

BTEC Performing Arts - Tech Award

Overview:

The BTEC Performing Arts Tech Award is a practical, engaging qualification designed for students aged 14-16 who want to explore the world of performing arts through technical and creative skills. It combines hands-on learning with theoretical understanding, preparing learners for further study or careers in theatre, dance, music, and other creative industries.

Who is it for?

- Students interested in performing arts and production
- Those who enjoy both practical work and theory
- Learners wanting to develop skills in acting, dancing, or technical support roles

Assessment:

A combination of coursework and practical assignments
Portfolio of evidence including videos, journals, and written reflections
Set tasks that reflect real-life performing arts scenarios
Graded Pass, Merit, Distinction

Progression Opportunities:

Further education: BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts, A Levels in Drama or Dance
Vocational routes: Theatre technician apprenticeships, performance arts colleges
Careers: Acting, dance, stage management, lighting and sound technician, production assistant

Course Structure:

The Tech Award consists of three units:

Exploring the Performing Arts

- Understand the different sectors of performing arts
- Explore roles, skills, and responsibilities in the industry
- Analyse professional performances

Developing Skills and Techniques in the Performing Arts

- Practical workshops in acting, dance, or technical skills
- Develop and improve performance skills
- Reflect on progress and development

Responding to a Brief

- Work individually or in groups to create a performance or production based on a set brief
- Apply skills learned to a real-world context
- Plan, develop, and present a final performance or technical piece

Skills Developed:

- Performance and technical skills (acting, dance, stagecraft)
- Creativity and problem-solving
- Communication and teamwork
- Time management and self-

Why Choose This Course?

- Learn in a creative, hands-on environment
- Gain industry-relevant experience
- Build confidence and teamwork skills
- Prepare for exciting careers in the arts sector

A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

Plot Summary

The play, adapted by Simon Stephens from the novel by Mark Haddon, follows Christopher Boone, a 15-year-old boy with an extraordinary brain who sees the world in a unique and logical way. After discovering his neighbour's dog, Wellington, has been killed, Christopher sets out to solve the mystery. His investigation uncovers hidden family secrets and leads him on a journey that changes his life. The story is told through Christopher's eyes and explores his challenges with communication, trust, and independence.

Characters:

- Christopher Boone – the protagonist, a mathematically gifted teenager who sees the world differently.
- Ed Boone – Christopher's father, protective but troubled.
- Judy Boone – Christopher's mother, who has a complex relationship with her son.
- Siobhan – Christopher's teacher and confidante.
- Mrs. Shears – owner of the murdered dog, Wellington.
- Roger Shears – Judy's partner.



Themes:

- Truth and Lies
- Family and Relationships
- Isolation and Communication
- Neurodiversity and Perspective
- Bravery and Growth

Purpose:

The play aims to provide insight into the mind of someone with autism spectrum condition (ASC), promote understanding and empathy, and explore how people navigate relationships, trust, and challenges. It also highlights the beauty of individual perspectives and celebrates neurodiversity.

Staging

The original production used a minimalist, grid-style set with digital projections, lighting, and sound to convey Christopher's thoughts and emotions. The stage often represented multiple environments, from homes to train stations, using creative movement and multimedia elements.

Rehearsal Process:

Rehearsals involved physical theatre techniques, character development exercises, and ensemble coordination. Emphasis was placed on non-verbal communication, movement sequences, and the use of space to reflect Christopher's inner world.

Practitioners:

- Simon Stephens – playwright
- Marianne Elliott – original director known for innovative and immersive staging
- Frantic Assembly – physical theatre company that collaborated on movement direction, influencing the style and staging

Theatrical Style

Physical Theatre

Strong influence from Frantic Assembly, using stylized movement and choreographed sequences.

Movement is used to illustrate thoughts, transitions, and abstract ideas, often replacing traditional scene changes.

The staging often avoids realism, instead creating an abstract, symbolic world that mirrors Christopher's mind. Use of minimal set, bold lighting, sound effects, and projections to show emotional and mental states rather than realistic locations.

The set often resembles a giant graph or grid, reflecting his love of math and structure.

