REVISE BTEC TECH AWARD
Performing Arts

REVISION GUIDE

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A note from the publisher

While the publishers have made every attempt to ensure that advice on the qualification and its assessment is accurate, the official specification and associated assessment guidance materials are the only authoritative source of information and should always be referred to for definitive guidance.

This qualification is reviewed on a regular basis and may be updated in the future.

Any such updates that affect the content of this Revision Guide will be outlined at

www.pearsonfe.co.uk/BTECchanges. The eBook version of this Revision Guide will also be updated to reflect the latest guidance as soon as possible.

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Pearson

Introduction

Revising Component 3 of your BTEC Tech Award

This Revision Guide has been designed to support you in preparing for the externally assessed component of your course. Component 3, Responding to a Brief, builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in Components 1 and 2. For assessment, you will be given a brief and stimulus to create performance material as either a **performer** (acting, dance, musical theatre) or a **designer** (with a focus from one of the following categories: costume/make-up/masks/ hair, set/props, lighting, sound). You will respond to the stimulus and create a workshop performance that communicates ideas and creative intentions to a target audience. Design students will give a presentation at the workshop performance, so their design ideas can be considered in the context of the workshop performance given by their group.

Your revision guide

This Revision Guide contains two types of pages, shown below.

Content **pages** help you revise the essential content you need to know for Component 3.

Skills **pages** help you prepare for your assessment.
Skills pages have a coloured edge and are shaded in the table of contents.

Use the **Now try this** activities on every page to help you test your knowledge and practise the relevant skills.
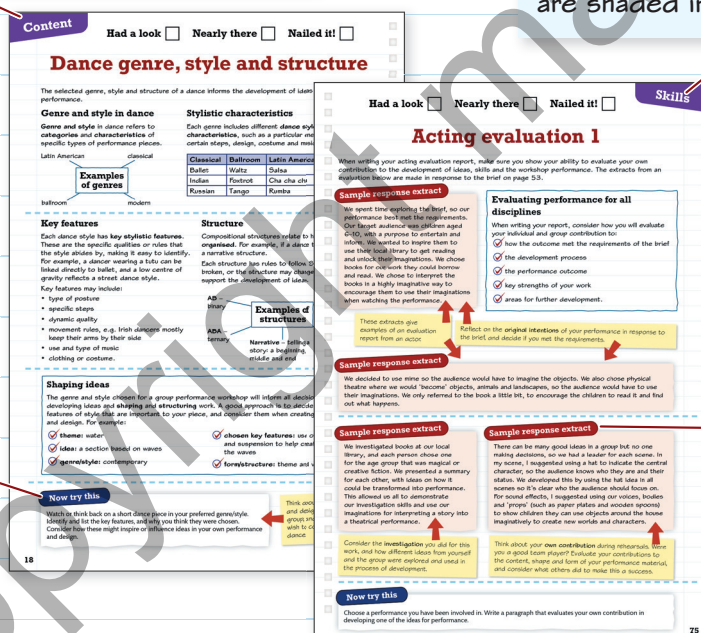
Look out for the **sample response extracts** to example assessment tasks on the skills pages. Post-its will explain their strengths and weaknesses.

Design disciplines

Refer to the specification and sample assessment material on the Pearson website for additional detail that is specific to **design** students, such as:

- **Skills and techniques of the designer**, e.g. understanding the implications of selected performance skills and techniques in relation to design, research, shaping and refining ideas, and the influence of practitioners such as Julie Taymor
- **Demonstrating during a presentation** the skills used during the development process, such as research, interpretative and collaborative skills (with performers/other designers), and the ability to communicate ideas through non-verbal media, e.g. diagrams, model boxes
- **Working effectively with others** by ensuring that designs are appropriate for the workshop performance and performers
- **Communicating ideas** through ensuring designs are realised in a workshop performance.

Details of assessment may change, so always make sure you are up to date.

Contents

A small bit of small print

Pearson publishes Sample Assessment Material and the Specification on its website. This is the official content and this book should be used in conjunction with it. The questions in *Now try this* have been written to help you test your knowledge and skills. Remember: the real assessment may not look like this.

Understanding a brief

Performers and designers often need to respond to a given brief for performance. It is important to understand what is required in response to the brief. See also pages 54–55 for a brief in the context of assessment.

Reading a brief

A brief for a workshop performance might include a **context** and **stimulus**. For example:

This is the context →

You have been asked by your local theatre to contribute to a gala afternoon. As they are celebrating 20 years since they opened, they have set the theme/stimulus for performance as:

This is the stimulus →

'New beginnings'

They have invited local performance groups to the theatre to show a short piece of work of around 10 to 15 minutes. They suggest that each group should be no more than seven performers and no more than four designers.

Understanding requirements

In response to the theme/stimulus, a brief might require you to:

- select a specific target audience
- work as part of a small group to create a workshop performance
- participate in discussions and practical activities to shape and develop original material and ideas, and rehearse for performance
- present the performance to an invited audience, working well as part of a group to apply performance and design skills and techniques creatively, communicating chosen ideas and creative intentions for the stimulus of 'New beginnings'
- evaluate the performance.

Workshop performance

A **workshop performance** is a simple, stripped-back performance of musical theatre, a play or dance.

✓ The performers might work without production elements such as costume, lighting or set. It might be an extract of the full-length version of the work. It is used in the performing arts industry to preview the staging of a new work for an audience and understand their reaction.

✓ Performers and designers ask the audience for feedback, and also view footage of the performance to evaluate: Are the intentions and aims clear? Are changes needed for future performances?

Considering responses

Performers and designers may use a list to check against in response to the brief, as the work develops.

1 Target audience (e.g. children, elderly, families)
2 Performance space (e.g. theatre, studio, hall)
3 **Performance** (e.g. acting, dance, musical theatre) or **design** discipline (e.g. costume, make-up, masks, hair; set/props; lighting, sound)
4 Performance and design skills and strengths (e.g. individually and as a group)
5 Structure of work (e.g. short scenes, continuous piece, showcase)
6 Style and genre (e.g contemporary, tragedy, comedy)
7 Creative intentions (e.g. to raise awareness of a topic, to educate, to entertain)
8 Planning and managing resources (e.g. for development and in performance)
9 Timing (e.g. time to develop and prepare and the running time in performance)
10 Number of performers and designers (see the Pearson website for assessment requirements).

Now try this

Consider the stimulus 'New beginnings' and the context in the brief above. Think of an idea in response. Explain how it links to the brief.

The idea might be informed by existing material you have worked with, or newly developed skills.

1

Responding to stimulus

Responding to a brief and stimulus involves **discussion** and **practical exploration activities**.

