

Performing Arts

Advanced GCE A2 H546

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H146

OCR Report to Centres

January 2013

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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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Overview

General Comments

This session saw evidence of good practice in all units and varied work across the spectrum. Candidates approached the units with a real commitment to develop greater knowledge and understanding of The Performing Arts Industry.

Reports from Examiners and Moderators supported the enthusiasm and approach from the centres and candidates. Whilst, good practice was evident in all units, for some candidates, further skill development and refinement would help candidates to achieve higher marks.

Most Centres ensured that candidates were able to access the assessment criteria for each unit. There is assistance on the OCR website to support teachers with detailed guidance and assignments.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

The issues for this unit remain unchanged. Centres must ensure that candidates have access to appropriate organisations, as there are still concerns that some candidates are studying organisations that involve sole traders where there is little scope to learn about a staffing structure and the issues surrounding larger organisations. Studying the local dance school does not allow the candidate to access the full range of marks available. Likewise, studying the same organisations with a group of candidates and presenting on the same job role is not recommended. Centres must encourage individual responses from candidates.

Moderators commented that many of the portfolios presented reflected research into how organisations operate including generating income, employment of staff and the marketing of shows or products. However, investigation into job roles does require more than just an organisational chart and candidates must include 'insightful comments into the significance of most or all roles' to demonstrate their understanding of how 'the business and the job roles within it' works within an organisation. Candidates must also comment on aspects such as pay and conditions, trade unions, the social and cultural dimensions of the organisations as well as the opportunities for progression and development. Candidates do need to be able to express opinions and qualify them with reference to measurable outcomes.

Locating evidence was often difficult for the moderator. Centres must use the location column and ensure that the URS sheets are filled in so the marking trail is visible.

Unit G381 Skills Development

This unit presented a small entry, which supports the preference to submit work in the summer session, clearly this gives candidates more time to develop and refine skills. Centres must follow the unit requirements with candidates selecting only 3 pieces of work. Including extra pieces does not gain more marks. Moderators will only look at 3 pieces of work and make their judgements on this. Centres must also distinguish between the finished piece and the works in progress. Only the finished piece needs to be presented to an audience, the other two pieces can remain as work in progress.

Centres must ensure that all candidates have included their Skills Development Plan. Centres that record this journey from initial readings to the finished piece are able to justify marks awarded and evidence the development made. All aspects of development should be captured on DVD and submitted as evidence.

The Skills Development Plan is crucial to identifying strengths and weaknesses and documenting progress throughout the unit. Candidates need to concentrate on the process of acquiring skills through practical involvement in pieces. Regular reviews of the plan showing feedback and evaluations of the development made, does provide good evidence of development.

Unit G382 Professional Practice: Performance

The entry for this unit was very small in this session. Good candidates demonstrated effective interaction with strong unity and coherence. A few candidates displayed a stronger sense of professional practice in their work with impressive theatrical performance work. Where centres did not respond to the need for professional production values, candidates were unable to access the full range of marks available to them. However, there was good evidence of candidates who had really developed a sense of belonging and ownership of their work.

Selection of material remains the most important factor for centres so that candidates are able to access the performance criteria. Selection of the right material is the key to success. Mixing repertoire or adding in extra songs, dances or monologues even if they are from repertoire does not necessarily allow the candidates to display a range of skills and techniques and is not acceptable. It is also essential that centres recognise that the 'school performance' is not the correct outlet for this unit. The performance should be discrete to the unit and for the candidates who have been entered for the examination.

Centres must ensure that candidates are thoroughly prepared, as there were clearly occasions where candidates needed further guidance for example, singing in the correct key and tonal qualities, as well as basic skills and stylistic demands. Candidates should not be left to produce and direct the pieces. Teachers must take responsibility for these areas.

Performance Diaries

Portfolios are continuing to improve and there was evidence of some thorough portfolio work where centres had ensured that candidates had diary logs, research and health and safety. Stronger candidates' showed clear evidence of planning and documented progress and the application of techniques. Health and Safety, whilst improving, remains the weakest aspect, candidates must consider more than just warm-ups and fire exits.

