincing overview of the topic exemplified by reference to representative works and practitioners in the topic. Paragraphs on separate works, often with a distinctive space between, is not an appropriate approach.

There were often large amounts of writing where the question was only loosely addressed at best. Responses that offer an 'all-I-know-about' answer will not score highly. In addition, insufficient notice is taken by candidates of command words or key words in the questions. Consequently, many responses were general and insufficiently related to the question.

Use of examples was often weak and reference to titles of works is insufficient illustration. Detailed art-form specific examples that illustrate points being made in response to the question is what was expected.

The use of art-form detail, that is how the drama, dance and music 'work', was also generally poor. Production details such as costume, setting, lighting, location could all be relevant, but not at the expense of explaining the ways in which the drama, music and dance function within the topic studied. Similarly, knowledge of social, historical and cultural context is not creditable in itself, without connection to the point under discussion, which should stem from both the art forms and the question to which the response is being made. The American Musical topic suffered the most from excessive unrelated social/historical context where the drama of the pieces was seen merely as the issues they raise. Some papers made no reference to music or drama, offered a nod to dance in De Mille's *Dream Ballet*, but gave extensive background on racism, miscegenation, Nazis, homosexuality, promiscuity, immigration, slavery, gambling, alcoholism 'et cetera, et cetera'.

Credit was only given for relevant contextual understanding that amplified the knowledge of how the three art forms are manipulated within the topic under discussion.

### Quality of Written Communication

There was a noticeable increase in a conversational style, with casual expression and a disregard for sentence structure, paragraphs, apostrophes and punctuation, spelling and grammar. Common mistakes were: 'where' and 'were', 'its' and 'it's', 'there, their and they're', 'women' for 'woman', integrate and Rodgers, both of which were in the question and 'practitioner' which appears twice on the paper.

Rhetorical questions often appeared but are not appropriate in this context – 'Should we go to war? I don't know, and neither does Bob Dylan' – is but one example.

The mark scheme makes clear where responses are credited for the relevant use of appropriate terminology, which is vocabulary which is used in the analysis and discussion of the performing arts. This includes, but is in no way limited to the 15 key words from Unit 1. Centres are advised to encourage candidates to read and discuss professional commentary on performance available in the media, critical texts and on-line in order to broaden their vocabulary and develop their own writing style.

Use of comments relating to what the candidate has considered, ‘my nine works’, ‘nine studied extracts’, ‘practitioners I have studied’, ‘works I have studied’ and the like, are regarded as weak and unnecessary expression and tend to indicate that the study has been limited to consideration of works rather than studying the topic area through the works.

## **Question-Specific Comments**

### **Post-modern Approaches to the Performing Arts since 1960**

This topic continues to attract a wide range of works as examples of what we may call a post-modern approach in the performing arts. However, there are often some wild claims of originality when the approach is not particularly innovative. ‘He used a Greek-type chorus, which had never been done before’ is an example of this unnecessary hyperbolic style. Part of the ‘originality’ of post-modern work is that it doesn’t need to be ‘new’. In addition, too many candidates appear to think that Tchaikovsky created the original ballets *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*.

#### **Question 1**

There were few responses to this question. Sophisticated responses dealt with each word separately and dissected its meaning before applying it to the genre. Less successful responses tended to deal with ‘detachment’ and occasionally ‘ambiguity’ but struggled with the concept of ‘scepticism’. At the lower levels, candidates ignored the three key words and wrote in terms of generic techniques associated with post-modernism. There were some good examples of close analytical study and some examples where candidates made contextual reference to work in associated areas of architecture, art, cinema and fashion design.

#### **Question 2**

The most popular choice of question and most candidates saw that the question was about the development of the style. The answers varied from quite weak, lacking in breadth, depth and good knowledge and understanding of the development of the style to some very sophisticated answers that displayed good contrasts and comparisons across the art forms within very engaging answers. The question provoked a range of argument. Some argued against the question and said that post-modern work was all about what was new and therefore rejected the old.