Developing ideas

Performers and designers start the creative process by using the **stimulus** in a brief to **generate ideas** for material. When discussing, selecting and rejecting ideas, it is important to:

- work effectively as a member of a group
- respect opinions
- take turns to share your ideas
- make notes for logging and evaluating ideas.

Exploring ideas

Practical activities can be used to explore and generate ideas in response to the brief and stimulus. The skills used will vary, depending on different features:

- **Discipline** – acting, dance, musical theatre, design. Within your discipline you could use improvisation as a quick way to respond to a brief immediately. You could split the group up and improvise, then share your findings with the rest of the group.
- **Form and style** of performance – if you know the style of performance you might use, you could work in pairs to list the stylistic features you might include. Then share these with the rest of your group.

These performers are using movement to explore the stimulus of 'Stronger together or apart'.

starting points (e.g. themes, issues, props, time and place, existing repertoire)

brainstorming

hot seating

improvisation

vocal work

movement techniques

Ways of exploring a stimulus

solo work

small group work

ensemble piece

sketches, drawings/ photographs

mock-ups and try-outs
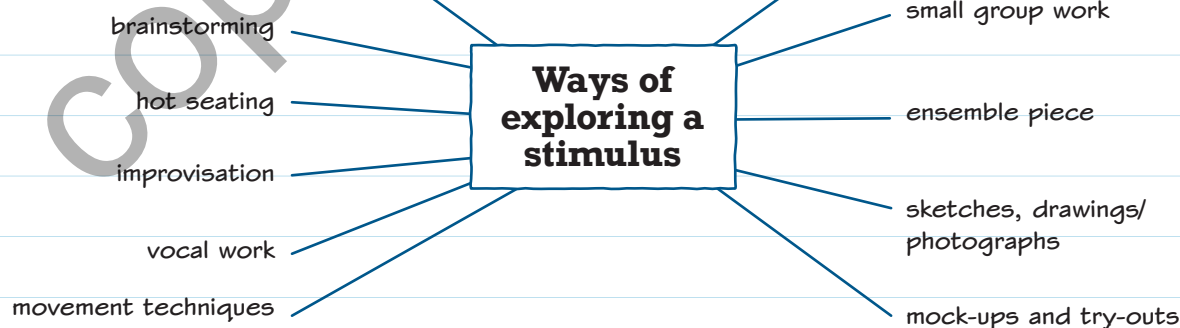
Now try this

Using the theme 'Stronger together or apart', choose two practical activities that you could use to explore this theme in a small group. Make notes on how these activities will help to generate ideas about the theme.

Target audience

Performers and designers need to be aware of their **target audience**, both when developing ideas and in performance. There are many ways to define the target audience for a piece of performance work. Here are three examples.

mixed   elderly people

enthusiasts of dance, drama, musical theatre

1 Age

2 Interests

Types of audience

regular theatre-goers   new to theatre

children (0–5/6–12 years)   teenagers   adults

3 Groups — clubs/societies

families

schools/colleges

people with special needs
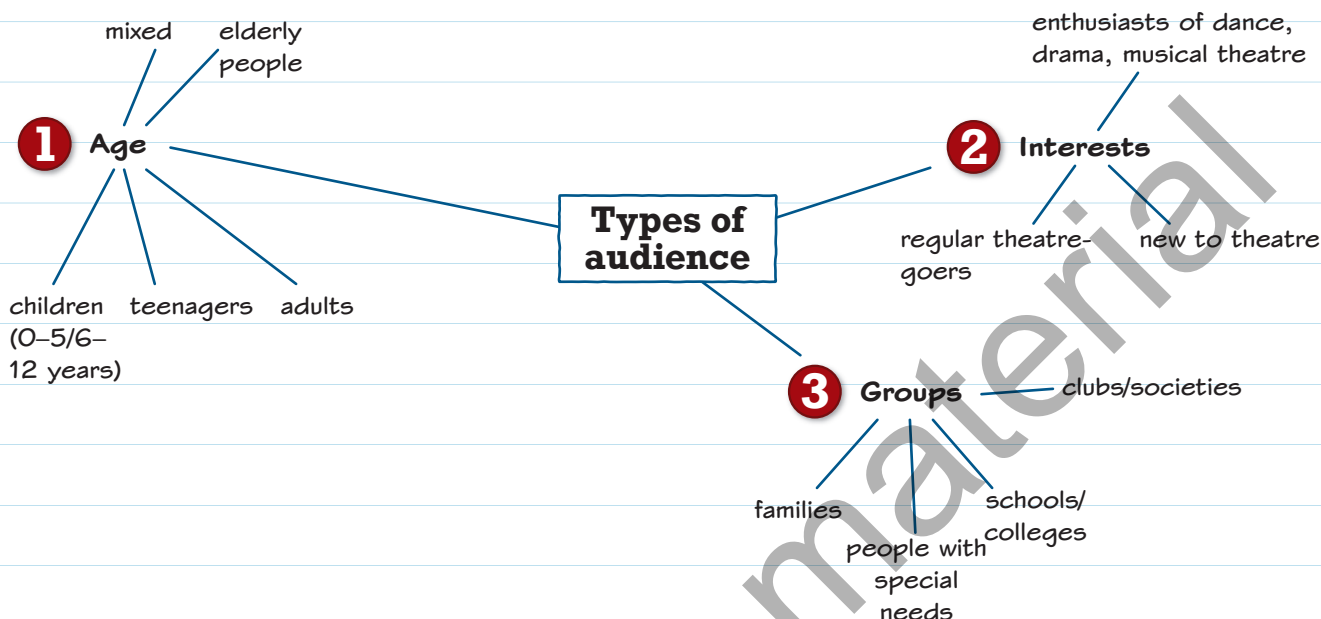
Audience needs

There are different ways to meet the needs of different target audiences.

- Targeting adults or young children involves different language levels, ideas and designs to engage them. The message and narrative for young children needs to be very clear.
- Targeting 'the general public' is a broad audience. Specific and specialist audiences might involve more targeted needs, for example: people with learning difficulties or issues relating to health.

Define the needs of your audience carefully and be aware of any social and cultural issues.

Performances for young audiences tend to be shorter than performances for adults. A young audience may also respond better to visual or auditory stimuli than to dialogue-heavy performances.

Now try this

Take 'All of a sudden ...' as your stimulus. Write down three factors to consider when targeting a performance for primary school-aged children.

Consider your target audience and:
- ideas that might appeal to them
- the purpose of your performance
- their needs
- how to keep them engaged.

3

Audience and purpose

The way that performers and designers target an audience might change, depending on the **purpose** of the performance. Here are **five** examples.

