

TRINITY GUILDHALL

Written Papers - May 2006.

Chief Examiner's Report

This document contains some general reflections on the scripts submitted by candidates worldwide for Trinity Guildhall ATCL and LTCL/LGSM written papers in the May 2006 examination session as follows:

ATCL Principles of Teaching
LTCL/ LGSM Principles of Teaching
LTCL/ LGSMD Performing Speech and Drama
LTCL/ LGSMD Performing Musical Theatre (2 Papers)

These are intended to provide guidance for teachers and candidates which we hope may be of assistance in preparing for future examinations at these levels.

Past papers including those set for May 2006 have now been posted on our website www.trinitycollege.co.uk.

Two further documents, the examiners' "Guide to Grading Written Work at Diploma Level" and "How to Succeed in Your Written Drama Diploma Paper" are also posted on the website and may be of interest.

Statistics on distinction/ pass/ below pass levels are given when 12 or more candidates undertook a paper.

ATCL Principles of Teaching

Percentage distribution of results:

Below Pass:	20.8%	
Pass:	66.7%	
Distinction:	12.5%	(Highest mark achieved by a candidate: 80%)

This examination requires candidates to answer four questions, each carrying equal marks (25). Candidates are therefore strongly advised to devote an approximately equal amount of time to each question. In several cases it was clear that candidates had not managed their time efficiently and their last question was extremely brief or - in one case - not attempted. No matter how brilliant any one answer, it will still only attract a maximum of 25% of the total marks available.

Similarly candidates MUST observe the rubric of the exam: "answer two questions from Section 1 and one each from Sections 2 and 3". In this session there were two cases of candidates answering two questions from section 2 or 3. In each case only the highest-scoring answer contributed to the total mark. These candidates had effectively disqualified themselves from access to 25% of the marks.

NB: It is acceptable for candidates to provide certain information in the form of lists and/or bullet points AS LONG AS the reason for its inclusion is explained and lines of reasoning are clear.

The ATCL Principles of Teaching is only 90 minutes long, so candidates do not have a great deal of time for each question. It is therefore vital that they read the question carefully and identify EXACTLY WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING THEM. By far the majority of Below Pass marks are awarded to candidates who SIMPLY DO NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION. They may write at length - and knowledgably - about inter-costal diaphragmatic breathing, warm-up exercises, a production they have taken part in and so on - but if this information is irrelevant to the question they are wasting valuable time on writing material that will not gain them any credit. Answers need to be succinct, clear and above all RELEVANT.

For example, consider Section 1 Question 1: "What difficulties might a drama teacher encounter when working with an amateur theatre group"?

When discussing this question with the examiners who set this paper, we agreed that the most likely "difficulties" would generally arise in four areas:

- Establishing and meeting the specific needs of the group. (What areas do they require assistance on? Are they doing a production or is this a one-off workshop? A pre-prepared lesson that has worked before in a classroom may not be relevant to their needs).
- Working with a group of mixed age, gender, experience, ability - and possibly religious and cultural backgrounds too. (The teacher must create working practices that are appropriate and to which a disparate group will respond. Certain people may be deeply offended by an approach that others find highly stimulating. Young teachers may need to work hard to establish their credibility with older members of the group who may be resistant to their teaching methods - or indeed their very presence!)
- Working with a group with varying levels of commitment and availability. (Not all members of the group may be available or wish to attend all sessions. For many people drama is a hobby - they want to participate on their own terms, not to have schedules imposed on them. This is not like teaching a class where students *have* to attend).
- Working with limited budgets and resources and/or inappropriate premises. (There may be no funds available for teaching materials, scripts, props and so on. The group may require a movement workshop but the floor of the only available rehearsal room is solid concrete).

None of these are insoluble PROBLEMS. But they are difficulties of which a teacher would need to be aware and - as far as possible - anticipate before starting work.