G383 Professional Practice: Production

There was only 1 entry for this unit during this session so generalisations are not relevant. For June entries, centres are reminded that they still need to provide industry compliant software and process, including industry standard diagrams, scales and terminology. Teaching the G383 unit does need adequate planning and resources. Centres must also ensure that they have the equipment and software that will allow candidates to receive appropriate teaching and exposure to technical tasks, computer programmes and technical tools allowing them to access the full range of marks available.

Unit G384 Getting Work

Centres were able to support candidates to display a real awareness of the professional context of the work. However, it is apparent that candidates wanting to reach the highest marks need to undertake independent research and apply current practice to their submissions. A realistic awareness of how to survive as a professional in the Performing Arts Industries is essential. This knowledge can only be accessed by research and independent work on the current industry practice and documenting it. This may mean moving away from the more traditional aspects of looking for jobs such as CV and letter of application towards more online and website activities. The SWOT analysis needs to be real and reflect the present economic climate and acknowledge the drawbacks of traditional practice and the need for technology and web-based applications.

Unit G385 Exploring Repertoire

There was only a very small entry for this unit. Many centres had worked to apply industry standards with a real feel of a professional approach attached. Candidates were more engaged with the repertoire and its demands. Centres do need to be aware that equal marks are attached to both performances and ensure that they are both of equal quality.

Centres must ensure that they check the suitability of the selected pieces and that they are inside the unit requirements. Choosing a contemporary version of a historical piece may compromise how candidates approach the research to realise the piece. Centres are encouraged to check with OCR if they are uncertain about the suitability of the selected material.

Candidates written work was generally of a good standard. They were able to produce research into both the stylistic features of the selected works and the apply these stylistic features in performance. Candidates need to focus on key moments and describe how research has been applied. Candidates must be guided towards the socio-historical contexts in which the selected works were written and performed. Centres must ensure that the practical work supports the written submissions where the focus is on a performance with the application of the correct stylistic components rather than focusing on individual performance skills and techniques. Displaying an understanding of the style is crucial to the overall success.

Unit G386 and G387 Producing Your Showcase/Production

There was a relatively small entry for this unit, nevertheless there were some good examples of accomplished performances. Many candidates had invested time and effort into refining their showcase but were unable to shape the material to reflect the professional context of the selected works. Selection of suitable material is essential in this unit and selecting pieces that are unsuitable, too difficult or inappropriate does impede candidates. Many skilful candidates in this session lacked both dynamism and impact. Duologues, duets and duos were the weakest performance piece for many candidates.

Where there was evidence of teacher guidance candidates were better prepared in both their selection of material and in the performance of the work. Too many centres do not recognise that the performance aspect of this unit is essential. Centres must attach more status to the event, ensuring that it is a real sense of occasion. Standards at this level are expected to be significantly higher than the AS performance unit and centres must acknowledge this.

The preparatory notes were improved in this session with candidates showing more understanding about the role of research and applying it to their performances. This improvement was notable and contributing to many improved marks awarded by examiners.

G387 Production Demonstration

There were no entries for this unit during this session. Centres are reminded for entries in the June session that capturing evidence throughout the process of design and realisation is crucial for the candidate. Centres should refer to teacher guidelines and also read the Principal Examiner's Report for further guidance.

To conclude, centres must read the unit reports from the Principal Examiners/Moderators carefully, to ensure that they are developing their understanding and subsequent application of the specification.

G380 Investigating Performing Arts Organisations

The case studies presented during this session showed that many candidates had, through their investigations, developed a sound knowledge of organisations in the performing arts industries and how they operated as businesses (AO1.1.1), generating income and employing large numbers of performers, technicians and ancillary staff. Candidates who chose mid-range performing arts organisations to study; arts centres, theatres and regional performing companies tended to find access the higher mark bands. Those who chose dance schools or music teachers operating as sole traders disadvantaged themselves and found it hard to present a 'thoughtful discussion of the structure of both organisations' (AO1.2.2) in any depth.

Most candidates included organisational charts and listed the main roles but 'insightful comments into the significance of most or all roles' are also required to get full marks from the middle mark band (AO1.2.2). Again this was not always picked up in the centre marking.

The specification asks centres to direct candidates to explore employment in the widest sense but the mark scheme very clearly focuses on the significance of the job role to the studied organisation. The career path of the person in the role is clearly interesting to candidates for this qualification and may make a good way of introducing the topic, too many candidates elaborated on this and talked at length about the person in the role while failing to analyse the role in its context (significance, purpose and effectiveness AO1.3.2 /AO4.2.3).