1 **To educate**
- Target audience might be children or teenagers.
- Purpose could be to cover a topic in the school curriculum – Theatre in Education (TIE) companies are a good example of performers with a brief to educate.
- Needs to communicate key points of the message in an interesting and original way, with an appropriate tone.

Purposes of performance

5 **To celebrate**
- Target audience might be a selected age group, or families.
- Purpose might be to celebrate a festival, landmark or personality.
- Communication should take account of religious or cultural considerations.

2 **To inform**
- Target audience might be parents and children.
- Purpose could be to alert audience to the dangers of fireworks prior to Bonfire Night.
- Needs to communicate facts and information so that safety is understood.

3 **To entertain**
- Ideas should take account of the target age of the audience, e.g. using familiar contexts or music.
- Purpose could be to entertain alone, or combine with another purpose.
- Consider the type of entertainment and any variety needed.

4 **To challenge viewpoints, to provoke, to raise awareness**
- Target audience might be teenagers.
- Purpose might be to raise awareness of lifestyle choices such as smoking, drinking or drugs, or consider an issue such as immigration.
- Needs to communicate the main objective clearly and ensure the material is appropriate.

Consider the purpose of a performance. For example, the book musical *South Pacific* integrates song and dance into a story that entertains, while also engaging the audience with a range of emotions and social issues such as race relations.

Now try this

Take 'Time and place' as your stimulus.
1 Choose a target audience.
2 Choose a purpose.
3 Create a spidergram with your main idea in the centre, surrounded by ideas for how you will engage your audience with your chosen purpose.

You might have more than one purpose – for example, to entertain and inform.

Performance space and staging

The type of performance space is considered early on when creating a performance. It determines how performers and designers stage a piece, and can play a big part in communicating creative intentions to an audience. Different types of staging can be used in performance spaces, for different purposes.
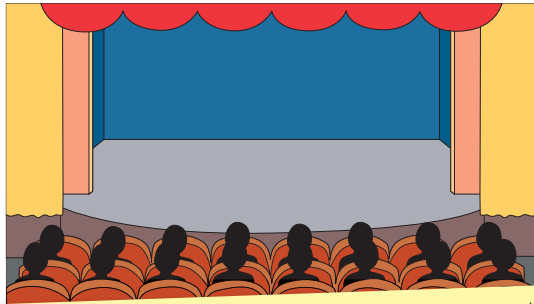
Proscenium arch, where the audience is end-on to the performance space, with one main point of view. The arch frames the action, and can be raised with a raked stage.
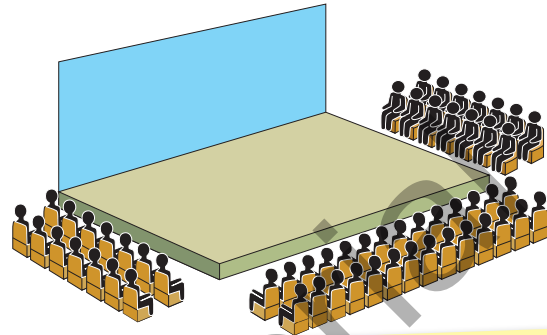
Thrust, where the audience is on three sides of the performance space. The action comes into the audience but can also be pulled back.
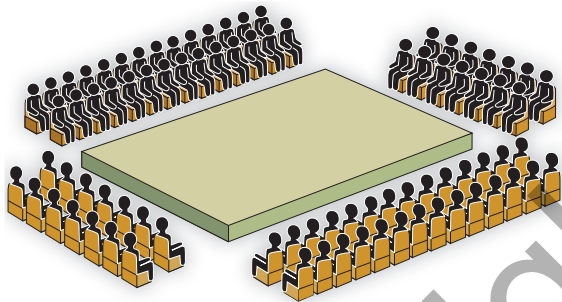
In the round, where the audience is on all sides of the performance space, which is in the middle. Performers enter and exit the stage through the audience.
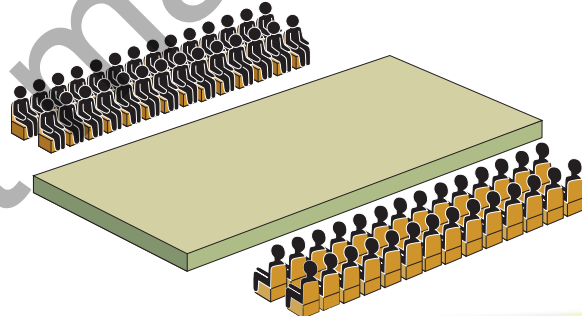
Traverse, where the audience is on either side of a rectangular, long and thin performance space. The audience is parallel and facing each other.
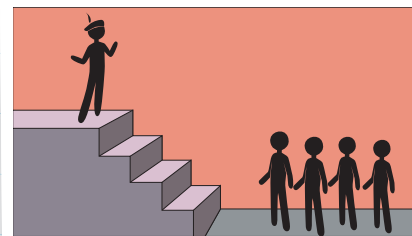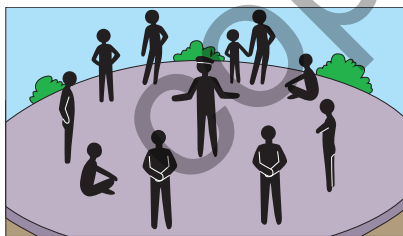
Promenade, where there is freedom to stage scenes in different locations. It needs confident performers and designers to encourage the audience to follow them on a journey.

Now try this

Consider a performance piece that you have staged or seen. Explain the type of venue, the stage used and the reasons for the choices about the performance space.

What changes might you consider to the stage or performance space?

Had a look ☐   Nearly there ☐   Nailed it! ☐

Using performance space

Performers and designers may need to work with requirements and constraints relating to the performance space. Using a space imaginatively can greatly enhance a performance.

Venues

Live performance can take place anywhere.

- **Theatres** – often a large stage space and auditorium, equipped with sound and lighting.
- **Community spaces** – such as community centres, schools, parks, staircases, coffee shops. Some may have a stage and others may be site-specific (e.g. a non-conventional theatre space).
- **Studios** – often part of a larger theatre, smaller in size and more flexible.
- **Arenas** – very large spaces, flexible in types of staging.
- **Flexible spaces** – performance spaces where the type of staging can be changed to suit the piece.

Staging inspires ideas

The stage space could help to **generate** ideas. For example, if there are no offstage areas, performers could be visible at all times or be hidden by set design instead of traditional wings.

> A non-theatrical location such as a staircase, library or café might start a creative process. The aspects of a location could generate ideas such as an ideal space for the audience, or a feature in the location that could be used.

Ideas inspire staging

The **performance idea** could shape the staging. For example, a theme could be 'Isolation'. Performers could spread out to indicate how lonely each person feels. In a flexible space, each performer could be completely alone in their own stage spaces. The audience could move to each performer, which might lead towards a type of staging such as promenade.

