



United College Sixth Form

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STEPPING INTO 6TH FORM

Drama

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Course Overview

The performing arts are a major part of the creative and cultural industries in the UK. Overall, the industry contributes approximately £4 billion to the UK economy and is a major employer. The UK's performing arts sector is vibrant, varied and hugely successful. It is a growth industry that offers diverse employment opportunities, for example in dance, drama, music, theatre, film, puppetry, costume design, directing, set design, makeup or special effects, as well as in the support functions and roles that bring these art forms to the fore.

Who is this qualification for?

The Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Performing Arts is intended to be an Applied General qualification for post-16 students who want to continue their education through applied learning and who aim to progress to higher education, and ultimately to employment, possibly in the performing arts sector. The qualification is equivalent in size to 2 A Levels, and it has been designed as part of a two year programme, normally alongside a further Level 3 qualification.

Students wishing to take this BTEC will have successfully completed a Level 2 programme of learning, with GCSEs or vocational learning.

What does the qualification cover?

The content of this qualification has been developed in consultation with academics to ensure that it supports progression to higher education. In addition, employers and professional bodies have been involved and consulted in order to confirm that the content is also appropriate and consistent with current practice. Students will study six mandatory units, covering the following:

- Investigating Practitioners' Work
 - Group Performance Workshop
 - Individual Performance Commission
 - Developing Skills and Techniques for Live Performance
 - Performing Arts in the Community
 - Final Live Performance to an Audience.

Students choose two optional units, which have been designed to support progression to the range of sector related courses in HE, and also to link with relevant occupational areas. The optional units cover content areas such as:

- acting
- dance
- musical theatre.

This qualification enables students to acquire substantial cross-sector knowledge, as well as practical skills.

Unit One: Investigating Practitioner's Work

In year 12 you will need to gain an understanding the contextual factors that have influenced and informed the work of performing arts practitioners and how this has an important role in developing your own professional practice and understanding of features, such as response to a theme, performance styles, genre and purpose. A personal evaluation of the work is important; judgements need to be based on effective research and secure critical analysis.

In this unit, you will develop skills that allow you to investigate the work of influential performing arts practitioners. You will identify the contextual factors that influence their work and critically analyse key information, such as creative intentions, performance, production and repertoire in order to develop and communicate independent judgements. To complete the assessment tasks within this unit, you will need to draw on your learning from across your programme.

This unit will give you skills in research, critical analysis and extended writing that will support your progress to higher education. As a performing arts practitioner you will need to have a good understanding of the work of influential practitioners to inform your own work and professional practice.

Summer Project:

For your Unit One you must have excellent knowledge of at least two practitioners. Choose, and then produce, detailed research on two practitioners from the list below:

1. **Gecko Theatre Company**
2. **Bertolt Brecht**
3. **Frantic Assembly**
4. **DV8**
5. **Steven Berkoff**
6. **Emma Rice**
7. **Alecky Blythe**



When researching you need to consider many different sources of information where you can access facts on the practitioner, their biography, their body of work and different perspectives on the work they have generated.

1. **Find their specific websites- for example: [Gecko \(geckotheatre.com\)](http://geckotheatre.com)**
2. **Read interviews from newspapers, magazines and theatre critique reviews**
3. **Look on Twitter**
4. **Watch live performances or look for their Youtube channel**
5. **Read academic essays, journals and blogs**
6. **Have a look at the BBC Iplayer archive**

Make sure you keep a list of all of the websites you visit for your bibliography.

Find information on the following:

- 1. The influence of historical factors, to include:**
 - o key events, epoch or major shifts and changes in society
 - o practitioner's personal history and experience.
- 2. The influence of cultural factors, to include:**
 - o traditions and practices within the arts, community or religion o other art forms, cultural trends and styles.
- 3. The influence of economic factors, to include:**
 - o reactions to or statements about the impact of economic factors on people o funding conditions for performing arts or the financial status of the practitioner.
- 4. The influence of political factors, to include:**
 - o relationship to establishment, supporting or undermining
 - o laws, propaganda, legal rights, censorship, equality and diversity.
- 5. The influence of technological factors, to include:**
 - o latest developments in technology and opportunities for the use of technology in productions o any type of impact of technology on people, behaviour or society.
- 6. The influence of social factors, to include:**
 - o values, morals, social conventions and audience expectations
 - o changes in social attitudes, media influences and external pressures, issues of equality, diversity and representation.
- 7. The influence of geographical and physical factors, to include:**
 - o relationship to the environment, geography or location
 - o conventions and innovation in the use of space, venues and physical characteristics of spaces.
- 8. The influence from others, to include:**
 - o the influence of their education from teachers, mentors or peers
 - o collaboration with others or whether practitioners were part of a movement.
- 9. Creative intentions and themes within their shows**
 - 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.