Job roles were often well chosen from within one of the organisations chosen. Generic talks, that described the work of a non-specific performer failed to provide 'a number of references to its (the role's) significance and purpose within the organisation (AO1.3.2) and could not merit marks above the lower band; this was not always acknowledged by the marker.

Most presentations were evidenced through a PowerPoint print out but candidates inevitably expand on the bullet points and where a DVD of the talk was included, demonstrated a far greater depth of knowledge of the job role when talking. Frequently during this season the hard copy did not support the marks awarded but the recording of the talk showed the full extent of the candidates understanding.

G381 Professional Practice: Skills Development

Administration

Most aspects of the moderation process went well. Centres generally understood the sampling process and enclosed the correct documentation. However some centres did not send all documentation promptly which caused delays in the moderation process. There was evidence that in some centres internal moderation had not taken place sufficiently in advance of the OCR deadline for submission. Centres must ensure that internal moderation of the work entered for submission takes place and that URS sheets are completed accurately and checked before marks are submitted to OCR in accordance with the deadline dates set.

DVDs must be sent with candidates' portfolios. DVDs should be checked to ensure that they can be played before being posted to the moderator. Centres are advised to ensure that backup copies of the DVD evidence are retained in case DVDs are damaged in transit or do not play.

General Comments

The unit has presented a range of work this session. Some centres are stretching their candidates and offering them some challenging texts to work from. Some very mature performances have been presented across the art forms. The essential part of this unit is to show development of skills. For each repertoire piece, there should be recordings of first readings, rehearsals, dress rehearsals and final performance in the case of the finished piece. It is good practice to show a candidate marking through a dance and then rehearsing it once the routine has been learned.

Choosing repertoire

Candidates must not offer devised work in this unit. Moderators do not count a devised dance piece as one of the three works, either in progress or final performance. Only repertoire work is acceptable on this unit.

Some candidates entered three pieces of repertoire choosing one from each art form. This was not always successful in demonstrating the development of skills as too little time was spent in each art form. As candidates must show evidence of leading and supporting roles some good practice was seen where a drama candidate worked on a monologue, a duologue and a group piece and the pieces chosen were sufficiently long to display skills being developed.

It is not appropriate to perform the part of one dancer in a duet as a solo piece as this is not how the repertoire is performed professionally. Weaker candidates were often those who took part in large ensemble pieces, this meant it was difficult to credit the candidate as they could not be picked out.

Recording of rehearsals and performances on DVD

Best practice was seen in centres where candidates were identified on the DVDs by the centre including a still shot taken from one of the performances and where candidates introduced themselves to camera stating their name, number, title of repertoire piece, name of composer/playwright/choreographer and the role being played. Also where the recorded performance was in chronological order and the chaptering of DVDs had taken place this clearly evidenced the development of skills, demonstrating two pieces (works in progress) and one final performance of one piece of repertoire in front of an audience

Centres **should not** send DVDs of three final performances as two of the works must be works in progress.

Candidate Identification

There should be a recent photograph of the candidate and in a column on the running order there should be details concerning their appearance on the DVD such as a brief description of their costume so that the moderator can identify them. DVDs should be chaptered with a clear indication on the running order sheet of where the candidate appears on the DVD for example John Smith 0234 enters stage left at 10 mins 30 seconds.

The position of the camera in relation to the stage needs careful consideration. The most helpful recordings showed work in progress at close range so that the facial expressions and eye focus were obvious to the viewer.

For final performances with live audience, the camera should remain static and be placed centrally so that the moderator has a good view of the whole stage, similar to sitting in the front stalls. If the camera is placed at the side of the stage, the view is from an angle and the moderator cannot see the candidates properly.

Front sheets

Centres should include a front sheet as page one of the portfolio clearly stating the skills chosen for development and the three pieces of repertoire with details of titles of work and the names of the playwrights, composers and choreographers eg “Accidental Death of an Anarchist” by Dario Fo. Good practice seen included candidates researching the repertoire and evidencing this by giving detailed notes relating to when the piece was written, who performed it and where. This also included an explanation of which version of the repertoire was being used and how they had adapted it for performance. This is particularly important for dance pieces and physical theatre.