Staging within staging

The **space itself** can be used in different ways.

- Different levels can help communicate ideas.
- Spaces or sections can be designated based on location, setting, character or importance.
- Think about the position of the body and the shapes it is making in the space.
- Diagrams and sketches can be used to plan use of levels, pathways and dimensions.

Choosing performance spaces

To help determine the staging for a performance piece, consider the following questions:

1. What are the possibilities for types of staging in the venue?
2. Where do you want the audience to be?
3. Where is onstage and offstage? How is this going to be clear?
4. Do you want to divide the stage space, or use staged levels to show more distinct areas?
5. Where are the entrances and exits? Are the fire exits and escape routes clear?
6. Are there any obstacles or problems within the space? Consider health and safety.

Now try this

You have been asked to create a performance on the theme 'Past, present and future'. Select a type of staging and explain how you would use it to communicate the theme.

> Use the questions above to help define the stage space in your mind.

Resources

Performers and designers need to plan and manage the resources needed for the rehearsal process and performance. This may include resources required by a performance brief.

Performance elements

choreography/ movement instruction   script   score

Costume, masks, make-up, hair

Performance space

lighting

set   sound   stage furniture

Resources include

Props

to wear, e.g. hats   to use, e.g. walking stick   as a focus in performance, e.g. scarecrow/ guy

Locations

rehearsal rooms – size, furniture such as chairs or tables to use   meetings

workshop performance

Schedule

deadlines   rehearsal dates   rehearsal times

Resource management

Sometimes the resources available might be basic or limited. It is still essential for performers and designers to communicate intention(s) clearly. Consider how a performance piece might be created without resources so that any additional resources enhance the piece. Useful questions to consider include:

- What do you want for the piece?
- What do you actually need?

Using resources

Solutions for basic or limited resources might include:

- ☑ making your own props
- ☑ making levels to increase performance space
- ☑ recreating or indicating objects or props through mime, physical theatre or a sound effect.

Schedules and deadlines

Setting deadlines for the rehearsal and development process for a performance helps ensure the piece is ready on time. Time constraints may be given in a brief. Some key stages for deadlines include:

1 decisions about the content of performance material

2 the date by which dialogue, songs, choreography and movement need to be learned

3 dates for design and realisation (e.g. making) of any elements such as set and props, so they are prepared and ready for the final run-through before performance

4 when the performance is to be shared with an audience

5 completing any notes, logs and reports that might be required.

Now try this

Think about some recent material that you have created and then performed, and how you managed resources. Make notes on anything you might do differently next time.

How could you improve your time management skills?

Had a look ☐   Nearly there ☐   Nailed it! ☐

Style

The term **style** in performing arts refers to the **characteristics** of a performance piece or genre.

Style and genre

Genre is a French word that means **category** or **type**. It is used to define the overall style of a performance piece. There are many genres in performing arts, with stylistic characteristics. Here are some examples.

Acting	Dance	Musical theatre
Comedy	Classical	Operetta
Melodrama	Ballroom	Jukebox
Epic	Latin American	Book musical
Verbatim	Modern	Rock musical

Stylistic characteristics

The development of an original performance piece will be informed by the **selected performance style**, **characteristics** and **production elements**. For example:

- A West End musical is likely to use elaborate sets and costumes to create a 'feel good' atmosphere for the audience.
- A verbatim play is likely to be performed with minimal sets and costumes so that the audience is not distracted from the content and message.
- An urban dance piece may use lighting and other effects to enhance the style of the work.

Content

Content is what a performance piece **is about**. For example, a performance piece might:

- tell a story, e.g. romantic, historical
- help an audience understand an issue, e.g. social, political, age-related
- educate about a historical event
- make an audience feel sad or think, e.g. using themes such as love or conflict with genres such as comedy or tragedy.

Structure and form

The structure and form of a piece is the **way** it is presented and **how** the story is told.

- A naturalistic play or book musical typically has a linear plot. It is presented in two or more acts. Some issues may be unresolved at the end of the first act but will be resolved by the end.
- Shorter non-narrative dance pieces often have structures that resolve by the end of the piece. Sections may be given letters. In a piece with an ABA structure, the material in the first section will come back at the end of the dance.

Linear and non-linear

- ✓ A **linear** plot is one where events happen in a chronological order (the order in which they really happened).
- ✓ A **non-linear** plot moves backward and forward in time.

Influences on performance style

Guys and Dolls by Loesser, Swerling and Burrows is an example of musical theatre. The genre, style, content, structure and form influence the performance of the piece.

- **Genre** and **style**: book musical – romance, with comic elements.
- **Content**: based on stories by Damon Runyon.
- **Structure** and **form**: two acts, with song and dance numbers linked by dialogue, and instrumental sections used between acts and scenes.
- **Performance style**: naturalistic, with heightened elements in song and dance sections. Costumes and scenic elements are appropriate to the setting of 1950s New York.

Now try this

Watch or think back to a performance you know well. Use the headings on this page to create a spidergram of the characteristics of the piece.

Types of stimulus

Performers and designers respond to stimulus in a brief by using it as a jumping-off point for creativity and ideas. It is important to explore any type of stimulus thoroughly to inform the ideas, planning and development of a performance piece. Here are some examples.

Themes e.g. a concept such as 'space', or a key word such as 'conflict'

Props e.g. walking stick, frying pan, deckchair

Stimulus as a starting point

Issues e.g. social, health or safety issues

Existing repertoire e.g. a play, composition or choreography that can be investigated and explored to inform the response

Time and place e.g. a park in spring, night time on a beach, early morning in a hospital

Choosing and combining ideas

You may find that one stimulus leads to another. You can use each stimulus as a starting point to explore. For example, an **issue** such as homelessness may lead to a cardboard box or blanket as a **prop**, and maybe a **time and place**, e.g. in a busy street at noon or at night alone. Each one can be explored as a starting point for exploration and ideas. You may then have many ideas and choices to make.

✓ You may choose one over the others.

✓ You may combine some ideas.

Issues such as homelessness are sensitive and emotive topics for performance.

Now try this

Using the stimulus of a **car journey at night**, consider some ideas for a performance piece for an audience of your choice.

Theme as a starting point

A theme can be used as a starting point to generate ideas for performance. A theme to investigate and explore practically might be a concept such as 'distance', or a key word such as 'discovery'.

Theme as a concept

Theme as a concept could be a statement of intent, a fact, an opinion or an imagined situation and context.