Of course candidates may be able to envisage other difficulties in specific circumstances but in general IDENTIFYING these areas is ALL THAT THE QUESTION REQUIRES. The best answer written by a candidate consisted of six paragraphs: an introduction identifying these four general areas; a paragraph expanding on each one, giving some relevant examples; and a brief conclusion. Question answered. Distinction.

The question does NOT require the candidate to give lengthy explanations of HOW they would seek to deal with these difficulties. Some candidates wrote lengthy descriptions of sessions they would run ("I would get everybody to stand in a circle and introduce themselves..." "To warm up the group I would play a number of theatre games such as Fizz/Buzz. This involves everyone sitting in a circle..." etc etc).

Other candidates identified one single area of difficulty and then used this as an opportunity to write everything they knew about a particular topic. E.g.: "A difficulty might be that the members of the group had poor articulation. To improve this I would do the following: get everyone to lie on their backs... etc). Candidates should avoid preparing

answers and then shoe-horning them into the nearest question to which they look vaguely relevant.

NB: We are aware that in Australia the term "amateur" has slightly different connotations. However, these general points on answering the question still apply.

Further comments on specific questions follow:

Question 2a : "We chose your class because it sounded like less work than French." How would you deal with a group of unmotivated students aged 14-15 in your drama or theatre skills class?

The most successful candidates gave specific examples of work and exercises that they would do with students of this age. Several candidates devoted too much of their answers to saying WHY motivation was important and too little to HOW they would motivate a group. Several candidates did not apply their answer to the age range specified and described exercises that would be far more suitable for much younger students.

Question 2b: "Mum said I had to do drama stuff or sport and I don't like sport". The speaker is a boy whom you will teach as an individual pupil. What sort of things do you say and do in your first lesson with him?"

Only a few candidates attempted this question. Generally answers showed imagination and sound teaching methodologies. The best answers focused on identifying the pupil's own interests and needs and designing introductory work appropriately. Beware (here and elsewhere) of merely describing activities that you have done in the past with a specific student.

Question 3a: Young pupils often feel self-conscious about practicing 'out loud' at home. How can you help them?

Some interesting and valid answers were written. Less successful candidates focused on WHY self-consciousness needs to be overcome rather than offering practical suggestions for activities and exercises. Some of those that did do this tended to describe exercises far more suited to group work in the classroom (improvisation, theatre games etc) rather than "at home".

Question 3b: Explain to a group of parents the benefits of structured daily practice for their children (who are your pupils) and advise the parents on what they should and shouldn't try to help with.

The most successful candidates directed the answer directly to an imagined group parents - as the question requires. Some used second person address effectively. A candidate who was clearly running out of time gave an excellent answer in three sets of bullet points: the benefits of structured daily practice, parental "dos" and "don'ts", with a few explanatory notes on each. Less successful candidates tended to give more generalised comments about the benefits of practicing without focusing on "*structured daily practice*" as required.

Section 2: Question 1a: Discuss the benefits of EITHER improvisation OR theatre games as a teaching method for a group of your students.

The benefits might typically include: encouraging students to work together; developing creativity and co-operation; enhancing understanding of scripted drama by exploring and

developing characterisation; enhancing self-esteem; and letting the students have fun! The best answers showed a clear understanding of the importance of relating theory to classroom practice. Less successful candidates tended to centre on a single aspect of improvisation and described it at length - e.g.: several candidates wrote at length about Stanislavski- or Mike Leigh-inspired exercises as a means of devising drama - rather than "discussing the benefits" of improvisation more generally.

Question 2b: You have overheard one of the teenagers in your drama group say of a teacher "She's got a good ideas but she talks to much". How might too much teacher talk inhibit the quality of learning and progress of drama students?

Only attempted by a few candidates. Generally answers were well argued with useful examples given. Candidates were generally aware of the dangers implicit in denying the fact that people may learn in different ways and at different speeds.

Section 3: Question 1a: Describe the range of assessment procedures that you would ideally like to build into the drama or theatre arts courses you teach, together with the benefits your students would derive from them.

