

# Investigating practitioners' work

Gail Deal

BTEC – Unit 1, level 3

# BTEC

## Introduction

This scheme is based on 3 1-hour lessons a week plus independent study throughout Year 12, but can be adapted to suit the needs of the centre and the pathway chosen.

This is a *mandatory* and *synoptic* Level 3 unit on all the BTEC Performing Arts qualifications. Key information can be found in the document opposite.

The frameworks in this scheme of work are closely based on the assessment outcomes that are to be found in the specification on pp. 22 to 26. The four assessment outcomes are listed on p. 22 and then the detail follows.

### The assessment

The unit is externally assessed by Pearson and is worth 60 marks. The task is set 5 weeks prior to the supervised assessment period so that learners can carry out the investigation and critical analysis. *The set task is then completed in 3 hours within a three day assessment period timetabled by Pearson.* It is available at two points in the academic year: Jan/Feb and May/June.

Learners investigate two practitioners and are given a set task with a vocational scenario. Once the task is issued in either December or March depending on the series chosen for assessment, the learners have 4 weeks to prepare their bibliography and *up to 4 A4 sides of research notes* based on their prior investigation of the practitioners. They may take these into the supervised assessment period. These notes are not handed in with the final booklet. Learners may produce handwritten or word-processed work, but the latter must be printed and sent to Pearson. A spellcheck can be used. This should be arranged with the exam department.

Staff should read the instructions in the task booklet and the Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA) document to ensure the assessment is supervised correctly.

The learner is to produce a piece of extended writing of *no more than 2000 words*.

An authentication sheet must be completed by each learner.

### Themes

The set task involves two practitioners and a theme common to both. Past themes have included 'morality', 'cultural diversity', and 'breaking the mould'.

### Choosing two practitioners

A list of practitioners is given in the specification and reproduced below for easy access. Learners must use *at least one practitioner* from the list. The second practitioner may be chosen from the list or may be of the learner's own choice. It would be a good idea to check with Pearson to see whether the practitioner chosen by a learner is appropriate. Learners may choose both practitioners from the list and this is a safer option.

### Setting mock external assessments

It is a good idea for the member(s) of staff delivering the unit to carry out their own research and produce a fact file for each practitioner, covering their repertoire/work, contextual factors, creative process and themes. Then tasks can be set which imitate the external assessment task and learners can practise writing in a 3-hour session or three 1-hour sessions or other variants. Some learners might be better in two writing blocks consisting of 2 hours and 1 hour.

### Preparation of resources

Although learners must carry out their own research, staff need to ensure that resources are available, so preparation time should be given to developing a bibliography for each practitioner. Key texts such as plays, scores, DVDs of films/shows/dance pieces should be made readily available to learners. The member

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<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/BTEC-Nationals/Performing-Arts/20161/specification-and-sample-assessments/97>



of staff in charge of the course should start with an audit of what resources are available within the department and the centre and what is easily available on the web. Some of the practitioners' works can be watched in a classroom situation and some can be performed to enhance understanding. The teachers in the department are a great resource and an initial meeting with the team should establish where expertise lies.

Learners will probably be familiar with the work of practitioners such as Andrew Lloyd Webber if they take singing lessons out of school/college. They may have been in a play by Brecht or Littlewood with their local amateur dramatic group. They may have experienced a workshop with Frantic Assembly or been to the theatre with their family to see work by Fosse. An audit would be helpful to establish the learners' prior knowledge.

It would be a great idea for learners to see live performance work so give the class a list of venues to investigate. Look on each practitioner's website (if they have one). Give a list of useful websites for researching live performances. For example Frantic Assembly tour their work and two of their pieces are on Digital Theatre Plus, a useful resource with live productions, interviews and other information.

For each practitioner, I have added some websites as starting points for learners' research.

## List of practitioners

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### Pina Bausch

- ▶ <http://www.pinabausch.org/en/pina/biography>
- ▶ <http://www.dancemagazine.com/pina-bausch-2484085996.html>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS8hEj37CrA>

### Steven Berkoff

- ▶ <http://www.stevenberkoff.com/>
- ▶ <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/steven-berkoff>
- ▶ *The Theatre of Steven Berkoff* by Steven Berkoff (Methuen, 2006)

### Matthew Bourne

- ▶ <https://new-adventures.net/profile/sir-matthew-bourne-obe>
- ▶ <https://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2017/matthew-bournes-cinderella/>
- ▶ *Matthew Bourne and His Adventures in Dance: Conversations with Alistair Macaulay* by Alistair Macaulay and Matthew Bourne (Faber and Faber, 2011)