- **Statement of intent** – e.g. 'Unlock your imagination' or 'Make yourself heard'.
- **Fact** – e.g. 'Death is inevitable for all living creatures' or 'Gravity keeps us grounded'.
- **Opinion, theory** or **declaration** – e.g. 'Time changes everything' or 'Performance enriches life'.
- **Imagined situation** and **context** – e.g. 'Living on the Moon', 'Robots will replace humans' or 'A world without war or conflict'.

Theme as a key word

A key word could be a noun, adjective or verb. Using a dictionary, thesaurus or thought shower can provide starting points and capture different contributions. Here are some examples of key words and their meanings.

- **Discovery** (noun): action or process of finding, uncovering, locating, or unlocking a secret or mystery.
- **Peace** (noun): freedom from disturbance, calm, quiet, stillness; a state or period when there is no war; friendship; law or order.
- **Dangerous** (adjective): able to cause harm or injury; menacing, risky, unsafe, exposed, insecure.

Linking themes to context

Context can be described as the elements that form the setting for an event, statement or idea. Here are **four** types of context to consider when responding to a theme. Performers and designers might focus on one or more, according to the theme and target audience.

1 Social

Social themes relate to society. For example:
- ✓ poverty
- ✓ education
- ✓ crime.

2 Cultural

Cultural themes relate to customs, traditions and values, such as:
- ✓ celebrations
- ✓ spirituality/religion
- ✓ tradition.

3 Ethical

Ethical themes relate to morality/what is right and wrong. For example:
- ✓ euthanasia
- ✓ abortion
- ✓ tradition.

4 Historical

Historical themes relate to past events, such as:
- ✓ First World War
- ✓ the Industrial Revolution
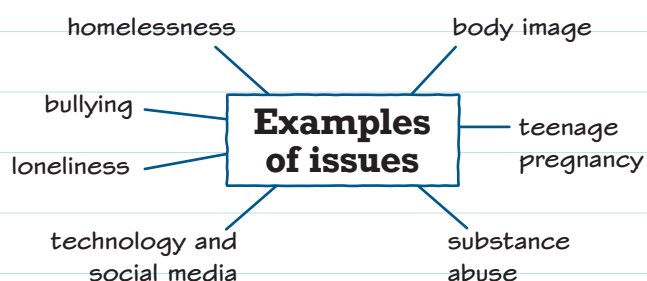- ✓ the Civil Rights movement.

Now try this

Consider the theme: 'We are all brothers and sisters.' Create a mind map to analyse this opinion. Explain how you would explore and develop it.

Thinking about the four types of context will focus your response.

Issues as a starting point

Performing arts pieces can be used to explore and raise awareness of a range of issues and topics, such as health and safety, or social issues. When working from a given stimulus, a possible starting point is considering linked issues.

homelessness　　　　　body image

bullying

loneliness

Examples of issues

teenage pregnancy

technology and social media

substance abuse

Approaches to issues

Different approaches can be chosen when creating an issue-based performing arts piece. For example:

- in the play *Too Much Punch for Judy*, Mark Wheeller explores the issue of drink-driving and its consequences in a very **direct** way
- in the contemporary dance piece *Ghost Dances*, Christopher Bruce takes a **subtler** approach to explore political oppression in South America.

Linking with stimulus

Different approaches can be chosen when **linking issues** with **stimulus**. Some may be obvious, some less so. Here are three examples.

1 Growing old
- Elder abuse: protecting older vulnerable people
- Caring for an ageing population: strains on social care and the NHS

Stimulus: Seasons

2 Youth
- Empowerment: votes for teenagers aged 16 and 17
- Unemployment: finding work, zero-hour contracts

3 Climate change
- Pollution and global warming: impact of motor cars and power stations
- Storms and natural disasters: how floods affect families and communities

Realistic approaches

Investigating issues will help ensure that performance pieces are credible and realistic. For example, you could do the following:

- Undertake a **survey** of young people to find out their feelings on future work prospects, or **interview** someone who works in a home for elderly people. You could collect the information yourself (this is primary research).
- Read a **news story** about the aftermath of a storm, or look at **scientific data** about global warming. You could examine existing material (this is secondary research).

Developing ideas

When developing a performance piece based on an issue, use your exploration to inform ideas. For example, you could:

- use an interesting news story as the basis of your plot
- create characters based on people you have interviewed
- use the results of a survey or interesting facts to top and tail your piece through narration or the use of back projections.

Now try this

Consider the stimulus: 'Back down to earth with a bump.' Choose a linked issue and explain how you would explore and develop it.

Think about whether your approach to the issue will be direct or subtle.

11

Props as a starting point

A prop can be used as a starting point to practically explore themes and help generate ideas.

Using props

Props are objects used by actors in performance. They can be anything held by performers, from apples to umbrellas or dustbins. They should be used seamlessly within a production.

Gene Kelly, Michael Kidd and Dan Dailey used dustbin lids as props in 1955 MGM musical, *It's Always Fair Weather*. On their way home from a night out, they mischievously discover how effective dustbin lids are as tap shoes.

Purpose and selection of props

Props should be used meaningfully. In a production, a prop may:

- establish a character
- provide additional dimensions to explore
- enhance the mood/atmosphere
- create an environment/setting.

Performers and designers might:

- use the theme of a piece to help choose suitable props
- pick an object and see if a connection can be made to the theme.

Example of ways to use props

☑ **Theme:** 'Loss'.

☑ **Theme to prop:** use a set of keys to explore losing/finding your keys.

☑ **Prop to theme:** a cheese grater leads to how transformative loss or trauma can be.

Planning and exploring

It is important to spend time **discussing** props, but more important to **try things out** physically. For example:

- Set some rules and explore using improvisation.
- Physically explore the prop in the way it was meant to be used.
- Physically explore the prop in the way it wasn't meant to be used.
- Use ideas to set another pathway for exploring.

Practical exploration

Once you have identified props, do the following:

1 Place them in the middle of the rehearsal space. Group around them for discussion.

2 Hold and investigate each prop, thinking about what it is, what is it used for and what it feels like.

3 Identify if the prop can be practically explored (e.g. how a chair can be used in different ways) or if it inspires practical exploration (e.g. a letter might inspire an improvisation about when someone said goodbye.)

Example explorations

Theme to prop:

☑ Keys could be used to improvise drama.

☑ Roles could be a mother or carer.

☑ Idea could be panic at losing/finding keys.

☑ Progression could be to finding a missing child and the emotional impact.

☑ Research could follow into missing children.

☑ Exploration could use improvisation or interviews to create a monologue (verbatim).

Prop to theme:

☑ A cheese grater could inspire physical theatre where a group sticks together like a block of cheese, moving across a space in linear motion.

☑ Each person could experiment with a way to get 'grated off', or come away from the group.