Note the word "ideally". The most successful candidates outlined the types and benefits of different types of assessment - self-assessment, diaries and workbooks, parental reports etc. Several less successful candidates wrote in extremely generalised terms of the benefits of drama as an activity for a child. In two such answers the word "assessment" did not even appear.

Question 1b: You have been asked to direct an end-of-year school production. What problems might you encounter in relationship with other members staff and in the use of school resources? How might you deal with these issues?

The most successful candidates demonstrated lateral thinking and presented pragmatic solutions to practical problems of timetabling, availability of rooms, sharing resources etc. These were far more appropriate responses to the question than lengthy explanations of the general benefits of school drama which some candidates hoped would win over their unsympathetic colleagues.

LTCL/ LGSM Principles of Teaching

Percentage distribution of results:

Below Pass:	33%	
Pass:	50%	
Distinction:	17%	(Highest mark achieved by 2 candidates: 78%)

This examination requires the candidate to answer 3 questions in 2 hours. Candidates therefore have roughly twice as long to answer each question as they do in the ATCL Principles of Teaching paper, and answers should reflect an appropriately advanced level of knowledge, analysis and application. There is no "minimum length" of answer required to gain a pass mark, but students should be aware that an essay of half a page - such as several students submitted - is hardly likely to provide the depth of response required at this level.

Many of the general comments on the ATCL Principles of Teaching paper apply to this examination too - particularly those on the need for candidates to organise their time, apply their knowledge effectively and above all TO ANSWER THE QUESTION.

The LTCL/LGSM paper is designed to allow candidates to demonstrate more fully their individual approach to teaching. The most successful answers convey a lively and informed sense of a candidate's experience and personality and show how this is reflected in his or her teaching methodologies. Candidates are typically asked to describe and evaluate their work from a personal perspective: "How might *you* use the text..."; "In *your opinion*..."; "Describe how *you* would structure...". At Licentiate level we are less concerned with you trying to tell us everything you know; rather we hope you will take the opportunity to SHOW US WHAT KIND OF TEACHERS YOU ARE. For this reason 40% of marks are available for Section 2, 3 or 4, where candidates are invited to write about their particular area of specialisation - speech and drama, music theatre or communication skills.

Further comments on specific questions follow:

Section 1: Describe some unsafe uses of the voice and/or body that you have heard and seen in performers in your discipline. Explain in each case (with some reference to anatomy and physiology) why they were unsafe. What techniques for the safe and effective use of the voice of body would you teach to such performers?

A three part question: DESCRIBE some unsafe uses, EXPLAIN why they were unsafe and outline WHAT TECHNIQUES you would teach. The most successful answers gave approximately equal weight to each part.

In particular the question asks for a description of unsafe uses "you have heard and seen". Candidates should therefore have used specific case studies from their own experience ("Actor X is severely overweight and constantly shouts and strains his voice when expressing anger", "Dancer Y never warms up and is obsessed with kicking higher than anyone else" etc.) An answer that described two or three such individuals (or possibly groups), explained why their practices were unsafe and then designed a specific training regime to address them would score highly. One candidate identified two such performers of his acquaintance but the exercises he subsequently outlined were general and not directly related to their needs.

Several candidates just listed some unsafe uses of voice and body. The least successful answers were rote-learned descriptions of the organs of articulation, the benefits of inter-costal diaphragmatic breathing, exercises to improve articulation and so on, which bore little relevance to the requirements of the question.

Sections 2, 3 and 4:

In these sections the most successful students showed understanding and selective use of knowledge to make informed and imaginative suggestions and/or observations about their teaching methodologies and strategies. The best answers combined a clear sense of overall purpose with a pleasing attention to detail.