It is clear that some candidates had a weak grasp of the context of the works and knew little about when and where they were set. There were, however, some excellent answers backed up by post-modern theory.

### **Politics and Performance since 1914**

Responses to this topic tended to be more detailed in the ways in which they used supportive material. However, ‘strumming the guitar gives a rhythm’ is not an appropriate depth of discussion of the way music can be used to determine, enhance, drive, punctuate, obfuscate, highlight and/or articulate political intent. This area would benefit from greater analysis of how the art forms are used to create impact, particularly music rather than just lyrics.

### Question 3

Often the level of analysis was a description of intention of the works and/or practitioner concerned rather than an exploration of the means by which the intention is achieved. Answers to this question were well differentiated, usually based on whether the candidate had noticed that they were meant to be 'analysing the techniques rather than merely explaining the political intent of the practitioners. There were misunderstandings about the context of some of the works and the historical detail was sometimes confused. However, there were also some very competent responses.

An illustration of just one 'technique' can be shown from part of one candidate's response which included an excellent analysis of the use of folk traditions in all three art forms: a deliberate harnessing of the 'popular' to create propaganda 'just as the Christian Church did with the Mystery plays', making comparisons between Woody Guthrie's musicianship, Commedia dell'Arte street theatre traditions and celebratory community folk dance.

### Question 4

There were few responses to this question and even fewer who were able to discuss the 'tension' aspect of the question. Others could outline the other two key parts of the question but did not always link them. The most direct approach was to say that you can't have one without the other and most took this route explaining the entertainment value of works whilst at the same time expressing a political point of view. Those who sought to argue that the two don't mix often got into convoluted explanations when both entertainment and political commitment were clearly evident.

### The Twentieth-Century American Musical

Few candidates were able to discuss across the works, preferring to respond musical by musical, which encourages both distraction from the question and narrative of the work. Art-form detail was slight, in music, where lyrics are the only example; in drama, where social issues replace art form understanding; and, a little better, dance, which lists Fosse's splayed hands and balding head, Robbins' 'clicks' in the Prologue and De Mille's 'revolutionary ballet that changed the world of the musical on Broadway', but little else.

An example of good use of both background and ways into art-form detail was 'Characters are drawn from the stereotypes of the melodrama, hero, heroine, villain, confidant, clown.' The candidate then went on to comparatively analyse different musicals within this context, including discussion of leitmotif and relevant dance motifs related to the characters.

### Question 5

Many candidates answered this well and could discuss a wide range of works across the Twentieth-Century and show the changes that have taken place with regard to integration from the days of the vaudeville show to the full integration witnessed in *West Side Story* (WSS) to the omission of dance from some sung-through musicals at the latter end of the period. Some were distracted into discussing integration of all three art forms without keeping a focus on the music. Some merely narrated the story or discussed the themes of the shows at great length

Weaker answers discussed integration generally rather than techniques used to integrate music. The strongest responses were able to analyse the works on a sophisticated level which reference to techniques such as leitmotif, underscore, reprise, types of songs plus on occasion a detailed analysis of key scenes in the development of the genre such as the Dream Ballet or sections from WSS, where the music drives the action in both drama and dance.

### **Question 6**

Given the reference to Richard Rodgers in the question, it was disappointing to see so few examples of how music can create 'sweetness and light'. Many can comment on the use of the tritone, but 'why should the Devil have all the best tunes?' One candidate even suggested that 'in this musical, [*My Fair Lady*] the music is not important because the class issues are so demanding'.

More sophisticated answers could discuss how the outlook changed over time and still make comparisons between practitioners and their works.

Most could discuss the dark and light shades of a range of musicals but for a few, the serious themes and the deaths of certain characters had passed them by and the musicals were 100% 'sweetness and light' up to 1960, when it all changed to dark 'and seedy'.

Almost all responses brought the argument to some form of conclusion.

### **Approaches to Performance in the Far East**

#### **Question 7**

There were no responses to this question.

#### **Question 8**

There were no responses to this question.

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