Now try this

Explore an idea for a workshop. The prop is a piece of paper and the theme is 'Loss'.

Setting as a starting point

The setting for a performing arts piece can be used as a starting point to generate and practically explore ideas. You could consider different times and places – for example, a beach in winter, night time in a hospital, early morning in a park.

Purpose of setting

The setting of a piece is usually within the performance space and can be realistic or symbolic. It can provide the audience with visual and aural clues about the performance, such as:

1 time
2 place
3 context.

1 Time

When using time as a setting for a starting point, you might explore:

- **a time** of day or night when the action is taking place, e.g. midnight, early morning, 15.15 on a Friday afternoon
- **a moment** in the past, present or future
- **a period of time** in particular, e.g. the Second World War, a school year.

2 Place

When using place as a setting for a starting point, you might explore:

- **a location**, e.g. indoors or outdoors, a pub, a car park, the moon
- **an unknown location**, e.g. not revealed or made clear – mysterious, symbolic
- **an environment**, e.g. busy hospital, deserted park, seagulls feeding on a rubbish dump
- **the weather**, e.g. thunderstorm, sunshine, elements of a particular season, temperature.

3 Context

When exploring the context of the setting as a starting point, you might consider:

- **the purpose** of the work, e.g. to entertain, to educate, to demonstrate specialist skills
- **the style(s)** selected for performance, e.g. jazz dance, naturalistic comedy
- **the relationship** between performers and audiences, e.g. end-on or traverse stage, audience participation
- **the performance space**, e.g. how much space is needed for performers, entrances and exits, 'offstage' areas or storage.

painted backdrop or flats

props

stage furniture, e.g. chairs, tables

lighting

flooring, e.g. markings to indicate edge of performance space

projected imagery/gobos

Ways to indicate time, place and context

music, e.g. live, recorded

blocks to create levels

sound effects to indicate location, create atmosphere, symbolise emotion

costume, including hair design and hats

spoken and sung text and dialogue

masks and make-up

signs, placards, hangings, banners

Now try this

Explore setting as a starting point for an idea, related to the stimulus 'Alone'.

Experiment with representing setting in both realistic and symbolic ways.

13

Existing acting repertoire

Existing plays and productions can be used as a starting point to generate ideas for performance and design. Here are **four** ways.

❶ Scripts and performance

Experiencing existing plays and productions can spark ideas.

- **Play scripts**, written by playwrights or companies, may include stage directions or guidance on interpreting the text, where you can read, analyse and perform extracts.
- **Live performances**, either amateur or professional productions, offer first-hand experience of all elements of a production.
- **Digital performances**, available by live streaming or recordings, allow you to see professional productions up close.

❷ Images, reviews and biography

Understanding existing repertoire through other sources can generate ideas.

- **Images from productions** are useful for understanding elements such as props or the positions of performers in the set and space.
- **Reviews of a production** by professional critics provide summaries and notes about their interpretation.
- **Biographies** of theatre practitioners (directors, writers, performers, designers) help gain an understanding of creation and purpose.

❸ Theatrical features

How existing plays and productions are broken down can inspire ideas. For example:

- **structure:** the shape and outline of the production, e.g. length of play, how it is divided into scenes or episodes
- **style:** the type of performance being used, e.g. naturalistic, Epic, physical theatre
- **form:** the specific features used in the production, e.g. narrator, flashbacks, duologue, direct address to audience
- **theatrical elements:** used to communicate ideas to an audience, e.g. props, set, sound.

❹ Context

Understanding who existing works were created for, and why, can generate ideas. For example:

- **when a work was made:** year, location, country
- **how a work was created:** original play by playwright, devised by theatre company, interpretation of classical play, adaptation
- **who it was made for:** all audiences, e.g. families; particular audiences, e.g. children
- **where it was performed:** type of performance space used, town/city or tour
- **what the story was** and how it was communicated to an audience: e.g. comedy, social issue.

Willy Russell

Blood Brothers by Willy Russell is an example of an award-winning internationally successful production. There are two versions: a play with songs and a musical.

✓ **Style, structure and form:** Tragicomedy. Episodic two-act play. First scene set at the end of the story so the audience knows what happens and the story tells how it happened. A narrator is used to introduce characters, link scenes and provide background. Most characters speak dialogue to each other and characters sing, sometimes directly to the audience.

✓ **Theatrical elements:** Naturalistic costume and props. Many locations and time periods in a symbolic setting.

✓ **Context:** Written: 1983. First shown: Liverpool. Suitable for: young audiences, using pop songs for key messages, e.g. how social class, upbringing and education can impact on life choices and opportunities. Audience sympathy with main characters; ends in tragedy as objectives unmet.

Now try this

Think of a professional work you are familiar with. Make a list of its theatrical features and how they might inspire or influence your ideas.

You could include:
- style, structure, form
- theatrical elements
- context.

Existing dance repertoire

The work of professional choreographers can inspire the development of a dance piece.

Be inspired!

Performers and designers have their own preferences but can always be inspired by others' work. For example, consider:

- the skill of the dancers
- a specific moment in the choreography
- use of design, performance space or music
- communication of themes and messages.

Starting points

A professional work could be used as a starting point for ideas. Here are **three** ways:

1 Mirroring a **choreographic approach** to creating a piece or a specific dance style.
2 Creating a **design element** or **performance space** with similar production values.
3 **Approaching themes** inspired by powerful performances and communication of ideas.

❶ Choreographic approach

Each choreographer has a different way of working, creating very different dance pieces. You might consider these questions:

- Does the choreographer set the movement specifically, or develop ideas through collaboration?
- Do they use narrative or themes?
- What kind of structures do they use (e.g. linear, cyclic, rondo or fragmented)?
- How do they use the music? Is it closely connected, used for atmosphere or is there no connection?

Gene Kelly

Gene Kelly choreographed for musical theatre in jazz, ballet and tap styles. His choreography entertains, develops a story and shows emotion.

You could make creative decisions to use styles such as these, or learn a phrase which you could use as a starting point.

❷ Performance space and design

Consider professional productions that inspire you. Think about these questions:

- How is space being used, and what effect does it have?
- How are design choices and props/set being used, and how will this affect the audience?

Lea Anderson produced a site-specific work, *Car*, where the dancers moved in and around an actual car.

❸ Approaches to themes

All dances have themes, whether it is the movement within it or an overall idea to be communicated. For example, Christopher Bruce used the theme of oppression in his haunting piece *Ghost Dances*, where he showed the plight of the Chilean people during a dictatorship. Merce Cunningham focused on the movement content, developing phrases and setting parameters for live improvisations or 'events'. Think about choices in relation to audience and creative intentions:

- How might a dramatic piece with a hard-hitting theme impact on an audience?
- How might a movement-based piece that explores and develops phrases communicate ideas?