The Skills Development Plan

There were some excellent examples of CVs and biographies this session. The best Skills Development Plans (SDP) outlined which skills were to be worked on and stated the three pieces of repertoire work (two in progress and almost complete and one finished piece performed in front of a live audience.) Excellent SDPs had been adjusted as the unit progressed and included notes on workshops and lessons. The best candidates referred to the SDP throughout the portfolio and explained how they had adapted it in response to feedback and self evaluation.

Commentaries

Commentaries need to be detailed and demonstrate candidate ownership. There have been some very informative and detailed commentaries presented on DVD which have provided good evidence. The best commentaries seen were independent documents which explained how the repertoire demonstrated the skills development.

Good practice involved candidates’ writing notes throughout their portfolios detailing development and then giving a comprehensive commentary at the end.

Observation reports

Observation reports must likewise be detailed analyses of the candidates' work and development, written by appropriately skilled observers who use appropriate technical terminology and their experience to make artistic judgements. In order to document the journey

made by the candidate throughout the unit, it is helpful to make observations at the beginning and end of the unit and at key points on the way. Some centres did not sign or date these reports rendering them invalid.

Health and Safety

Most candidates showed good awareness of Health and Safety procedures in the portfolios. However health and safety should be embedded in the portfolio not merely added in an appendix. Candidates should be able to show how they have used the information and knowledge in their practice.

Performance venues

The majority of centres chose appropriate spaces for their rehearsals and performances. However, some drama and music performances took place in computer rooms which are not appropriate performance spaces similarly dance performances did not always take place in a room with a sprung floor. If possible, try to give candidates a variety of spaces in which to perform.

G382 Professional Practice: Performance

General Comments

The entry was very small in this the last January entry for this specification and unit.

Candidates performed well where they responded effectively to demands of the unit and to the assessment criteria in terms of professional replication, choice of appropriate repertoire and depth of analysis in written evidence. In most centres candidates used their knowledge, skills and understanding to respond appropriately to the demands of the tasks and evidence needs.

The choice of material provided sufficient technical and artistic rigour to produce evidence at an appropriate level with no devised work apparent during this session. There were some issues concerning repertoire but not sufficient to affect application of the assessment criteria in the relevant areas except in one centre but even here the predominant reason for the relatively low marks was the standard of performance technique and skill.

Generally the external examination was managed well by centres with appropriate timetables and organisation on the day.

Candidates did not do so well where they did not respond to professional production values as outlined above. Some centres also responded poorly in the demand for Health and Safety considerations in portfolios especially where candidates included generic Risk Assessments only and ignored their own personal artistic considerations.

Performance (G382)

Candidates that produced appropriate performances fully understood the vocational and technical demands of the unit and contextualised their preparation with reference to assessment criteria and demands. Consequently candidates that generally achieved well in the task of producing a performance were immersed in professional practice and chose clear repertoire pieces. Within this context there was evidence of a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.

A range of approaches is expected given the choices and resources available but centres must give candidates the opportunity to produce evidence that tests their understanding of professional practice against the assessment criteria.

Most centres now seem to be fully aware that candidates cannot elect which art form they wish to be assessed on and understand that a candidate is marked on their entire performance. In relation to this some centres added additional songs and dances to performances in order to showcase the specific skills of some candidates. In some cases this further confused the issue of repertoire without adding significantly to the individual marks. If a candidate does one dance for instance in a way that is unrelated to the piece as a whole and then has little other profile in ensemble or performance terms then the dance will have little overall effect. Similarly throwing in the odd Adele song is not likely to add to marks for the overall knowledge and understanding as defined in the assessment criteria if the song is completely unrelated (and averagely delivered).

Some centres also need to consider whether using a major school production is an appropriate way of addressing the needs of the unit and the generation of evidence against the assessment criteria. Slotting a couple of candidates into these events is not always the best way to profile skills and techniques in the specific context of the unit. Two and a half hours for the assessment of just two candidates is excessive, on the other hand a severely edited version of a

Shakespeare play for a reasonably large group, especially when time is made up with popular songs and unrelated dance routines, would also be considered inappropriate.

