

Contemporary Drama Performance

Gail Deal

BTEC – Unit 13

BTEC

Introduction

Performing Arts learners are required to use their acting skills in two short contemporary drama performances. Each performance should be an extract from a play written after 1930. The two plays should be contrasting. This scheme of work will use:

- ▶ *Blood Wedding* (1932) by Federico García Lorca
- ▶ *The Jungle* (2017) by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson.

Introducing the unit

To introduce the unit and inspire the learners, the first task is to take your class and staff to see the two plays you have chosen.

If this is your first time booking a theatre trip, then carefully follow the guidelines set by your school/college and allow plenty of time to do the paperwork and get it approved. It is sometimes better to go to the theatre on a night at the beginning of the week, e.g. Monday or Tuesday when the group tickets might be cheaper. Look for deals in your region for special schools' prices and matinee cheap rates.

My class saw *Blood Wedding* at the Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common Northside, London, SW4 0QW. George Richmond-Scott adapted Lorca's text and directed the production. It was set in modern London and used *immersive and surrealist styles of theatre*. It had a small cast of seven actors and lasted approximately 2 hours with an interval.

We linked our trip to see *Blood Wedding* at the Omnibus Theatre in Clapham with a workshop back at college run by the director George Richmond-Scott and the Movement Director, Patricia Suarez.

You might want to use the original text by Lorca and there is a translation in *Lorca: Three Plays*, published by Methuen.

There is a useful DramaWorks resource pack entitled *Plays Through Practice* by Jeni Whittaker, which is very useful for the study of this play and accompanying practical work. It offers a brief overview of Lorca's life and the times he lived through. He was born in Granada, Spain in 1898 and was shot by the Black Squad under General Franco's regime in August 1936. His body was never found. Other plays by Lorca that you might wish to use are *Yerma* (1934) and the *House of Bernarda Alba* (1936).

The Jungle was performed at the Playhouse Theatre in London and was directed by Stephen Daldry and Justin Martin. It was originally commissioned by The Royal National Theatre and first presented at the Young Vic Theatre on 7 December 2017. It was a co-production with the Good Chance Theatre. The first performance at The Playhouse Theatre was on 16 June 2018. The performance lasted 2 hours 40 minutes including a 20 minute interval. The script is published by Faber and Faber.

Task 1

Each learner writes a 500 word review of each play. You should discuss what a theatre review should include and show the learners some recent reviews of other plays from a selection of newspapers, magazines and theatre websites.

The learners should be encouraged to buy a programme of the productions of the two plays to enable them better to study the structure of the piece, i.e. the acts and scenes as well as the cast list and names of all the key players in the production. They should discuss the plot and the emotional highs and lows throughout the development of the narrative and record this for their theatre reviews. Offer the learners a template for writing the review. This should be made available online on the subject portal.

Gail Deal is a senior moderator/examiner for CIE. She is Head of Performing Arts at Esher College, and began her career as a professional ice skater and dancer. She has an MA in Literature and Culture, with BA (Hons) in Modern Languages and Arts. She is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She is interested in all forms of live and recorded performances, teaches Creative Writing and writes theatre reviews.



Each learner has an *individual online folder* to which the verifiers have access.

The folder contains:

- ▶ Fact files on the two playwrights, the directors and designers of the productions seen by the learners
- ▶ Reviews of shows seen
- ▶ Characterisation profiles
- ▶ Research into interpretations of role
- ▶ The learner's acting log
- ▶ Photographic journal of rehearsal process
- ▶ Evaluations of the two main performances
- ▶ Two programmes.

The teacher can upload documents to the subject portal under Unit 13, e.g.:

- ▶ Director's notes
- ▶ Links to useful websites
- ▶ Links to film footage of rehearsals and performances
- ▶ Templates for theatre reviews and acting logs
- ▶ The four learning outcomes and their various aspects taken from the specification.

Questions/examples can be put by each aspect to help learners use the LOs more successfully.

Video footage of rehearsals, performances and feedback sessions are uploaded to a student video portal for the course so that learners can access practical work for evaluation purposes and staff can carry out verification tasks.

Assessment methods

Observation reports, witness statements and assessment records are uploaded to a staff collaboration site for the subject and these are also kept as hard copy in a central folder within the department for the Standards Verifier to view, should the case arise. Staff should write *observation reports* at milestones during the process and give regular feedback so that learners can respond to that feedback in their log books. It is possible to do this in a viva and film the session. It might take the form of one-to-one interviews about the learner's work or be a more formal setting with the director giving feedback on a run through.