Below is one you can use as an example I have done on The Paper Birds:



The Paper Birds
Theatre Company



The Paper Birds Theatre Company

Historical Events at the time the company was created:

2001: 9/11 and the twin towers terrorist attack

2002: London Tube bombing

Formed in 2003 upon graduation from Bretton Hall, The Paper Birds was founded upon friendship and a mutual love of contemporary theatre, movement, and a desire to make work that placed female roles centre stage.

2004: Massive tsunami in December – killed thousands. Face book is launched. Ladette culture created.

2005: Youtube was founded. IRA Ends armed conflict.

2006: Google buys Youtube, North Korea tests nuclear weapons.

2007: iphone announced, Gordon Brown becomes new Prime minister- New Labour – education reforms

2008: Hadron Collider created.

2009: Financial crisis. Russia shuts off oil supply. Swine flu happens. Barack Obama is inaugurated. Michael Jackson dies.

2010: Hung parliament. Conservative and Lib Dems join to form a coalition.

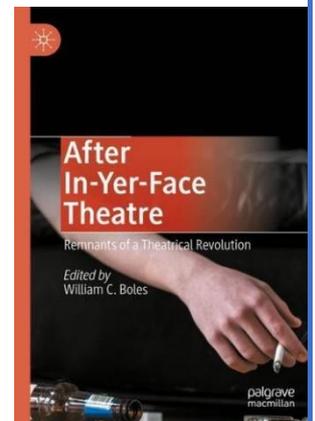
2011: London riots.

The influence of cultural factors, to include:

- Verbatim theatre
- Use of technology
- Devised theatre- Moving away from traditional scripted performance
- Site specific theatre/ Promenade/ Community Theatre/ Bringing theatre into schools

'In yer face' theatre of the 1990s influenced by serious crimes that affected society: Stephen Daldry and the murder of James Balger. Moving away from theatre purely as entertainment but artists wanted to created pieces that truly affected their audiences.

Feminism in theatre and Caryl Churchill, a feminist writer, had a profound affect on the Paper Birds. Plays like Vinegar Tom, Cloud Nine and Top Girls. Her plays are shocking and intelligent using Brechtian techniques to communicate political messages to the audience.



The influence of economic factors, to include:

Not only were the paper birds born into a conservative government where Margaret Thatcher took the funding away from much of the arts, instigating closures of theatres around the country. They also trained in a northern drama college where pit closures, also a Conservative policy, has affected the surrounding communities. In 2008 the recession further impacted the production of new theatre and so The Paper Birds focused more on the power of theatre to make changes within schools and as a touring theatre company. The fixed, more mainstream theatres are likely to be more influenced by financial gains acting as tourist entertainers in London's West End or Stratford's RSC.

*A scene from
'Broke' in 2014
where the
company explored
debt and poverty*



The influence of political factors, to include:

'Our artistic policy states: 'The Paper Birds strive to create and share devised work that is important; work that is culturally, socially and politically observational and conversationally urgent.' And it is this statement that underpins all of our work – we want to make work that is about something, we don't make work for the sake of making work. We want to evoke discussion and create debate. Naturally, we have found that the topics we want to raise into discussion have a political slant, whether that be about ageing (On the One Hand, 2013), booze Britain (Thirsty, 2011), human trafficking (In a Thousand Pieces, 2008) or debt and poverty (Broke, 2014). We aim to make people whose voices wouldn't ordinarily be heard on our stages speak loudly and clearly. We understand that we harbour a powerful tool as theatre artists, and that we can use our voice for the greater good.'



Grace Savage in Blind (2014)

The influence of technological factors:

Noises off: Will social media change the face of theatre?