Again, centres should consider carefully the profile of candidates and how to access the whole of the assessment criteria in a reasonable length of time, without the addition of non-repertoire material. Centres should also avoid using work from other units such as unit 2: Skills Development as evidence for this unit.

Most candidates performed with a sense of commitment and worked hard to achieve the best performance that their skills allowed.

Some centres had encouraged the candidates to work as a 'company' and this had successfully engendered supportive working environments and cooperation between students.

Written evidence (G382)

Portfolios continue to improve with candidates able to respond to some very useful and comprehensive structures from centres. Better candidates were able to augment these with committed and 'owned' responses drawing on practitioners and seen performances. The best portfolios showed clear evidence of planning, target setting, diary entries that showed progress and an application of techniques.

Health and Safety contents had improved with the use of risk assessments, annotated photographs and appropriate warm-up activities all contributing to an enhanced understanding. There were some good examples where candidates had really tried to link H & S to their own performance and this should be encouraged but many candidates were still relying on vague comments about wires and spills and keeping the stage area clear without much thought about their own, specific, circumstances. If they are performing they *must* have regard to the health and safety and condition of their physical instrument, this is not only essential evidence but a requirement of any professional practice context.

G384 Getting Work

General comments

As in previous January sessions entries were modest with a slight decrease in numbers of candidates. This will be the last year of the January entry for this specification. The process of submitting moderation samples for these centres ran smoothly with only a couple of centres needing prompting to enter marks or send portfolios.

Advance documentation

All centres returned MS1s and Centre Authentication Forms, two when prompted.

The unit demands and the assessment grid

The unit demands (self-promotional pack, plan and evaluation) provide the evidence for the application of the assessment criteria as laid out in the grid. The criteria are applied to all the evidence but most of the evidence for AO1.1 and AO4.1 is to be found in the development of the promotional pack.

Professional Context

Generally there was a real awareness of the professional context of the work, although the most noticeable hindrance to this remained where candidates relied on their school or college experience to provide all of the details for their pack. There was a tendency last year to focus on companies rather than on freelance careers, which did not provide the range and depth of evidence necessary to meet the requirements of the specification. There is a need for portfolios to be based on research into the demands of the industry, focused to a large extent by the interviews conducted with freelance professionals. In the best work these interviews were explicitly reproduced as appendices and also clearly permeated and informed all of their work. There were still some portfolios that contained no evidence of having undertaken any interviews whatsoever.

Promotional pack

The quality of the production of the packs varied significantly. At best, they were attractive, professionally produced with well-crafted text and imagery that drew the reader's attention. These packs had a clear reference to a specific artistic audience. They knew in effect who they were marketing themselves to and what those companies or professional wanted. At worst, it was difficult to disentangle the promotional materials from the plethora of print-outs of internet pages, photocopied handouts and extraneous working notes, all of which severely reduced the impact of the work. These portfolios remained unedited and general course notes did not respond to the specific demands of the specification. Some portfolios were unstructured and the full use of appendices to take unused material and notes did not appear to be fully employed.

Résumés and CVs were not always well thought out and did not demonstrate a good professional progression together with a strong sense of professional aspiration in particular artistic vocational areas. There were often anomalies between what was claimed in the CV and what the plan actually contained. It should be noted that CVs and letters are not compulsory. It entirely depends on the 'audience' for the promotional pack and they should not be included habitually.

This also includes letters that are in response to an advertisement, these can sometimes reduce the range of evidence and are not always appropriate. Overall the impact and attractiveness in marketing terms is what candidates should consider when designing the pack. They should be dynamic and lively (as well as informed) in a way that standard CVs and letters are sometimes not. Promotional packs should not be annotated, if necessary include the annotated copies as drafts in the appendix. Pro-mo packs should be as they are when they land on the artistic director's desk.

Sample letters were generally of an acceptable standard but there was considerable scope for adopting a more professional – and hence more persuasive – tone. The quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar sometimes undermined the quality of what was being said. It is vital that candidates adopt high professional standards in their use of written English – this is clearly in the assessment criteria. Some letters were not addressed to anyone and therefore their power to influence was severely restricted. In a significant number of instances there was little understanding of what is expected in the professional context. Candidates should be asking themselves whether letters and CVs what are expected in the specific job or vocational context?