Tracking sheets for the class showing grades met (P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4) and PLTS and Functional Skills see pp. 10 – 11 of the specification at:

https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/BTEC-Nationals/Performing-Arts/2010/Specification/Unit_13_Contemporary_Theatre_Performance.pdf

One method of documenting feedback on performance days is for the director to write notes while the show is running, using one colour ink for a matinee and another colour for the evening performance and so on. This is uploaded to the subject portal for learner access.

A copy of this written feedback could help the learner focus and improve their interpretation of a role and they would have time to respond in written format to the director's notes.

The director can then add notes on how the learner has responded to feedback after the matinee performance and amended their performance in the evening show.

The unit has a recommended number of 60 guided learning hours. This could be 5 hours a week for 12 weeks and therefore take place over one term.

Week 1

Introduce the unit and make the specification for Unit 13 accessible both online and in hard copy for each learner.

Explain the schedule and the four learning aims.

Give the dates for the final performances.

Explain how the unit will be assessed.

Give out the assignment brief/s – see example in the Resources at the end of this scheme.

Discuss theatre styles and give examples of plays using naturalism, realism, surrealism, expressionism, etc. Refer to LO2.

Practical activity

Choose a short scene from your chosen play and act it out using a different style each time. You will need to explain the features of the style and give the learners a bullet point list as a basis. It is probably easiest to start with Brecht. For example:

- ▶ Use of placards to denote roles
- ▶ Multi-role
- ▶ Sharing a role among actors using a key prop
- ▶ Direct address/breaking fourth wall
- ▶ Use of song to break up action
- ▶ Show the workings of theatre, e.g. stage hands sit on stage, actors change costume on stage
- ▶ Narrator
- ▶ Make distinctions between social classes, e.g. upper class characters walk on the balls of their feet.

Week 2

Theatre trip to see *Blood Wedding*.

Write a review of *Blood Wedding* (500 words minimum with images – template given as an option).

Go through Learning Outcome 1 (LO1) and how to use the online log book.

Explain what is meant by *context* when it comes to a play and the importance of *knowing the whole work* in order to understand the extract to be performed for the assessment.

Explain how to produce Fact Files or PowerPoint slide shows covering each playwright, their life and work and the times they lived through.

Discuss how to research the playwrights and ask students to make a list of their sources. Upload to folder.

For each play, learners create some biogs on the key players and their contribution to the production: director and designers of set, sound, lighting, costume, movement, composer.

Week 3

Two-hour *workshop* on *Blood Wedding* with director George Richmond-Scott and Movement Director Patricia Suarez. Learners are given extracts from the play to work on. For *Blood Wedding*, the director George Richmond-Scott adapted Lorca's text. Some of the extracts show the Lorca text in translation and the director of the current production's adaptation. Learners will work from both texts in order to discover how interpretations may vary. They will choose which extract to use for their own performance (10 minutes minimum).

Week 4

Theatre trip to see *The Jungle* at the Playhouse Theatre, London.

Learners write a theatre review of this performance using the programme, the website and the experience of seeing the play live. They can use a template. The teacher leads a class discussion on the production using a series of prepared questions.

Read through of the play as a class or two smaller groups.

Discussion and decision on extracts and groups. An extract must lead to a performance which is at least 10 minutes long.

Each group casts their extract and start to rehearse.

Learners learn their lines.

Weeks 5, 6, 7 and 8

Rehearsals of the two extracts – from page to stage.

Working on characterization – use LOs (mind maps).

Keeping up to date with the actor's log and using the learning outcomes.

Checking that learners are on task and using the assignment brief effectively.

Source costumes and props.

Produce a programme for each group performance including the running order, a photograph of each learner with their name and number.

Invite an audience to the performances.

Week 9

Technical and dress rehearsals.

Group performances of *the two extracts*.

Staff complete observation records. Cover both landmark rehearsals and both performances.

Upload videos of performances to the portal for student and staff access.

Keep a copy on a hard drive/memory stick. Label with centre's name and number, title of show and date, class name or code and attach the running order and programme. Store safely as a confidential file.

Week 10

Watch the two extracts on film and write a detailed evaluation of each to add to the log book using LO4 to help focus the evaluation.

Learners print all work from their online folder and put into a hard copy folder. This is handed in for assessment.

Teachers mark the work using the assessment record template, one for each learner. The work is then internally verified. Paperwork is completed and stored in a centrally held folder. If this is online, it is a good idea to have hard copies as well.