### Bertolt Brecht

- ▶ [http://www.theatredatabase.com/20th\\_century/bertolt\\_brecht\\_001.html](http://www.theatredatabase.com/20th_century/bertolt_brecht_001.html)
- ▶ *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (Eyre Methuen drama book)
- ▶ *Plays and Playwrights* by John Willett (Eyre Methuen Drama)
- ▶ *Bertolt Brecht: Chaos, according to Plan, Directors in Perspective* by John Fuegi (Cambridge University Press, 1987)

### Peter Brook

- ▶ *There Are No Secrets: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre* by Peter Brook (Methuen Drama, 2017)
- ▶ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Peter-Brook>
- ▶ <https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/interviews/2017/peter-brook-theatre-exists-present-cant-i>

### Christopher Bruce

- ▶ <http://www.rambert.org.uk/explore/rambert-voices/ghost-dances-bruce-1981/> (Bruce talking about his time at Rambert)
- ▶ Triple Bill DVD 2006, starring: Royal Danish Ballet Company
- ▶ <http://www.filmreference.com/film/19/Christopher-Bruce.html>

### Cirque du Soleil

- ▶ <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/user/cirquedusoleil>
- ▶ *Cirque du Soleil: The Mystery of Mystere* DVD, [www.imdb.com/title/tt3107608/](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3107608/)

### Complicite

- ▶ *Complicite - Three Plays: Street of Crocodiles / Mnemonic / Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* (Methuen Modern Plays) by Simon McBurney (Methuen Drama, 2004)
- ▶ <http://www.complicite.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.ft.com/content/6afb60-c14c-11e2-9767-00144feab7de>

**DV8**

- ▶ <https://www.dv8.co.uk>
- ▶ DV8 Physical Theatre – Can We Talk About This? – YouTube
- ▶ <https://theatreanddance.britishcouncil.org/artists-and-companies/d/dv8-physical-theatre/>

**Bob Fosse**

- ▶ *All His Jazz: The Life and Death of Bob Fosse* by Martin Gottfried (Bantam Books, 1990)
- ▶ <https://www.biography.com/people/bob-fosse-9299517>
- ▶ <http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2017decfeb/fosse.html>

**Frantic Assembly**

- ▶ [www.franticassembly.co.uk](http://www.franticassembly.co.uk)
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUqZPfGIX6U>
- ▶ *The Frantic Assembly Book of Devising Theatre* (1st edition) by Scott Graham, Steven Hoggett (Routledge, 2009)

**Martha Graham**

- ▶ *Martha Graham: The Evolution of Her Dance Theory and Training* by Marian Horosko (University Press of Florida, 2002)
- ▶ *Martha Graham: Blood Memory: An Autobiography* by Martha Graham. (Macmillan, 1992)
- ▶ <http://www.marthagraham.org/>

**Akram Khan**

- ▶ *Akram Khan: Homeland – The Making of Desh* [DVD]
- ▶ *Akram Khan (Actor, Director)*, Studio: Drakes Avenue (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)
- ▶ *Akram Khan's Rush* by Lorna Sanders (2012-08-01)

**Kneehigh**

- ▶ *British Theatre Companies: 1995–2014: Mind the Gap, Kneehigh Theatre, Suspect Culture, Stan's Cafe, Blast Theory, Punchdrunk* (*British Theatre Companies: From Fringe to Mainstream*) by Liz Tomlin (Methuen Drama, 2015)
- ▶ *Kneehigh Anthology: Volume 1: The Bacchae, The Wooden Frock, The Red Shoes* by Emma Rice and Tom Morris (Oberon Modern Plays)
- ▶ *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* by Kneehigh and Daniel Jamieson (Oberon Modern Plays)
- ▶ *British Theatre Companies: 1995–2014: Mind the Gap, Kneehigh Theatre, Suspect Culture, Stan's Cafe, Blast Theory, Punchdrunk* (*British Theatre Companies: From Fringe to Mainstream*) by Liz Tomlin (Methuen Drama, 2015)

**Joan Littlewood**

- ▶ *Joan Littlewood's Theatre* (Cambridge Studies in Modern Theatre) by Nadine Holdsworth
- ▶ *Joan's Book: The Autobiography of Joan Littlewood* by Joan Littlewood and Philip Hedley
- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/feb/17/oh-what-a-lovely-war-stratford-east>

**Andrew Lloyd Webber**

- ▶ *Unmasked* by Andrew Lloyd Webber (HarperCollins, 2018)
- ▶ *Andrew Lloyd Webber – Unmasked: The Platinum Collection*, Hal Leonard, 2018
- ▶ <https://www.andrewlloydwebber.com/>