There was not enough use being made of digital and electronic platforms in the production of promotional material. Current professional practice in the promotion of skills and employability will generally include reference to a website, social media and examples of work on DVD/CD. Very few professional artists still use the traditional 10 by 8 photograph, CV or cards (although postcards are sometimes used). This does not mean that they should not be included if appropriate, but candidates should show knowledge and understanding of current promotional methods and it is possible for traditional paper responses to be the appendices to a predominantly virtual pack.

Plan of first year of work

The specification allows candidates to build their first year of work around a maximum of 50% contract work. This recognises the reality of the professional situation in providing a sustainable income during a period where getting work is difficult and where reputation is becoming established. It is a prerequisite, however, that such contract work should be in a related professional area. The majority of contracts were in teaching (either privately or in a College) and were appropriate in their scope and projected income. However, a minority of candidates identified work in supermarkets, restaurants and other retail work which had virtually no link with their professional aspirations.

There was more evidence that plan becoming much more credible but some candidates still did not understand the need to get current rates of pay from the relevant organisations and unions and therefore come up with realistic earnings. In one or two centres all candidates continued to 'pack' the plan with over-detailed spreadsheets. The best plans were 'smart' and edited rigorously and provided figures that gave a clear indication of survival without providing multiple tables.

Most candidates related the range of freelance work identified to the research interviews they had conducted. Some centres provided plans for three or even five years – one detailed year is the demand, although it is quite acceptable as part of the analysis to look forward to subsequent years.

Analysis of the plan

This was often the weakest aspect of the portfolios and proved to be a good differentiator between standards of work. It was almost a truism that the weaker the plan, the weaker the analysis of it. Most candidates were good at identifying the strengths of their plan since this was often closely related to the skills outlined in the résumé. Weaknesses were more difficult for candidates to identify. In terms of opportunities, the most able candidates could see that the

nature of their work could grow in relation to their professional development and this provided a good source of discussion. Threats were more difficult to identify, but the strongest candidates were able to locate the work in a context that did identify such threats. Good candidates placed their analysis into a wider professional context and related it both to a specific professional area and their place in it. Given the current economic climate it should be a given for candidates to mention both their own personal issues and contexts in the SWOT analysis as well as the effect economic downturn has on the industry and audience behaviour.

G385 Exploring Repertoire

General Comments

There was a range of material used: 'Everyman'/'Teechers', Jazz/Kings of Leon and Oedipus/Music Hall. This latter combination presented a misunderstanding of the rubric in that the choice of a modern adaptation of Oedipus does not, under any circumstances, render this choice of text as 'contemporary'. The criteria for judging a text as historical or modern depends entirely upon the date in which the work was originated. This is underpinned by the nature of the research which must be undertaken in relation to each piece. When Oedipus is paired with a performance of Music Hall the research undertaken across both pieces is entirely historical in nature and therefore does not access the full range of marks across the Assessment Objectives.

Essays

Essays were generally written to a good standard and indicative of clear, focussed teaching although the application of research to performance was sometimes weak. Examples of research process also demonstrated a good level of challenge however, such as how an historical play such as 'Everyman' was originally performed and how this might be adapted. There was some impressive socio-historical writing on K.O.L. and also on the way the style of music was first interpreted.

Practical Work

This was mostly to a high standard. Jazz / K.O.L. seems to have benefited from specialist teacher input and specific musical assessment and written comments from these staff were very helpful. Vocals and instrumentation were well handled for candidates of this age and experience. Research process was realised effectively in some excellent performances. It was good to see rock music treated respectfully and expertly as an art form. The performance of 'Teechers' employed a larger cast than is usual for a Godber piece and may have suffered as a result: it also may have suffered from having to use the whole of a large stage area effectively.

Academic Standards

There continues to be some confusion between citations, footnotes and bibliographies which often are combined and sometimes lack the academic rigour demanded of the specification. Centres are encouraged to refer to one of the academic style guides available on the Internet (MLA, Harvard etc.).

Administration

This generally was sound, with all relevant paperwork supplied. There continues to be an issue with poor quality/out of date photographs however, which were either blurred or poorly photocopied. These are unhelpful in providing adequate identification.

D.V.D

Identity parades on the DVD were still sometimes too quick and/or vocally indistinct.