Now try this

Think back to the last professional work you watched. Write a couple of sentences describing what you liked about the piece, and what you could use for inspiration for your own work.

You can get to know professional dance pieces through watching, analysing and researching them. Make choreography notes, such as what you liked or disliked, or a specific moment worth remembering.

Had a look ☐   **Nearly there** ☐   **Nailed it!** ☐

Existing musical theatre repertoire

Creating and developing a musical theatre performance can be inspired and informed by existing repertoire.

Engaging with purposes

When making creative decisions for a musical theatre piece, it can be informed by how existing repertoire **engages** the audience with **different purposes**, e.g. to educate, inform, entertain, provoke, challenge viewpoints, raise awareness or celebrate.

Rodgers and Hammerstein

Rodgers and Hammerstein are examples of writers of musical theatre with **more than one purpose**. For example:

✓ the musical *Show Boat* was intended to entertain and also challenge viewpoints about mixed-race marriage in America in the late 19th century

✓ this can be seen in the song and dance numbers intended to entertain, and aspects of the plot that deal with racial segregation.

Starting points

Existing musical repertoire can inspire ideas. Here are **three** ways.

1 You might explore a particular **style and approach** of musical theatre, based on a book or a film.

2 You might investigate the way a piece of musical theatre is staged and the use of **production values**.

3 Your response to a brief and stimulus might be inspired by the professional **processes** used.

❶ Style and approach

If you are using a book as an idea for a piece of musical theatre, you might be inspired by exploring approaches to pieces such as *Oklahoma!*

• It is a **book musical**, based on the play *Green Grow the Lilacs*.

• It is an early example of a musical with songs and dances that are fully integrated into the plot, written by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

• A score and a libretto were published, from which directors and musical directors worked when creating versions of the piece.

❷ Production values and setting

Consider what you could take from investigating professional productions that engage you. For example, *The Lion King* is an example of musical theatre **developed from a film** animated by Disney.

• It was developed for stage by director Judy Taymor, using the plot and songs from the film as well as additional songs and scenes.

• The piece uses 'humanimals', large hollow puppets that allow the audience to see the puppeteer.

• Dance also features heavily in the musical, and the choreography includes elements of traditional African dance styles.

❸ Using processes

The processes used to develop a piece of existing repertoire may inspire your approach. For example:

• **responding to stimuli to generate ideas** such as books, historic events, cartoons or songs

• **exploring and developing ideas** for ways to bring the show to life in the performance space, during rehearsals

• **teaching material to performers** led by the choreographer/musical director, to learn songs quickly and accurately. In a sitzprobe, seated performers sing with the orchestra for the first time, focusing on integrating performance

• **refining and adjusting material** to make improvements. Many professional shows have preview performances which can inspire ideas to improve the piece.

Now try this

Think back to watching a professional work that engaged and inspired you. Write a couple of sentences describing what you liked about the piece, and what you might use for inspiration or to influence your own creative work.

Acting genre, style and structure

The development of ideas for acting in a workshop performance is informed by the chosen genre, style and structure of the piece.

Acting genre and style

Genre and **style** in acting refer to **categories** and **characteristics** of specific types of performance pieces. Examples include comedy, tragedy, docudrama, history play, political play, physical theatre and Theatre in Education (TIE).

Mixing genre and style

Many plays and performance texts cross more than one genre and stylistic characteristic, such as political farce, tragicomedy or comic thriller.

Stylistic characteristics

Each genre includes different **acting styles** with a set of **characteristics**. Examples are a particular form, how a character is interpreted or how a work is staged (e.g. setting, dialogue, movement).

Genre	Characteristic and form
Comedy	Farce, black comedy, romantic, satire
Tragedy	Melodrama, mystery, thriller, social drama
History play	Shakespeare's history plays, Epic, morality
TIE	Verbatim, forum theatre, Epic

Key features

Each acting style has **key stylistic features**. For example, actors don't talk directly to the audience in a naturalistic play, and don't rely on spoken text to communicate ideas in physical theatre. Contemporary plays may include features from more than one acting style.

Key stylistic features may include:

- **type of acting** – e.g. naturalism (realism), non-naturalism (stylised). For example, romantic naturalistic comedy; non-naturalistic history play; verbatim, TIE social drama
- **relationship with audience** – e.g. fourth wall 'naturalism' (like the audience are watching through a glass wall), direct audience address (as seen in pantomime)
- **plot/story/treatment of themes** – e.g. a journey, a conflict, a romance, a social issue
- **structure of the play** – e.g. episodic short scenes, three or five acts
- **structure and form of each scene** – e.g. ensemble scene, duologue, narrator linking scenes
- **use of production elements** – e.g. staging, set, lighting, sound/music
- **interpretation of character** – e.g. costume, props, make-up, masks.

Shaping ideas

The genre and style chosen for a group performance workshop will inform all decisions when developing ideas and **shaping** and **structuring** work. A good approach is to decide on the key features of style that are important to your piece and consider them when creating the elements of your performance.

For example:

- ✓ **theme:** same old mistakes
- ✓ **idea:** three generations of a family dealing with love and loss, with the same behaviours repeated
- ✓ **genre/style:** tragicomedy – text-based naturalistic and non-naturalistic physical theatre
- ✓ **chosen key features:** symbolic setting, realistic dialogue, fourth wall
- ✓ **form/structure:** episodic naturalistic scenes linked by physical movement sequences.

Now try this

Watch or think back on an extract from a play in your preferred genre/style. List the key features and how they are used in the piece. Consider how these might inspire or influence ideas in your own performance.

Think about how you can put to best use your performance skills and those of your group, what your theme is and what you may be communicating.

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Dance genre, style and structure

The selected genre, style and structure of a dance informs the development of ideas in a workshop performance.

Genre and style in dance

Genre and style in dance refers to **categories** and **characteristics** of specific types of performance pieces.

Latin American   classical

Examples of genres
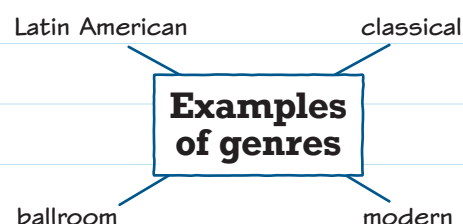
ballroom   modern

Stylistic characteristics

Each genre includes different **dance styles** with a set of **characteristics**, such as a particular energy and use of certain steps, design, costume and music.