For example, 3(b) - "Describe how you would structure a term's work in musical theatre for young teenagers working towards a showcase performance" - requires an answer that gives a week-by-week breakdown of classes and rehearsal, giving appropriate reasons for these choices and anticipated learning outcomes for each stage of the work. Some answers were both unrealistic in the amount of work attempted and made no attempt to explain how or why the lessons were structured as suggested (E.g.: "Week 1: Learn music. Introduction to acting skills (Stanislavski)")

When supplied with a section of text, (as in questions 2(a) and 3(a)) candidates should refer to it in detail. Some candidates answering question 2(a) (Shakespeare sonnet) made general comments about the sonnet form and/or blank verse rather than describing how they would use this particular poem "to develop a dramatic scene between two or more characters" - a task that requires practical teaching strategies rather than literary criticism.

Section 5. Question 1: Is there any current health and safety legislation in your country that has had any impact on your work as a teacher? If there is currently no such legislation, explain how such laws might benefit your work.

Answers should reflect on how specific legislation has - or might - affect personal teaching practices. The most successful candidates displayed a sound knowledge of the issues and a degree of lateral thinking. One candidate argued convincingly that legislation limiting class size could have a negative effect on his work (he would have to put up the cost of the lesson per student, thus excluding children from underprivileged families).

Less successful candidates outlined safety rules and regulations with little personal reflection and few examples from their own work.

Section 5: Question 2: If your work relates to pupils from different cultural backgrounds, explain the difficulties this causes and how in practical terms you manage to include everyone in group work. If you work currently with one cultural group, explain how your methodology might be adapted to a multi-cultural group.

The most successful candidates demonstrated candour and honesty in defining the real practical difficulties of dealing with pupils of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. One candidate wrote convincingly about the use of mime with a group of children who did not share a common language.

Less successful answers outlined the benefits of drama as an activity for encouraging social cohesion, but did not deal with the specific, practical teaching challenges that might be encountered.

LTCL/ LGSMD Performing Speech and Drama

At Licentiate levels, candidates are not only required to display a range of advanced performance skills but also to demonstrate the ability to interpret and evaluate performance texts, analyse and comment upon their own practical work, demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of the work of key practitioners and practice and to have attained a detailed and critical awareness of dramatic literature in periods of literature that they have studied.

We are sometimes asked questions like: "How many plays do I have to know about to pass the LTCL?" "What period of literature do I have to study?" Such questions completely miss the point of the nature of this qualification and the type of student that should be undertaking it. In the UK, Trinity Guildhall Licentiate diplomas are currently accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) as Level 6 qualifications - that is, comparable to a first degree or equivalent. Typically we envisage this qualification requiring two years' full-time study after passing the ATCL. If a university undergraduate in English Literature were to ask: "What is the minimum number of books I have to read to get my degree" it would be difficult to consider him or her a serious student. The same considerations apply to these diplomas.

We would therefore expect that candidates undertaking the LTCL/LGSMD would have read, comprehended and appreciated the work of numerous playwrights from many different countries before undertaking their written examination. A student who asks a teacher "Do I have to read *A Streetcar Named Desire* for this exam?" fails to appreciate the fundamental nature of this qualification; whereas a student who reads *Streetcar* because he or she desperately wants to study two of the greatest roles in post-war American drama - and then goes off to explore more works by Tennessee Williams - is showing the correct level of application and interest.

The wider the range of dramatic texts a candidate has read - and the wider range of performance opportunities - the better he or she will be equipped to sit this examination. Like the Licentiate teaching examinations, this paper is not designed to encourage students to write down a lot of facts they have "mugged up": rather it presents an opportunity for them to show HOW THEY APPLY THE KNOWLEDGE THEY HAVE GAINED TO THE PRACTICAL DEMANDS OF PERFORMANCE.

Many of the general comments on the ATCL Principles of Teaching paper apply to this examination too - particularly those on the need for candidates to organise their time, apply their knowledge effectively and above all TO ANSWER THE QUESTION.

Further comments on specific questions follow:

Section 1: Extract from *Twelfth Night*.