Conclusion

The overall submission contained generally accurately marked work of a solid and rigorous standard that underlines effective teaching.

G386 Producing your own Showcase

General Comments

Despite a smaller entry for this unit there was evidence of some very competent work. Overall, the standards were slightly better than had been seen in previous January sessions. Candidates were generally prepared and had considered not just the content of their Showcase but also the performance techniques required to realise it. However, as in previous sessions whilst the standard of the Showcase was more competent candidates still struggled to secure the highest marks as many candidates found it difficult to produce a dynamic performance of their Showcase, showing mastery of their selected material. The sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills and personal style required at the top end of the marking band is crucial to be able to reflect the professional context of the material selected and only a few candidates were able to give authoritative and absorbing performances. The strongest performers were able to show a wide range of performance techniques with a good awareness of the audience.

It was encouraging to see all Centres supporting the professional context of the showcase with greater attention to a suitable performance space with technical support. Centres must continue to ensure that performances spaces give the candidates opportunities to perform as if they were on a professional stage.

Administration in Centres was generally good. Most centres ensured the paperwork arrived in time, provided a running order and details of candidates' performances. Candidate photographs were, however, often missing. Provision of DVD-recorded evidence of the examination was generally good during this session. Centres at the end of the session worked hard to ensure that DVDs were sent as soon as possible after the examination.

The Discussion

The discussion was tackled well by candidates with many having prepared to talk extensively about their selected pieces and to share the journey from selection to performance. Many candidates had been well prepared by the Centres with good attention to discussing social, historical and cultural influences and how they had been applied. There were a few candidates who had not fully explored this area and this became evident in performance. Candidates, generally, showed an understanding of the creative process as well as health and safety and warm-up procedures.

Dance

Candidates were able to discuss how they had selected and studied their chosen works using DVD footage to learn the pieces. They were aware of the stylistic elements and the skills needed to perform the pieces. There was still evidence of candidates selecting works and then editing them further to avoid the more difficult aspects of the choreography. If this is the case candidates should be encouraged to look for more suitable material where they can cope with the demands of the choreographic intention. Stronger candidates showed good evidence of applying the research they had undertaken and could talk about the influence of practitioners and various choreographers. Most of the dance candidates provided a copy of their selected dances on DVD in their portfolios and a clear website address for the examiner to be able to watch the selected pieces, particularly, if the selected pieces were by less well known choreographers.

Drama

Many drama candidates had undertaken the process of research very well and were able to talk about the social historical and cultural aspects that they had researched. They displayed good knowledge of the pieces and were influenced by previous professional performances and the use of professional practice on YouTube. Stronger candidates displayed an understanding of their chosen pieces as well as an appreciation of the playwrights' intentions. They were able to discuss their ideas for performance of the pieces, influences, style and context as well as characterisation, period, mood and atmosphere. However, too many candidates were unable to discuss with the Examiner how they intended to apply the influence of social, historical and cultural aspects in performance.

Music

There were some very good music candidates in this session that had researched their chosen pieces competently and were able to discuss how the stylistic aspects alongside the cultural and social elements had shaped their pieces. However, some candidates had undertaken this process and then chosen to interpret songs in a different way from the composers' intentions. Whilst the process does allow for some development of individual style candidates must ensure that they are performing the selected work as a repertoire piece, which involves capturing the original intentions of the composer and working with them.

The Performance of the Showcase

There was good evidence that showcases had been rehearsed and refined. Most candidates had considered costume, props, lighting and set. A few candidates had produced PowerPoint presentations that accompanied their Showcase and covered the costume change in-between the pieces. These were well done and gave a professional context to the performance. Some candidates, however, chose to change their costumes and set in full view of the audience and lacked the seamless flow required for the smooth running of the pieces. A few candidates took far too long in-between their pieces and this meant the ambience they may have built up from their last performance piece was lost by a tolerant, but restless, audience.

Selection of appropriate material is still very much an area for development. Successful candidates were able to perform in contrasting styles and showed a good range of skills and techniques. Overall, performance material was varied and the diversity of the material selected for the showcase was encouraging. Candidates must select appropriate material that is within their ability. Choosing material because they 'like it' or because it is a 'challenge' does put the candidate at a disadvantage.