Classical	Ballroom	Latin American	Modern
Ballet	Waltz	Salsa	Contemporary
Indian	Foxtrot	Cha cha cha	Jazz
Russian	Tango	Rumba	Street

Key features

Each dance style has **key stylistic features**. These are the specific qualities or rules that the style abides by, making it easy to identify. For example, a dancer wearing a tutu can be linked directly to ballet, and a low centre of gravity reflects a street dance style.
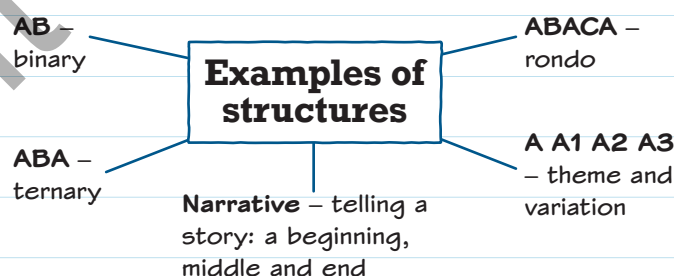
Key features may include:

- type of posture
- specific steps
- dynamic quality
- movement rules, e.g. Irish dancers mostly keep their arms by their side
- use and type of music
- clothing or costume.

Structure

Compositional structures relate to how dance is **organised**. For example, if a dance tells a story, it has a narrative structure.

Each structure has rules to follow. Some rules may be broken, or the structure may change completely to support the development of ideas.

AB – binary

ABA – ternary

Examples of structures

ABACA – rondo

A A1 A2 A3 – theme and variation

Narrative – telling a story: a beginning, middle and end

Shaping ideas

The genre and style chosen for a group performance workshop will inform all decisions when developing ideas and **shaping** and **structuring** work. A good approach is to decide on the key features of style that are important to your piece, and consider them when creating your movement and design. For example:

✓ **theme:** water

✓ **idea:** a section based on waves

✓ **genre/style:** contemporary

✓ **chosen key features:** use of floor work, fall and suspension to help create the motion of the waves

✓ **form/structure:** theme and variation.

Watch or think back on a short dance piece in your preferred genre/style. Identify and list the key features, and why you think they were chosen. Consider how these might inspire or influence ideas in your own performance and design.

Think about the performance and design skills of your group, and what you might wish to communicate in a dance.

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Musical theatre genre, style and structure

The development of ideas for a workshop performance is informed by the selected genre, style and structure of the musical theatre piece.

Genre and style in musical theatre

Genre and **style** in musical theatre refer to **categories** and **characteristics** of specific types of performance pieces. Popular music theatre examples include:

- book musicals, e.g. *Oklahoma!, Guys and Dolls*
- operetta, e.g. *The Pirates of Penzance, The Merry Widow*
- jukebox musical, e.g. *Mamma Mia, We Will Rock You*
- rock musical, e.g. *Hair, Hamilton.*

Key features

Each musical theatre genre has **key stylistic features**. These are specific to the genre and make it easy to identify.

Genre	Stylistic feature
Jukebox musical	Existing songs from pop band or artist
20th century book musicals	Male/female juvenile lead characters

Some contemporary musicals include features from more than one genre. Key stylistic features may include:

- **style of music and singing** – e.g. pop, rock, light opera
- **style of dance** – e.g. jazz, ballet
- **themes** – e.g. forbidden love, conflict, historical
- **plot/story** – e.g. romance, adventure, mystery
- **character types** – e.g. juvenile lead, comic character, villain
- **use of production elements** – e.g. costume, set, lighting.

Common elements

Musical theatre combines three elements:

1 **Music/songs**, including solos, duets, chorus numbers and instrumental sections.

2 **Dance sequences** within songs or as separate elements, such as interludes.

3 **Libretto** – sections of spoken dialogue. In some musicals, libretto is replaced with 'sung through' elements of dialogue.

Functions

Music and **dance** can be used to set or change the mood, heighten drama or emotion and provide an interlude.

Dialogue and **song** can be used for plot development and character and relationship development.

Shaping ideas

The chosen genre and style for a workshop performance will inform all decisions when developing, **shaping** and **structuring** work. It is good to decide on the key features and elements that are important to your piece. For example:

- ✓ **theme:** finding love again
- ✓ **idea:** three couples meet in the same locations at different times in history
- ✓ **genre/style:** jukebox musical
- ✓ **chosen elements:** songs by Ariana Grande, dialogue and dance
- ✓ **form/structure:** three scenes include song/dialogue, linked by dance interludes.

Now try this

Watch or think back on extracts from musicals in your preferred genre/style. List the key features and how they are used in the piece. Consider how these might inspire or influence ideas in your own performance and design.

Think about the performance and design skills of your group, and how you can put them to best use.

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Skills and creative intentions

The development of ideas for a performance is informed by the skills of the performers and designers, and their creative intentions.

Linking skills and ideas

Knowing the **skills**, **knowledge** and **expertise** of members of a group can inform ideas and help decide who does what.

- If a group is particularly good at contemporary dance or Epic theatre, this might influence the selected style.
- If someone has sheet music and someone else can play an instrument, you could include a song and have live music.
- If someone writes quickly, they might take notes of meetings, ideas and decisions.
- If someone knows how to edit music or scripts, they might organise these resources.

This dance piece in response to the theme 'Celebrate' used the skills of group members who could perform gymnastic dance moves.

Identifying skills and knowledge

At the start of the creative process, write down the skills and knowledge of the group. Start with your own list and then share it so that others might identify a skill you haven't noted. For example:

- I am good at choreography.
- I can play the piano.
- I have good stamina.
- I am particularly good at contemporary dance.
- I am expressive with my body.
- I can sing and dance at the same time.
- I can project my voice well.
- I know how to edit music.
- I am not scared to be a silly character.
- I have lots of sheet music at home.
- I can take notes and type quickly.
- I know how to do lifts safely.
- I know how to warm up the voice properly.
- I can develop my design skills.

Creative intentions

Creative intention relates to what you are trying to **express** or **communicate** in performance. This could be a serious topic, or might be purely for entertainment. When making and explaining a creative decision, make sure you can support it by stating why you made that choice. As you select creative ideas, answer these questions:

- How effective is this idea? Will it work?
- To what extent does the group have the skills and techniques to contribute to the performance successfully?

Developing ideas

Your creative intention will help you make decisions as you develop your work.

<u>Creative intention</u>

To communicate how mental health affects teenagers.

<u>Scenes</u>

1 Bullying scene.
2 Statistics scene.
3 Bipolar physical theatre sequence.
4 Depression split-stage scene.

Need to develop Scene 1 to make the link clear to mental health. Are they bullied because of a mental health issue, or does the issue cause the bullying? Workshop this next week to create the link.

Now try this

Create a list of your own skills and knowledge you could bring to a performance.

Think about the activities you take part in, inside and outside school. Ask someone who knows you well if they can add anything.