



# Performance Studies

A Level

## Performance Studies

Delivery Guide

Repertoire



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## Delivery Guide – Repertoire

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# Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: Expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected which best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email [resourcesfeedback@ocr.org.uk](mailto:resourcesfeedback@ocr.org.uk).

## KEY



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# Curriculum Content

Each candidate performs from memory one extract from the repertoire he or she has studied for either Performance Contexts 1 or 2. The performance may be either the work of an individual candidate or of a group of up to six candidates. The performance should last between three and eighteen minutes as each candidate should have the equivalent of three minutes' exposure.

The performance realisation is marked out of 20 marks, which is worth 10% of the A Level. It is assessed under AO2, 'Skills in devising performance material and in performing work.' It is a performance to an audience.

## APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE CONTENT

### **What is repertoire?**

Repertoire is practitioners' published work. For Unit G402, students will have studied two, possibly three practitioners. From dance - Matthew Bourne, Shobana Jeyasingh or Lloyd Newson; from drama, Caryl Churchill, Athol Fugard or John Godber and from music, The Beatles, John Adams or George Gershwin.

Additionally, as preparation for Unit G403 students will have studied nine or more further practitioners from dance, drama and music to answer questions on one of the Twentieth Century American Musical, Postmodern Approaches to Performing Arts since 1960, Politics and Performance since 1914 or Approaches to Performance in the Far East.

### **What does this mean in real terms?**

From the large total of works they have studied, students are required to choose one extract they can perform most effectively to an audience.

Teachers should encourage thinking about possible repertoire performance from the outset, as works are studied. By the end of the course, the work will have chosen itself for most students.

### **Frequently asked questions:**

#### **1. Does the group size matter?**

Yes. Groups must be between 1 and 6, however centres are not advised to encourage all students to do solos or force groups of 6. Each candidate should be in a setting he or she is comfortable with.

#### **2. Does the timing matter?**

Yes, it should be about 3 minutes' exposure per candidate. The examiner will time the performance but a little over or under-run shouldn't be a problem. Three minutes is considered the right time to develop a performance. If a group performs as a band and they sing together, a shorter length is acceptable.

#### **3. Does the performance have to be an exact copy of the original?**

No, and it's neither karaoke nor slavish reproduction of the original, either. It's an interpretation that is still recognisable as a piece from the given practitioner(s) but may shed new light or angle on the work.

# Thinking Conceptually

## **4. Can they make any changes to the piece?**

Candidates may join together shorter (sometimes edited) extracts from a play, dance a series of short fragments or make a song medley. Gershwin numbers are often less than two minutes. It's acceptable to change a piece to fit one performer or a group, provided it works dramatically, musically or choreographically. The examiner should be given a copy in advance of scripts and notes of changes.

## **5. Can a silent partner be on stage?**

Yes, if it's necessary to perform the piece.

## **6. Must it be from memory?**

Yes. The work should be learned and performed from memory. That includes music if the candidate is playing an instrument.

## **7. Can they sing and play an instrument?**

Yes, candidates can sing, play an instrument or do both.

## **8. For singing, can a backing track be used?**

Yes, if a suitable accompanist is not available.

## **8. Should all candidates in a centre perform the same piece?**

There is no rule against it, but it's unlikely that given a free choice all candidates displaying a range of skills and passions would choose the exact same piece.

## **9. Can they be assessed in more than one art form?**

Yes, it may be that dance and drama, or music and dance form part of the chosen piece and are assessed as part of the overall performance.

## **Conceptual links to other areas of the course**

As G404 is the synoptic unit that closes the course, the only part remaining after this is the student devised piece from a commission. This should also be informed stylistically by one or more of the same studied practitioners.

## ACTIVITIES

### **How do students choose their pieces?**

Play to their strengths. To like a song, a play or dance may not be enough. Candidates need to stretch themselves, but higher-level singers or dancers are better to perform piece which complement their abilities.

### **How do they rehearse?**

The rehearsal process needs to be as rigorous as for group devised pieces. A timetable/schedule is needed. Solos, pairs or groups need to settle planning and broad interpretation. If solo, the individual needs regular assistance. Teachers should only very rarely assume that a solo performer is making satisfactory progress without any reference to peers or to staff.

Consider externals - accompanist, props and costumes. Props, set and costumes should not be relied upon too much - there are no marks for them. Mime skills are much valued in performances.

### **How do they get feedback if working solo?**

Solos and groups benefit from videoing progress. Playback needs watching critically. Peer assessment should be honest and constructive. Teacher commentary is essential with the assessment criteria to hand.

### **How do they assess themselves and their peers?**

The assessment criteria are listed on page 47 of the OCR Specification, Performance Studies, H148/H548, Appendix B3.1 (2008). Just as teachers mark progress against those criteria, so should students as they rehearse. There should be a final mock/dress rehearsal where these criteria are the basis for assessment.

### **What is the interview about?**

The examiner will interview candidates prior to performing, either alone, in groups or clusters in order to find out what is to be performed, what changes (if any) have been made from the original, any performance challenges met and what the examiner will expect to see. It needn't be daunting, especially if teachers rehearse it in advance with students.

# Thinking Contextually

## Activities

### 1. Dance Repertoire

With opportunities for solos, duets and group pieces, Bourne's repertoire proves popular. One question not asked frequently enough is - do the students have the stamina as well as the choreographic skills to sustain the piece?