Some knowledge of the works of Shakespeare, his theatre, the technical demands of his verse and an appreciation of the performance opportunities that he offers actors is the most fundamental requirement of a performance diploma at this level.

The most successful candidates followed the requirements of the question exactly: "Work through the extract suggesting how it might be interpreted and performed". "Might" is a key word. Such answers offered several possibilities of interpretation that an actor could use in performance, staying close to the text at all times. Indeed, in ANY examination where a text is supplied candidates should endeavour to deal specifically with the words that have been put in front of them.

Several candidates spent a lot of time explaining the plot of *Twelfth Night* (despite the fact that a perfectly adequate plot summary has already been supplied for any students who might not know the play). Others demonstrated knowledge of other plays in the canon which was not relevant to the requirement of the question ("There are many plays in which Shakespeare's heroines dress as men - e.g.: Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Imogen in *Cymbeline*. This is because...etc"). While it is pleasing to know that candidates are familiar with these works this is NOT WHAT THE QUESTION REQUIRES.

Vague, generalised comments about the mood of the characters ("Orsino is sad in this scene") do not display the level of analysis or understanding that we expect at this level. Dogmatic commands on gesture ("At this point Viola should stamp her foot in frustration at this point") are equally inappropriate - though it would be perfectly acceptable to say something like "at this point the actress playing Viola might wish to find some physical expression of the frustration she is experiencing".

Section 2. Question 1a: By what means, and for what reasons, did a particular playwright or poet become important to you?

Given that this question allows the candidate to write a personal appreciation of ANY poet or playwright from ANY country in ANY period, we would realistically expect a comprehensive familiarity and analytical understanding of the chosen writer's work. The

most successful answers related personal growth and awareness with a clear awareness of a writer's style and content (One candidate wrote on how Fugard influenced his political thinking, another on how Beckett reflected her late-adolescent sense of nihilism).

Less successful candidates showed limited awareness of their writers' oeuvre. One answer on Sylvia Plath made direct reference to only a single poem. Responses to writers' work was generalised and unspecific ("It really spoke to me" "It was brilliant") showing little of the analytical thought we would expect at this level. Candidates that trotted out pre-prepared biographical sketches ("Shakespeare was born in Stratford upon Avon, the son of a glover...") generally failed to meet the pass mark.

Section 2. Question 1b: Outline and illustrate an appropriate rehearsal schedule for the public presentation of a play or performance programme. As a performer what you hope to achieve at each stage of the process?

While most candidates demonstrated an awareness of the structure of a typical rehearsal period, many paid far too little attention to the second part of the question - "*As a performer* what would you hope to achieve at each stage of the process."

Answers from less successful candidates tended to read like a description of a process which they had experienced but were unable to analyse or justify in any way. E.g.: "Week 3: Learn lines. Improvisation should be used during this period".

Section 3: Preparation for presentation of either 'Cargoes' or 'Jazz Fantasia'.

Most candidates demonstrated an appropriate level of textual analysis with imaginative ideas for presentation of these pieces, though some suggestions were disappointingly literal ("Every time the word 'Drum' is mentioned I would have someone banging a drum").

Less successful candidates focused on the literary qualities of the piece, writing a "practical criticism" of the chosen poem rather than envisaging the opportunities that it might present for performance.

LTCL/ LGSMD Performing Musical Theatre

Most of the comments about the LTCL/LGSMD Performing Speech and Drama apply to this qualification. The greater the range of repertoire, performance skills, musical theatre history, contextual awareness and production processes candidates are aware of, the more likely they are to succeed in this paper.

Musical theatre is par excellence the art form of *integration*: not only of the performer's dance, movement, singing and acting skills, but of story, text, music, lyric, design, lighting, sound and staging. The written paper is designed to encourage the candidate to consider how practitioners integrate these factors in the creation of an holistic production and/or performance.

Due to clashes in some candidates' examination schedules, two different papers were sat on different days.