Bloggers battle over the best way to bring theatre to an internet audience - and how to create 'liveness' online



Also available online ... National Theatre Wales' The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning.
Photograph: Farrow's Creative/National Theatre Wales

Brace yourselves. Things are about to take a turn for the meta. Theatre bloggers have been discussing theatre as it exists on the internet. So that's an online writer writing about online writing about online theatre. Got that? Good.

Broadly speaking, theatre exists in two forms online. There's theatre as digital content - live broadcasts, online video and so on - and there's digital content related to theatre, like marketing or education tools.

The first, as regular readers will know by now, is all about liveness. At Whatsonstage.com, Honour Bayes reckons there's still a division over this. "Non-believers feel the very nature of what they love is being eroded," she writes, "whilst believers think this is an exciting way to find new converts to the cause." Strangely, the way she puts it reduces such content to marketing - in this formulation live broadcasts merely function as gateways, attempts to seduce new audiences into theatres, rather than things that have intrinsic artistic merit.

Common Themes

Every show we make at The Paper Birds has its own demands; the set design, atmosphere and content; but here is a 'checklist' of things that we often incorporate to help you shape your own lighting design.

- We create atmospheres on stage - theatricality is important to us - we believe the way the stage looks is as important as what is being said. Focus on creating beautiful imagery—light plays a huge role.
- BUT we also contrast magical moments with stark washes - this might be when we are talking to the audience, or breaking the action. In many ways having moments of bright stark light, means that when the atmospheric moments creep in, they are all the more beautiful.
- Practically, there are lots of things we need to cater for - we need to be lit evenly across the stage, so good coverage is required. We use a lot of AV design on screens, so we need to position lights carefully not to drown these out. We use a lot of back and side light to pick out movement. We isolate different spaces or playing 'zones', these might relate to one character, or set. And there are often 'specials' rigged that have just one specific job—e.g. to pick out a block or a microphone stand downstage.
- We rarely focus hard edged lights. We use frost in spotlights (profiles) to soften the edges. But placing frost makes the spotlight bigger as it diffuses the light—so we often need to put in an iris to make the beam smaller.
- General cover / washes are usually created using Fresnel's. These are cut in around the playing space with the barn doors.
- We use long, slow transitions or fades between states - our default setting on the lighting board is usually about 10 seconds. If we do use a quick 'snap' transition, it's normally for a specific reason, like for example, an actor has stopped the action and cut a scene short.
- In our most recent shows we have started to use moving lights to pick out or isolate areas of the stage, but for our past body of work, we often stayed away from these as we didn't have the budget to tour our own.
- We use the QLab programme to plot in our whole show - we pay for a licence to run lights, sound and AV all in one plot. This is connected to an ETC lighting desk. But when we run small scale touring projects, we have also used a free lighting programme called LX Console that allows DMX connection from the dimmers to USB on the computer.



Media and The Television

As well as the 'characters' that appear as different household objects, the TV is a recurring strand that appears at intervals throughout the play. It is here that common media representations of class, of success, and of the political agenda relating to social mobility are explored through separate strands.

- The TV is introduced; it switches through channels and different politicians and their promotion of social mobility. Nick Clegg, former leader of the Liberal Democrats famously promoted a fair and just society where everyone is free to prosper, one of his crucial speeches is played out here. This segment is to set the tone and convention for the TV strand throughout.
- Winning and instant success; the TV begins to chart famous representations of instant 'rags to riches' stories. The reality TV generation has created many instant stars that have been plummeted to fame and fortune. The sentiment here is that TV shows such as X Factor have enabled society to develop an ideology that believes in celebrity success and rejects the notion that in order to be successful and rise up the social ladder you need to work hard.

The influence of social factors:

1. Radicalization of different groups, whether it was BNP and other far right movements, or radicalization of European nationals. Over the course of the past decade, "radicalization" has become prevalent and is used to explain the phenomena of political violence. The concept rose to prominence in the wake of so-called "home-grown" terrorism in Western countries [Neumann 2008: 3; Sedwick 2010: 480; Kudnani 2012: 4-7; Schmid 2013: 1; Crone and Harrow 2011: 522-524; Crone 2016: 589]. Researchers, policy-makers, and the public had to come to terms with the fact that the perpetrators

of these atrocities were young men, and women, who had been born and brought up in Europe, which meant that jihadist terrorism could no longer be conceived of as an “external” threat.