The starting point is to watch DVDs of the works. This will have been done for Unit G402, but this time, watch looking for a piece that is 3, 6, 9 minutes up to the maximum of 18 for a group of six.

Some of the larger ensemble pieces in *Nutcracker!* (2003) for example can be adapted for smaller numbers.

Decide which student is dancing which part. Devise drama-type exercises to put the characters in the same situations, without dancing but to help develop roles. Both Newson and Bourne integrate dance and drama in many works.

In Bourne, set and costumes are integral to his vision. Reproduction of such lavish elements is rarely practicable, so think about one dress, a token prop or stage flat, back slide projections or coloured lighting.

It's worth remembering that in a dance repertoire rehearsal time will be larger than anticipated – at least an hour for a minute's worth of dance blocking with corresponding additional rehearsal time.

If American Musicals or Postmodernism from Unit G403 is chosen, the same principles apply – watch work on video, select the extract suitable for skills and stamina of student, trial and error, rehearse in depth, peer/self/teacher assessment to the exam criteria.

Reviews in newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph*, *Sunday Times* or *The Guardian* are useful pointers to performance perspectives in professional work.

#### Useful links:

Matthew Bourne <http://www.new-adventures.net>

Upcoming shows and tours, tweets and reviews will give students a feel for the work Bourne does.

Lloyd Newson <http://dv8.co.uk/about-dv8/lloyd-newson>

Information about Newson and his company DV8, tours, artistic policy, personnel and specific shows.

Shobana Jeyasingh <http://www.shobanajeyasingh.co.uk/>

Commissions, projects, programmes and some of her ethos expressed through her company.

Dance Advantage <http://www.danceadvantage.net/effective-performance-warmup/>

How to prepare for a pre-dance warm-up, which is as important as the show itself.

## Resources



# Thinking Contextually

## Activities

### 2 . Drama Repertoire

John Godber is popular with very accessible work, like *Teechers*, *Shakers* and *Bouncers* which are funny and fun to perform. Because he is influenced by Brecht, it's suggested that early sessions focus on Brechtian techniques, such as making strange, use of third person, song, captions, direct audience address, gender, multi-roling and socio/political comment.

Caryl Churchill employs many of the same approaches plus overlapping dialogue in her often feminist work, so the same starting point should be Brecht before texts. It's suggested that early readings are followed by sharing scenes with others, including non-Performance Studies and younger students so that the comedic, fast-paced action is tested in performance while being honed.

There are elements of Brecht in Athol Fugard's work too. Fugard's work benefits from an understanding of apartheid and racial issues. Many other political dramatists are influenced by Brecht.

Videoring rehearsals is good practice.

If Postmodernism or Politics and Performance from Unit G403 is chosen, the same principles apply – watch work on video, select the extract suitable for skills and stamina of student, trial and error, rehearse in depth, peer/self/teacher assessment to the exam criteria.

#### Useful links:

John Godber <http://www.johngodber.co.uk/>

Details of tours, reaction, ideas from and about the Godber technique and as a former teacher, Godber has packed it full of interviews, videos and audios that teachers and students need.

Caryl Churchill <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/oct/03/caryl-churchill-collaborators-interview>

Interview with The Guardian's Mark Lawson revealing thoughts and her philosophy which helps student preparation for performing a piece of hers.

Athol Fugard <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/27/294735100/at-81-playwright-athol-fugard-looks-back-on-aging-and-apartheid>

Article about the playwright at 81, looking back on apartheid and aging in which he explains how at the heart of his work is 'the dynamic of family.'

Bertolt Brecht <http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/drama/brecht.htm>

Universal Teacher, useful background on Brecht, the man, the plays and the philosophies – very useful as a starter for teachers and students before studying Godber or Churchill.

## Resources

# Thinking Contextually

## Activities

### 3. Music Repertoire

From G402, The Beatles and Gershwin are the most popular. Most Gershwin songs are done solo with a piano accompaniment, some with all on stage as in a club or cabaret chorus with solos stepping forward in turn to sing. Beatles' songs could be sung and/or played by a group. A Beatles' song has been done in Peter Sellar's style, spoken like a poem.

The music genre lends itself to bigger influence from cover versions, other interpretations. Sometimes harmonies help performers show their skills and contribute to an ensemble performance.

Sometimes students have difficulties with characters and 'voices' in lyrics, in which case background drama improvisations help them identify more with the song.

John Adams is rarely performed as high musical ability is required, but other postmodern practitioners such as Steve Reich are accessible and make for interesting and usual work.

If American Musicals, Postmodernism or Politics and Performance from Unit G403 is chosen, the same principles apply – watch work(s) on video or listen to them performed, select the extract suitable for skills and stamina of student, trial and error, rehearse in depth and continuous peer/self/teacher assessment to the exam criteria.

#### Useful links:

George Gershwin <http://www.gershwin.com/>

Official site of George and Ira Gershwin giving ideas for interpretations of many of the classic songs.

The Beatles <http://www.thebeatles.com/>

Main site for biography, song information, trivia and ideas for students and staff.

John Adams <http://www.earbox.com/>

Website of Adams' work and information about performances with a list of linked and related resources.

How to Get Into Musical Theatre <http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Into-Musical-Theatre>

Tips and hints for those looking for a career in that genre, useful to point students towards skills needed for performance.

## Resources



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