Resources

Resource 1: Assignment Brief

Qualification	BTEC Advanced Subsidiary Level 3 Performing Arts
Unit number and title	Unit 13 Contemporary Drama Performance
Learning aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Be able to research contemporary texts ▶ Be able to interpret and realise contemporary texts ▶ Be able to rehearse contemporary texts for performance. ▶ Be able to perform contemporary texts.
Assignment title	<i>Blood Wedding</i> and <i>The Jungle</i>
Assessor	
Issue date	
Hand in deadline	

Vocational Scenario or Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Your theatre company has been asked to put on a showcase of extracts from the two plays to demonstrate different theatre styles. ▶ The venue will be the Community Theatre in the college grounds. ▶ The date will be _____ with performances starting at _____ ▶ Your theatre company is required to produce a programme for the show. Act 1 will comprise extracts from <i>Blood Wedding</i> and Act 2 will comprise extracts from <i>The Jungle</i>. The programme must have photographs of the cast in costume. This could be a series of group photographs, one for each performance of an extract. Each learner must be easily recognisable and have their name and number written by their image for easy identification by the verifiers. See below. Deadline for hand in of programme: _____
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Task 1 Live Productions – Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write TWO theatre reviews, one of <i>Blood Wedding</i> seen at the Omnibus Theatre on 16 September 2018 and one of <i>The Jungle</i> seen at The Playhouse Theatre, London. Include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The success of the plot – using 'Learning Outcome 2 Styles' to comment on form, structure and style of the play • The effectiveness of the characters • The choice of locations • The entertainment factor (song, dance, comedy) • Choose your three favourite moments and explain why they are successful. 2. Choose one performer from each play and follow them through the show so you can write about their interpretation of the role. Discuss aspects of performance using Learning Outcome 4, i.e. physical expression, vocal expression and emotional investment. 3. Compare the following aspects of the two plays. You may present this comparison as an essay or as bullet points in a table. Please include images and cover the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre style • Position of audience • Type of performance space • Size of cast • Music/aural setting • Movement/dance • Subject matter • Themes • Social, political and historical contexts • Relationships between characters – could be in the form of a diagram/ mind map • Groups of characters/social class • Message to audience • Death/Murder/Violence • Cultures • Physical set, props and lighting • Costumes <p>Use Learning Outcome 1 to help you.</p> <p>Explain in detail at the end of the comparison which features you would like to select for your interpretation of the chosen extract.</p>
Checklist of evidence required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theatre reviews of <i>Blood Wedding</i> and <i>The Jungle</i> 2. Discussion of two individual performances 3. Comparison between the two plays
Criteria covered by this task:	
Unit/Criteria reference	To achieve the criteria you must show that you are able to:
P1	Research contemporary texts to provide ideas for their interpretation [IE]
M1	Research contemporary texts selecting features for their interpretation [IE]
D1	Research contemporary texts selecting detailed features for their interpretation [IE]

Task 2	<p>You will be performing in TWO EXTRACTS. In order to understand the role you are performing and its place within the context of the play, you will need to carry out research to prepare yourself in a professional manner.</p> <p>Read the whole play in order to understand the role of your character/s and find out all you can about them and their relationships with other characters. Complete a <i>character profile</i> to record this information (Learning Outcome 2).</p> <p>For each extract that you are in produce TWO PROGRAMMES covering the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of play with an image from the show on the front cover • Date, time and place of premiere • Biography of the playwright • Brief synopsis of action • Details on settings – when and where the action takes place • Structure (no. of acts/scenes/intervals) • Include photographs of you and the other performers in your group in costume – name and number by the side of the photograph.
Checklist of evidence required	<p>Two character profiles (one for each play)</p> <p>Two programmes (one for each extract).</p>

Task 3 Learning Outcomes 2, 3, 4	<p>Log Book</p> <p>Keep a log book throughout the entire process from day one to final performance. Focus on the Learning Outcomes and ensure you address as many of the words in the lists as you can. Give detailed examples from your work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Focus on interpretation of role/character and use of features of chosen style ▶ Vocal and physical skills development during rehearsals. ▶ Include response to feedback from teacher’s observation reports ▶ Include evaluations of landmark rehearsals (tech and dress) and final performances ▶ Include annotated rehearsal schedule ▶ Create an annotated photographic record of rehearsals including dress rehearsal.
Checklist of evidence required	<p>Log book covering skills development during rehearsals, including technical rehearsal and dress rehearsal</p> <p>Rehearsal schedule annotated for learner’s contribution</p> <p>Annotated photographic record of rehearsals including dress rehearsal</p> <p>Learner response to feedback throughout the process and after landmark rehearsals/ performances, i.e. dress rehearsal and final performance</p> <p>Evaluations of the two final performances</p> <p>DVD of film footage of rehearsals and both performances</p>