Many Centres provided sound and lighting as well as a suitable performance space that was well lit and appropriate. Many performance pieces were presented with full use of costume, stage and lighting which, although, not examined, does add to the spirit and realism of the candidates work. Technical support was also evident and enhanced many candidates' performances. Where an audience had been invited candidates made full use of communication skills and entertaining them.

Health and Safety was generally adhered to, although too many candidates performed in bare feet or socks, which really is not acceptable in a professional context.

Dance

It was pleasing to note that candidates had selected dance works from repertoire. There was a range of dance pieces, which were performed quite well. Candidates must be careful when selecting Graded pieces, particularly in ballet and tap, as many of these pieces are choreographed to examine particular skills and are not choreographed as performance pieces.

Many of them are quite short in duration, which means that the candidate does not give himself or herself that opportunity to display a range of skills and performance elements. Duets were not always taken from repertoire but performed as solo routines in a side-by-side performance. Many candidates needed to develop greater strength and endurance to ensure that they were able to perform all three pieces.

Dancers seen were able to show awareness of Health and Safety issues. They had discussed various aspects of footwear, jewellery, hair and costume in their preparatory notes. Spatial awareness and suitability of the performance space were also highlighted.

Drama

There was evidence of some very good drama performances. Candidates had selected works from repertoire and many had included the research of social, historical and cultural elements, which meant stylistically the pieces worked well. Some of the selected works were challenging but stronger candidates had ensured that their knowledge and understanding of the pieces tackled these difficult areas.

Many weaker candidates were unable to vary their pace, pitch and tone, making their characters very 'one-dimensional'. Their lack of research and development meant that they had a limited understanding of their characters and were unable to convey meaning and purpose. Vocal skills were varied with many candidates needing to focus on effective voice projection and clear diction.

Duologues were generally the weakest pieces for most candidates. Candidates must also look carefully when selecting pieces that require them to perform as the opposite gender or play an older character. There is a wealth of material to select from, particularly for young people, and it is really unnecessary to be selecting unsuitable pieces.

Staging of the pieces still needs further consideration. Quite a few candidates chose to work in profile but they had not considered the impact on the audience. Many lines were lost or thrown away as they simply could not be heard, particularly with comedy pieces. There was too much pacing of the stage and overuse of the arms and hands in conversation work or to make a point. Candidates must use their research to ensure that they are performing the piece correctly. Good performances considered the audience and engagement with them was enhanced through consideration of blocking and motivation behind the movements.

Music

Good music candidates were able to shape and mould their material, displaying a sophisticated understanding of the interpretative skills required. Candidates at the highest level showed a committed personal style and confidence in communicating their pieces. Good practice saw candidates producing performances that really engaged with the audience. Some music candidates used professional backing tracks, others either accompanied themselves or had piano/keyboard accompanists. Good candidates had rehearsed with the backing tracks to ensure that they were familiar with the key and style of the song.

Singers were varied. Good candidates had considered the suitability of the material matched against their vocal abilities. They had a good understanding of style and developed appropriate performance techniques. However, too many candidates failed to capture the essence of Musical Theatre and opted to stand at the front of the stage and sing. Unless candidates had intended to produce a 'concert style' they needed to embrace the character and context of the selected work. Duets were not so well performed. Many candidates had done nothing to shape and mould the material. Communication aspects were compromised by poor staging, which also affected the candidates' rapport and relationship with each other. Candidates must be encouraged to consider all aspects of staging and performing duets to meet the criteria at the highest level. There were still too many concerns over poor tuning, tone and stylistic interpretations.

Preparatory Notes

Preparatory notes submitted were generally of an improved standard. Many candidates had adhered to the concept of research and included this in their notes. Weaker candidates did not address the demands of the social, historical and cultural aspects and struggled to detail how each performance piece had developed through a diary and feedback. However, the use of the diary to record the progress and development of the work was greatly improved. Good candidates had demonstrated a developed and applied awareness of their approach to performance preparation. They were able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the processes required, with particular reference to social, historical and cultural influences. This was evident for many candidates in the performance of their pieces. There was good evidence of developing skills and techniques through a fluent demand of technical vocabulary. It was encouraging to see preparatory notes that supported preparation, written in continuous prose replacing compendium style folders.

G387 Production Demonstration

There were no entries for this session.

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