**Katie Mitchell**

- ▶ *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* by Katie Mitchell and Nicholas Hytner (Routledge, 2009)
- ▶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/arts/music/katie-mitchell-opera-lessons-in-love-and-violence.html>
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAij9r9RvFO>

**Punchdrunk**

- ▶ <https://www.punchdrunk.com/>
- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/sep/05/punchdrunk-stage-six-hour-theatre-show-audiences-two-kabeiroi>
- ▶ See also above under 'Kneehigh'

**Stephen Sondheim**

- ▶ *Stephen Sondheim and the Reinvention of the American Musical* by Robert L. McLaughlin (University Press of Mississippi, 2016)
- ▶ *The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies* (Oxford Handbooks) by Robert Gordon (Oxford University Press, 2014)
- ▶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/16/t-magazine/lin-manuel-miranda-stephen-sondheim.html>

**Stanislavski**

- ▶ *The Complete Stanislavsky Toolkit* by Bella Merlin (Nick Hern Books, 2014)
- ▶ *An Actor Prepares* by Constantin Stanislavski (Aristophanes Press, June 2015)
- ▶ *Stanislavski in Practice* by Nick O'Brien (Routledge, 2010)

(Check the Pearson website for updates in case the list changes over time.)

## Scheme of work overview

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This scheme is based on three 1-hour lessons a week plus independent study throughout Year 12, but can be adapted to suit the needs of the centre and the pathway chosen. Two lessons are delivered by the department.

A third lesson should be set up in the Learning Resource Centre where learners register and carry out research with support on hand. This means that staff can aid them in finding resources and learning how to search catalogues, for example. If there is an area with computers and head phones then learners can watch online films, workshops and interviews relevant to their two practitioners. There is a lot of independent learning in this unit. Any supervision which can be offered would be useful. A system of one to one tutorials would help ensure learners are on track with their research and preparation.

If the centre has Digital Theatre Plus access for the learners, then they can watch productions of the practitioners' repertoire and supporting interviews as well as accessing other online resources.

### Recording research/writing a bibliography

There are various ways to record the research so that staff can check that learners are working appropriately towards the external assessment.

Learners can work in A4 or A3 sketch books, printing resources and annotating them. They might use A4 folders or online folders to which staff should have access. Notebooks and blogs could also be used.

### Evaluating sources

Staff should check on at least a weekly basis that learners are on track with their research. One way of doing this is by asking them to write down each source of research and then write brief notes on what was learned from the source. **(C1 The application of critical analysis skills.)** This can be done in a chart. The notes can then be expanded in the learner's folder. This method ensures that the learner is working towards their bibliography each week. Web addresses must also be recorded.

## Week 1

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### A1 Investigation Process

The unit is introduced and the external assessment is explained. A week-by-week schedule should be given to the students as hard copy or online so that they have tasks to complete each week.

Divide class into small groups of learners and ask them to discuss the following to see if they can come up with definitions and examples of each of the key terms:

- ▶ A practitioner
- ▶ A contextual factor
- ▶ Repertoire
- ▶ Creative work

Groups feedback in a plenary and then definitions are agreed with tutor leading. Definitions are written on the board/shown on a screen so the whole class can see and note them down.

Look at the examples of practitioners given by the class and see if any are on the list above. Suggest one practitioner from the list for each learner and set a short research task where they have to find out:

1. Place and date of birth
2. Place and date of death
3. Four facts about the practitioner's family
4. Three pieces of work by the practitioner
5. Three facts about their education
6. Three facts about the historical era they lived through

7. At least two other people with whom they worked creatively
8. Themes in their work
9. Three relevant images
10. Conclusive statement about the contribution of this practitioner to the world of performing arts.

You could complete the task on a practitioner as an example.

### Creating the bibliography

The learner must record the sources for the research giving all appropriate details, e.g. title of book, name of author, publisher, place and date of publication, page numbers if relevant

Learners should complete a table for this task where they detail the sources in the left hand side column and then describe/evaluate the source in the right hand side column. **(C1 The application of critical analysis skills.)**

Set some rules for the learners to follow at this stage to ensure good practice. And prepare properly for the written assessment:

1. Learners must use *at least two books, two articles from magazines and three websites*. These must be entered on the *source table*.
2. Learners must not rely on Wikipedia.
3. Learners must not plagiarise.
4. Learners must refer to sources through direct reference and by quotation.
5. Sources should be numbered.
6. The research task should be started in the LRC session with the help of library staff.
7. The writing up of the research should be completed in the learner's online folder if possible and then shared with the class in the following week. A PowerPoint slideshow would be appropriate for the presentation.
8. Learners must evaluate their process. What were their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out this task? What problems did they encounter and how did they solve them? What did they find particularly challenging? How reliable were the sources? **(C1 The application of critical analysis skills.)**

## Week 2

### A1 Investigation Process: primary and secondary sources

Before the learners present their findings, explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. At the end of each presentation (can be a PowerPoint slideshow) the learner should have listed the sources. Ask the class to divide them into primary and secondary.