Criteria covered by this task:	
Unit/Criteria reference	To achieve the criteria you must show that you are able to:
P2	Realise characters and meet demands of the texts in relation to the interpretations
M2	Realise characters with skill and imagination, meeting the demands of the texts in relation to the interpretations
D2	Realise characters with discipline, skill and imagination, meeting the demands of the texts in relation to the interpretations
P3	Develop performance through rehearsal with guidance [CT]
M3	Develop performance through rehearsal, with independent application of direction and creative autonomy
D3	Develop performance through rehearsal, with imaginative and independent direction and highly creative autonomy
P4	Perform roles from contrasting contemporary texts, showing differences in characterisation [EP]

M4	Perform roles from contrasting contemporary texts, showing effective and distinctive differences in characterisation
D4	Perform roles from contrasting contemporary texts, showing expressive and imaginative differences in characterisation

Sources of information to support you with this Assignment	<p><i>The Jungle</i> by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson, published by Faber and Faber Limited, London 2017 (script)</p> <p>Programme for <i>The Jungle</i> from the Playhouse theatre</p> <p>Thejungleplay.co.uk</p> <p>goodchance.org.uk – for info about the theatre company who set up in The Jungle in Calais</p> <p>'From Peshwar To Calais - Eating In The Jungle' by A. A. Gill, published in <i>The Times</i>, 28 February 2016</p> <p><i>Blood Wedding</i> by Lorca adapted by George Richmond-Scott, excerpts of the script used in the workshop</p> <p><i>Blood Wedding</i> programme notes from the Omnibus Theatre 2018</p> <p>DramaWorks <i>Plays Through Practice: Blood Wedding</i>, copyright Jeni Whittaker</p>
Other assessment materials attached to this Assignment Brief	e.g., work sheets, risk assessments, risk assessment of college theatre

Resource 2: Unit 13: Learning outcomes

You must write about the following aspects of drama in your log books.

(For learners who find writing difficult, the following questions could be prepared by the learner in advance and then the teacher could interview them in the form of a viva. This could be filmed and submitted as evidence in the place of a log book. The learner could use notes, images and diagrams to aid them in the interview as it is not a memory test, but an alternative method of recording the learner's research and process. There might be a series of short vivas, one on each learning outcome. Some learners may wish to produce their own vlog.)

The notes in the brackets are to help you and set you on the right path.

Your two texts are:

- ▶ **Blood Wedding** (1932) written in Spain by Federico García Lorca
- ▶ **The Jungle** (2017) written by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson (Revised version 2018).

You will find out about the two plays in theatre programmes and on websites, but make sure you are working from the correct productions/adaptations, i.e. the productions seen at the theatre.

1 Be able to research contemporary texts

For each text, carry out research into the following and write notes and include images where possible.

A. Contextual research: e.g.

Political, social, cultural, economic, moral

State when and where was the play written and by whom.

State when and where the play is set.

What was happening at the time a) the play was written and b) when it is set.

Include a timeline of events in history to help you. Consider the type of government in power, what the society was like, the moral codes and the culture of the people.

Look at each character and comment on their financial/economic status.

Entertainment

Why was the play written?

In what way does it entertain its audience?

Does it have another purpose? E.g. to inform, to educate? Explain how it does this.

Who is the target audience?

What is the play's message?

Subject matter

What is the play about? Outline the plot briefly. Draw a diagram showing the status of each character and the relationships between them.

Theme

What themes does the play include e.g. love, hate, deception, secrets, lies, nature, fate, lunacy

BLOOD WEDDING:

Produced by Lauri Cryan and Anastasia Panova

Adapted and directed by George Richmond-Scott

THE JUNGLE:

Casting Julia Horan CDG

Executive Producer

David Lan

It should be noted that *The Jungle* is a National Theatre and Young Vic co-production with Good Chance Theatre. The production at the Playhouse Theatre in the autumn of 2018 was presented by Sonia Friedman Productions, Tom Kirdahy, Hunter Arnold and a host of associate producers (see the programme).

B. Aesthetic research:

Treatment of themes and issues;

Outline the themes and explain how they are presented

What issues does the play raise, e.g. Should one interfere in matters of the heart?

Could the deaths have been avoided?

What does tragedy mean?

Stylistic and structural aspects;

State the number of acts and the number of scenes/divisions per act.

What happens a) just before, b) during and c) after the interval?

What style has been used in the play? Is there one style or more than one? When and how does the style change? How does this affect the audience?