2. The #Metoo movement was a social movement against sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and rape culture, in which people publicize their experiences of sexual abuse or sexual harassment. Initially began in 2006 but was re-ignited in 2017 after the Harvey Weinstein case and as other prolific sexual predators in the film and television industries emerged.
3. LGBTQIA+ movement with gender norms being debated and analysed.
4. The rise of social media which has created a society overly preoccupied with visual representations of what some consider the perfect ‘lifestyle, life and appearance’. This had led to a wave of young people with body dysmorphic issues, low self esteem and an unhealthy perception of what is considered ‘normal’. This has also led to a rise in the use of cosmetic surgery and diet products upheld advertised by social media influencers.
5. Cancel Culture
6. Trolling
7. Black Lives Matter
8. Social Class

The sociologists said these two groups at the extremes of the class system had been missed in conventional approaches to class analysis, which have focused on the middle and working classes.

Professor of sociology at Manchester University, Fiona Devine, said the survey really gave a sense of class in 21st Century Britain.

“The survey has really allowed us to drill down and get a much more complete picture of class in modern Britain. What it allows us to understand is a more sophisticated, nuanced picture of what class is like now. It shows us there is still a top and a bottom, at the top we still have an elite of very wealthy people and at the bottom the poor, with very little social and cultural engagement. It’s what’s in the middle which is really interesting and exciting, there’s a much more fuzzy area between the traditional working class and traditional middle class. There’s the emergent workers and the new affluent workers who are different groups of people who won’t necessarily see themselves as working or middle class.”

The researchers also found the established middle class made up 25% of the population and was the largest of all the class groups, with the traditional working class now only making up 14% of the population. They say the new affluent workers and emergent service workers appear to be the children of the “traditional working class,” which they say has been fragmented by de-industrialisation, mass unemployment, immigration and the restructuring of urban space.

Measuring Social Mobility

Social mobility is the movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between social strata in a society. It is a change in social status relative to others’ social location within a given society.



Both academics and government measure ‘social mobility’ in a variety of ways: academics can’t agree on whether social mobility has declined or remained the same over the last fifty years and whether Britain’s mobility is average or poor compared to other developing countries. Government measurements often compare the performance of children eligible for free school meals with their peers – a measure limited in how much it truly indicates a child’s ‘disadvantage’. The traditional model of measuring social mobility has been confined to analysing statistics; income, growth, employment and education. Yet the research used within *Mobile* compiled by Friedman is unique in that it examines not only the statistical factors of the subject’s mobility, but also the emotional impact too. For further reading about Friedman and The Great British Class Survey see ‘Social Class in the 21st Century’ by Mike Savage.

To the left is part of the research the Paper Birds have done into social mobility. Their piece titled: ‘Mobile’ in 2016 and explores Britain’s class system in an intimate venue of a caravan.

The influence of geographical and physical factors, to include:



Background

The idea for *Mobile* was first conceived when The Paper Birds were approached by sociologist Dr Sam Friedman from the London School of Economics who mentioned that his research into social mobility was rich with interesting stories.

As a follower of The Paper Birds' work, Friedman understood that their productions were often political and concerned with social observations about modern Britain and often used verbatim material. Throughout his own research and studies, Friedman had conducted many interviews with many different subjects about their upward mobility in social structures and was willing to share these transcripts for use as verbatim material from which to develop a performance. Artistic Director Jemma Mc Donnell began to develop an idea to use Friedman's research in a site-specific performance based in a caravan. The caravan presented

many connotations about class, and the allure of developing a performance in such a small intimate space was an exciting and challenging prospect for The Paper Birds to tackle.

The company sought partners to be able to develop the project; it was co-commissioned by the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury and Live Theatre, Newcastle. Regular collaborators The Media Workshop were also commissioned to work alongside The Paper Birds in the development of the technical aspects of the show, and a composer and set designer were also recruited for the project.

The second instalment in the Class Trilogy, *Mobile* follows 2014's *Broke*, which was a small scale studio show; a physical and visual exploration of debt, poverty and the economy in modern Britain. *Broke* was also a verbatim production that utilised real people's voices and accounts from interviews the company conducted relating to people's finances and outlook on the economy.



Designer Fiammetta Horvat mid set-build (2011)

Why did you set it in toilet cubicles?