For this type of investigation the *primary sources* would be live performance, interviews and surveys.

The *secondary sources* would be articles and case studies about the practitioner and his work. These might be digital, recorded on TV, podcasts, web based, print, and archives. Books and articles on the practitioner's key theories would come under secondary sources.

Use a bibliography for your own sample practitioner to demonstrate some of these sources. The National Resource Centre for Dance has useful fact files on major dance practitioners. There are bibliographies on practitioners that you can buy. You will need some hard copies to show the class. It would be worth investing in these for the choreographers on the list. Try to ensure that key books are in the centre's library for student use. Maybe these should be reference copies so that learners cannot take them home.

## Week 3

### A1 Investigation process – selecting relevant material and employing different formats for recording information

When the learners present their findings and evaluations, questions will arise about how to select information, and this is the part of research they will probably find daunting. Bring in some books and resource booklets on various practitioners and share them round the class. Give them a list of details to research such as the major works (repertoire) of the practitioner, their biographical details, the historical era they lived through, key events which might have impacted on their work and their key theories or approaches to work.

Let them work in pairs and give them 30 minutes to locate the information.

They must write down the pages numbers where they found each piece of information. After 15 minutes ask them to feedback to the class, not the information itself, but how they located it. They should be able to discuss the contents/chapters in the book/resource booklet and the index. There might be a glossary they used.

In the LRC session, learners should repeat the task but for a different practitioner and complete it independently rather than with a partner. The findings should be written up and saved in the online folder. Comments should be included about books that were selected for the task and which were rejected, and why.

In the third lesson extracts of some of the practitioner's work could be viewed on YouTube. Again use your practitioner as an example. Discuss the problems with relying too heavily on YouTube for viewing performance work. Ask learners to look back at the list of works for each practitioner they researched and try to find the complete work on YouTube. If the complete work is not available where will they look next? Will they have to buy the work on a DVD? Are the DVDs in the LRC? Invest some money in providing a selection of key works for the practitioners and put these on reference-only loan so that learners can access them in the LRC but not take them home.

### Employing different formats for recording information

Each learner will have their own preference, but while watching and analysing performance work, they could use a journal or notebook rather than a phone. Learners often seem reluctant to watch an entire film so you might have to set some time aside for viewing films of works. You could do this by week, e.g. Fosse week – watch *Chicago*, *Cabaret* and *Sweet Charity*; Bourne week – watch *Swan Lake*, *Nutcracker!*, *Car Man* and *Sleeping Beauty*. You might have a good resource bank at your centre and can share the resources. Some old style VHS tapes and a VHS player might be lurking in a cupboard and now is the time to bring out those old VHS tapes as some works are no longer available or not on DVD, YouTube, Vimeo or Amazon. Some centres will still have the equipment for transferring VHS tapes to DVDs. This is permissible if the VHS tape is of a television recording.

With the help of the class aim to produce a chart with the practitioners in the left-hand column and the works available in the right hand column. Use details for location, e.g. *Chicago* DVD in LRC.

## Week 4

### A1 Investigation process – documenting research sources

Learners will have seen how to set out a bibliography, but might be unsure of how to reference a work in their written assessment. The task set for the external assessment will focus on themes so the learner can be researching these for each practitioner.

This week they are asked to look at the theme of 'fame and celebrity' in Matthew Bourne's work. You might show clips from *Swan Lake* and *Dorian Grey*. In *Swan Lake* the main characters who are famous are the royal family but 'The Girlfriend' dressed in pink acts like a celebrity who has no style and no knowledge of theatre etiquette. In *Dorian Gray*, there are scenes with Dorian and the photographers which emphasise Dorian's celebrity status.

Give the learners a handful of articles/reviews/books written on these works and ask them to find comments about the theme of celebrity.

### Sources

These can be presented in class and discussed. This could be a small group or pair task. The learners appoint a spokesperson to feedback on what was found in the articles. They should quote from the article. They must state the title of the article, the name of the publication, the place and date of the publication, the name of the author/journalist. Once all the learners have presented, set the written task which should be completed independently and uploaded to the online folder:

#### **How does Matthew Bourne present the theme of celebrity in his work?**

Explain how to use footnotes and numbering sources. Give some examples of direct referencing and using quotations with correct citations. You might use the Lead Examiner's reports to show how important this is. Show the assessment objectives on the external assessment mark scheme to demonstrate what learners need to do to get marks in the highest band.