Where is the climax? Point out moments of tension.

Consider how lighting and sound are used to structure the play.

Did any moments shock you? Confuse you? Move you? Pinpoint the moment and explain its effect on you.

Comment on how characters might be set against each other, one on one or in pairs or groups?

How does the play open and end?

Design and specialist requirements for set, properties, costumes, etc.:

Use the programme to give details of the people who designed the set, props, costumes and sound.

Use the script and the experience of seeing the play live to help you comment on the design elements of the two plays. You might want to present the comparison in the form of a table where you compare the various aspects of design used in the two plays.

You will have to produce and perform a 10-minute extract from each play. Present ideas for designs for the costume, set, props, lighting and sound. Use images.

2 Be able to interpret and realise contemporary texts

If you have had any workshops on either text, you should be able to comment on how movement is used in the production. For example, you might have had a movement workshop with Patricia Suarez who choreographed *Blood Wedding* at the Omnibus Theatre. You should explain which movements were demonstrated and learned and which of these you will use/adapt for your own performance of the 10-minute extract.

Blood Wedding:

- ▶ Why does Moon use movement more than the other characters?
- ▶ What style of movement is this?
- ▶ Could he behave in a different way and have the same effect?
- ▶ How does he speak?
- ▶ In what way is this different from the other characters?
- ▶ Why is there a change of accent in Act 2?

The Jungle

Written by Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson

Directed by Stephen Daldry and Justin Martin

Set by Miriam Buether

Costumes by Catherine Kodicek

Lighting by Jon Clark

Sound by Paul Arditti

Musical Direction/Composition by John Pfumojena

Video by Duncan McLean and Tristan Shepherd

Look at the various characters in each of the two plays. In small groups create *character profiles* for all the characters in *Blood Wedding* and the major characters in *The Jungle*. The profile can be presented in bullet points with images. You should cover:

- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Nationality
- ▶ Language(s) spoken
- ▶ (Social) status – you should consider their status at the beginning of the play and then at the end. It might be appropriate to consider their social status in their own country and how it differs from where they are currently living.
- ▶ Family status, e.g. father
- ▶ Socio-economic status
- ▶ Marital status
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Profession/job
- ▶ Relationships with other characters
- ▶ Accent/dialect
- ▶ Connected to which theme(s).

Analysis:

- ▶ Language: when analysing each character's language write annotations around the text
- ▶ Imagery: highlight any imagery used in the script
- ▶ Psychological insight: trace the development of each character's journey through the play. Make notes on whether they have changed during the course of the play
- ▶ Thematic awareness: list the themes of the play and draw a symbol for each one
- ▶ Interpretation and dramatic coherence: Considering the whole play, does it make sense? Did you find any parts difficult to understand? Explain why.
- ▶ Character analysis; use profiles above but add notes on how characters change/develop and react to other characters and new situations
- ▶ Consideration of author's intentions: Why do you think the author(s) wrote this play? What did he hope the reaction of the audience would be? How did he want them to feel? Refer to your own experiences when seeing the two plays.

Styles:

Form and structure, e.g.

Act divisions

Scene structure

Plot

Sub-plot

Imagery

Symbol

Lyricism

Rhythm

Metre

Relationship between sound and meaning

Naturalism

Realism

Expressionism

Surrealism.

(Give definitions of the last four terms. Relate them to styles of theatre. Find examples of plays and practitioners using each style.)

3 Be able to rehearse contemporary texts for performance

Personal management: e.g.

Time management

Rehearsal schedules

Physical preparation

Mental preparation

Actor's log

Costume and props

Healthy and safe working practices

Concentration and discipline

Trust and cooperation

Communication

Listening and response:

Taking direction; creative flexibility and generosity

Use of rehearsal exercises and technique

Group interaction

Responding positively to feedback

Growth and development:

Experiment and risk

Engagement with the role

Character decisions

Extension and refinement

Learning and memorising

Sustained spontaneity.

4 Be able to perform contemporary texts

Physical expression:

Posture

Gesture

Tempo-rhythm

Range

Appropriateness of energy

Vocal expression:

Range and use of vocal instrument

Tone

Pace

Pitch

Control

Inflection

Projection

Register

Idiosyncrasy

Dialect and accent (if appropriate).

Emotional investment:

Commitment on stage

Interaction and response

Playing the moment

Public solitude

Appropriateness and use of emotional range

Coherence and consistency of role

Character journey

Nature of relationship with an audience.

Learners must work on at least two contrasting texts. The performances may be an extract from the texts, lasting a minimum of 10 minutes each.