The idea for the set came about very early on in a discussion with designer Fiammetta Horvat about water – we intended to use water as a recurring motif throughout the piece, to represent alcohol and to accentuate the movement of 'being drunk'. The bathroom setting allowed us to push that strand further. The white tiles were able to create a blank canvas and able to transcend lots of different locations.

The connotations surrounding public toilet stalls in bars also came into play; we liked the nod to 'girls going to the toilet in pairs', as well as our experiences of what the atmosphere is like in the girls toilets on a night out – it's a safe place where girls can check in with each other and re-do their hair and make-up, as well as the more negative connotation of being sick or falling asleep in the cubicle.

Review of 'Mobile': Reviewer: Ron Simpson

An audience of up to eight people sits in a conventionally comfortable caravan while the rain beats on the roof (at least it did on the first night in Harrogate) and a pleasantly chatty young woman hands round biscuits and talks discursively about her mother and her upbringing.

She turns the television on to show a series of extracts to do with aspirations and equal opportunities, then the whole caravan comes alive for a 40-minute presentation on class and social mobility – the title, *Mobile*, puns on the mobile home and social mobility. The young woman whose name turns out to be Cindy (played at this performance with earnest naturalness by Shona Cowie) tells of the need to get away from her home streets and the pain that causes her mother, but often she just sits there reading a book or working at her desk as other testimonies reveal themselves.

Extracts from interviews carried out by Dr. Sam Friedman burst out from kitchen utensils; shelves open up to show Cindy's home street; the window of the caravan lights up to represent outer space (a desire to be an astronaut was one of her earliest ambitions); the caravan seems to rock into forward motion, as the receding site appears through the windows.

As a piece of immersive theatre *Mobile* is fascinating and at the end, in Cindy's last speech, personally moving. The effects conjured up by The Media Workshop are often astonishing. The Paper Birds' claims for their political agenda ("taking big socio-political subjects") may be a little overstated – the medium is more exciting than the message – but *Mobile* is undoubtedly a unique and stimulating piece of theatre.

At the end of a long tour, The Paper Birds have landed next to Harrogate's Royal Hall for four days, with as many as ten performances some days. The programme lists three actors alternating as Cindy, with Olivia Birchenough and Georgie Coles sharing the role with Cowie.

The influence from others, to include:

In Depth: Influences & Practitioners

- Artistic Director Jemma McDonnell cites Theatre de Complicite and Director Simon McBurney as a key influence, as well as the work of German choreographer Pina Bausch.
- The process of many postmodern artists such as Robert Wilson, Forced Entertainment and The Wooster Group influenced The Paper Birds early practice. Today, the company are influenced by their peers and other artists. These may include Gecko, Lone Twin, Chris Thorpe, Kirsty Housley, Ontroerond Goed.
- There are many conventions of Bertolt Brecht's theatre that are resonant with The Paper Birds work; political themes, alienation effects, and breaking the fourth wall.



Bibliography:

[Noises off: Will social media change the face of theatre? | Theatre | The Guardian](#)
[WEB-EDITION THIRSTY Student-Resource-Pack.pdf](#)
[On-Lighting-THE-PAPER-BIRDS.pdf](#)
[Free Resources - The Paper Birds : The Paper Birds](#)
[Mobile – Harrogate Theatre - The Reviews Hub](#)

Now its your turn...

Finally, A Theatre Review



Your access details are:

Login: <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/custom-browse?docid=nationalTheatreCollection>

Username: NN132B

Password: AG567U

You will have an opportunity to study and perform a Shakespeare play and so to prepare I would like you to log onto the National Theatre Online Library, choose a Shakespeare play and write a review on it answering one of the following questions:

Analyse and evaluate your chosen character's vocal and physical performance in two or more scenes.

Choose two characters and analyse how they interacted in two or more scenes?

How did your chosen performer present Elizabethan performance skills in two or more scenes?

Useful websites:

National Theatre resources: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning>

A brilliant website exploring careers in theatre: <https://getintothetheatre.org/>

Frantic Assembly's resources website: <https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/resources>

Royal Shakespeare Company's resources website: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/education/teacher-resources/>

A Backstage tour of the Lowry Theatre: https://youtu.be/P-g3dPPf9_Y

Frantic Assembly: [Home](#) | [Frantic Assembly](#)