Look through the list of practitioners to see if others deal with this theme.

## Weeks 5–10

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### **B Relationship between contextual factors, creative intentions and themes**

In order to illustrate how to research how contextual factors influence a practitioner's work, look at the life and work of a selection of practitioners and make a PowerPoint for each practitioner. Learners should work in pairs and cover two practitioners. The influence of the following factors should be addressed. (These are taken from the specification cited above and learners should revisit the specification for more detail on each factor.)

- ▶ historical factors:
- ▶ cultural factors:
- ▶ economic factors:
- ▶ political factors:
- ▶ technical factors:
- ▶ social factors:
- ▶ geographical and physical factors:
- ▶ The influences from other practitioners and performers.
- ▶ The influences from education, teachers and mentors.

The PowerPoint should contain images and video clips and be presented formally to the class. There should be an extensive bibliography at the end. Allow several lessons for the presentations but try to keep them to a duration of 15 minutes each. Learners should submit their PP slideshow, cue cards and supporting documentation/research folder to the member of staff for checking and feedback.

## Week 11

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Presentations.

## Week 12

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### **B2 Creative intentions and themes**

A collaborative group task is set up where learners use their presentations and research to make a chart showing all the themes of all the selected practitioners. Teachers may input their own knowledge and expertise. Use this week to research themes across the practitioners' works. Themes might be:

- ▶ War and conflict
- ▶ Love – unrequited and fulfilled
- ▶ Romance
- ▶ Family relationships
- ▶ Decadence
- ▶ Rebellion
- ▶ Power
- ▶ Deprivation
- ▶ Corruption
- ▶ Ambition
- ▶ Identity
- ▶ Abuse
- ▶ Justice
- ▶ Revenge.

## Weeks 13–15

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Learners work independently on their two chosen practitioners and make notes on creative intentions and themes using the following as a framework. These are taken from the specification cited above.

### **Creative intentions and themes:**

- ▶ Exploration of themes in the work and how they are communicated, such as war, morality, romance.
- ▶ Use of creative ideas and intentions.
- ▶ Genre of the work(s).
- ▶ Target audiences and intended effect.
- ▶ Contextual influences on the work.
- ▶ How practitioners' work has influenced others.

- ▶ Collaboration with other practitioners in the performing arts and/or other areas.
- ▶ Public and critical responses to their work.

It is clear from the framework that learners will need to read lots of reviews, articles and interviews about the practitioners' work and creative process. The points in the framework should be discussed in class to ensure the learners understand what each means, where to research them and how to address them in written work

## Weeks 16–20

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### **C Critical analysis of the work of performing arts practitioners**

#### **C1 The application of critical analysis skills**

##### **Preparation**

Learners should prepare to write a 2000 word essay in a 3 hour period which may be tackled in two 90 minute blocks or however the centre sees fit. It must be supervised.

Learners should gather their research and select what they deem relevant and reliable. They should explore different perspectives on the practitioners' work. They should have evaluated their sources and put this information in a table.

Now they should compare the work with that of other practitioners and see if they can do more investigation.

#### **C2 How performance styles and methods that characterise practitioner work are used to create and communicate meaning and style**

Learners will look at their research and the texts they have chosen to analyse. Live work should be analysed in small sections. For example, in dance learners might take 8 counts at a time and work out the motifs and phrases used. They can comment on the actions, space and dynamics employed. The physical and aural settings can be analysed and the number, gender, physique and role of the dancers. Images from live performances can be annotated to help analysis. With musical theatre pieces, the lyrics can be annotated with movement details.

Learners should be analysing how aspects of performance such as pace, musicality, vocal delivery, spatial awareness, timing, characterisation, physicality, gesture and contact work.

Learners should analyse the relationship between the performer and the performance space, the aural setting, the physical setting, the audience and other performers.

Aspects such as make-up, hair, costume, lighting, use of multi-media, genre, style should be analysed while looking at the text, the choreography and the score.

## Weeks 21–24

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The TASK is set and the learners start to explore the theme which Pearson have set. Two practitioners are chosen which seem appropriate for the theme. The teacher should spend a lesson with the learners explaining the wording of the task. Learners carry out their research and prepare their 4 pages of notes and bibliography to take into the external assessment. They have to meet the two following assessment outcomes taken from the specification cited above.

### **D Be able to present the conclusions and independent judgements through effective investigation**

#### **D1 Summarise key information to support independent judgements**

See the specification for the details.

## Week 25

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Supervised assessment.