Further comments on specific questions follow:

Section 1: Extracts from *Rent* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

In each case candidates were given the opening scene from the musical in question and asked: "What issues would a director need to discuss with his/her creative team (designers, musical director, choreographer etc) when preparing to stage this scene?"

Successful candidates showed a pleasing understanding of the issues involved and displayed an awareness of the options available. For instance, both scenes use a narrator to tell "the story to far". How will the narrator's relationship with the audience be established (and sustained) in the performance? Will he/ she need special lighting, microphoning, costuming etc? How will the other actors on stage relate to the story that is being told?

Then there are other fundamental questions that must be considered: how will the on-stage band in *Rent* be accommodated by the set design (and the sound designer come to that)? What issues does Mark's on-stage camera raise? Will the Witch and the Prince appear in the prologue to *Beauty and the Beast*? Will the Prince's transformation into the Beast be shown to the audience, and if so how?

Less successful candidates either gave dogmatic instructions on how the scene MUST be played and showed little curiosity in exploring creative possibilities, employing bald statements like: "As this scene is narrated, no choreography is required"; or "They will wear Victorian costumes" (with no further explanation given). Other candidates tended to dwell exclusively on one aspect of the production (e.g.: the physical blocking of the actors on the stage) with little consideration of the others elements of the scene.

Section 2 comprises questions about performance and rehearsal practices.

Section 2: Auditions are a vital part of a successful show. What issues affect a performer before, during and after an audition? What steps would you take to maximise your chances of landing a role?

Answers tended to concentrate on in-depth study and preparation of the role (including much sub-Stanislawskian "hot seating" at home prior to the audition). Candidates might profitably have also considered the other "issues" that face a performer (nervousness, short notice of audition, learning dance routines on the spot), not to mention practical matters such as the importance of good head shots, up to date CVs and so on.

Section 2: When preparing for a musical theatre role, some actors like to watch and listen to performances and recordings of other performers in the same role. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this? As far as possible you should illustrate your answer with examples from your own experience.

Candidates were not required to make a categorical statement about whether this practice is good or bad, just to discuss the advantages and disadvantages. Some candidates dismissed the idea of watching other performers out of hand and used this question as an opportunity to write about how they would create Stanislavski character biographies - though whether or not this is the most effective preparation for a performance in a musical is debatable.

Section 2: The musical director and choreographer are absent from rehearsal. The director asks you to teach the cast a chorus number and organize some rudimentary staging. What steps would you take to achieve this?

Candidates generally demonstrated a sound approach to this task. As requested, answers focused on a specific number. At times candidates ignored the word "rudimentary" and were over-specific in their suggestions, especially for choreography.

Section 3 comprises questions on the development of the American musical and its influence on the rest of the world.

Section 3: Candidates for Trinity Guildhall Grade exams in musical theatre are often asked to perform "material written both before and after 1965". Why is this date considered significant in the development of musical performance? Illustrate your answer with examples from works written both before and after 1965.

Answers tended to be over-generalised and some demonstrated serious factual errors about the history of the twentieth century. Candidates might profitably have focused on the political, social, musical and technological developments of the mid-Sixties, rather than giving lengthy descriptions of the plots of musicals chosen more or less at random.

How have cinematic techniques influenced the stage musical? Illustrate your answer with specific examples.

One candidate misunderstood this question and wrote a general comparison between stage and screen musicals. By "cinematic techniques" the question is referring to the cinema's characteristic use of very short scenes, cross-cutting, multi-screen, voice-over and so on. The candidate might profitably have considered how these techniques have been adapted by the libretto writers, directors, choreographers and designers of such shows as *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *City of Angels*, *Rent* and many others.

Construct a framework within which the evolution of the American musical can be considered. Give reasons for your choices.

One student wrote an excellent answer to this question, outlining the major periods of musical theatre style and describing the innovations of several landmark shows from *Showboat* onwards.

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