The cast functions as an ensemble, frequently stepping in and out of different characters and roles. Actors work collaboratively to create environments, objects, and emotional landscapes.

The script reflects Christopher's logical, detailed narration, often breaking the fourth wall and addressing the audience directly.

Director's Process:

The director emphasized creating a cohesive vision that balanced realism with abstract representation. Collaboration with designers and choreographers ensured that each element supported the storytelling. Character work and blocking reflected Christopher's viewpoint, and timing was critical to match technical cues.



Design Process:

Designers focused on integrating technology, lighting, and sound to represent Christopher's mind. The set was built to be dynamic and interactive, allowing quick scene transitions and visual storytelling. The use of projections and synchronized lighting was key.

Frantic Assembly is a renowned British theatre company celebrated for its innovative approach to physical theatre. Known for combining movement, design, and narrative in powerful and visually striking ways, the company played a vital role in shaping the physical style of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Their collaboration brought a unique physical vocabulary to the production, using choreographed movement sequences to express the internal experiences of the protagonist, Christopher. This physical storytelling helped convey emotions, transitions, and environments in a non-verbal yet impactful way, making abstract thoughts visible on stage. Frantic Assembly's work emphasizes collaboration, ensemble work, and the use of space and bodies to tell complex, layered stories—ideals that are central to the staging of *Curious Incident*.



Synopsis

Christopher finds his neighbour, Mrs Shears' dog, Wellington, lying dead with a garden fork sticking out of his side. As the main action continues, Christopher's teacher, Siobhan, narrates the story by reading from his notebook.

A policeman arrives and Christopher tells him that he didn't kill the dog. In his book, Christopher explains that he doesn't lie. Christopher starts to groan, and when the policeman tries to help Christopher up, he hits him. The policeman arrests him. At the police station we find out that Christopher has a father, but his mother has died. His father, Ed, arrives and explains that Christopher didn't mean to hurt the policeman. Christopher is given a caution and released.

In Christopher's book he explains that his mum died two years ago. He came home from school one day and she wasn't there. We see the moment when Ed tells Christopher his mum has died of a heart attack.

Christopher tells Siobhan he is going to make finding Wellington's killer a project although his father told him not to. He visits a number of neighbours, including Mrs Alexander. She hasn't heard anything about Wellington, but realises they haven't talked before and it's nice that he's come to talk to her. When she goes inside to get some refreshments, Christopher worries Mrs Alexander will call the police so he goes away.

Ed talks to Mrs Gascoyne at Christopher's school. He wants Christopher to take his Maths A Level early and offers to pay for the extra staff needed. Ed tells Christopher off for 'poking round' Mrs Shears' garden. He makes him promise to give up his detective work.

Christopher goes back to see Mrs Alexander and asks her about Mr Shears. She explains that Christopher's mother had an affair with Mr Shears: this is why Mr Shears left. Ed discovers Christopher's book and reads about his conversation with Mrs Alexander and what he's been up to. Ed shakes Christopher, who punches him. Ed then hits him back before going off in search of a drink. After he has calmed down, Ed apologises to Christopher.

When Christopher gets home, he looks all over the house for his book, eventually finding a box with his book and a number of envelopes with his name and address on. He realises they are from his mother, Judy, who is now living with Mr Shears.

The next day, while Ed is out, Christopher reads more of the letters from his mother. Ed finds him with the letters and tries to explain that he wanted to protect him. He explains that when his mother left with Mr Shears, Mrs Shears was very nice to him and they became good friends, although things became difficult and they argued. One day he left after an argument with Mrs Shears to find Wellington waiting to attack him, so he killed the dog. Christopher rolls himself into a ball and recites numbers to calm down. He tells his father he has to leave because it would be dangerous to stay. He has his mother's address now.

Christopher decides to go and live with his mum in London. He finds his dad's wallet, takes out a card and memorises the PIN. He goes to Swindon to get to the train station. Christopher explains a formula for reaching places if you are lost. At the station, a policeman approaches Christopher and offers to help him. As he tries to board the train, Christopher is stopped by the policeman, who tells him his father is at the police station, looking for him. Unable to convince Christopher to get off, the train departs with them both still on board. Christopher wets himself and the policeman sends him to the toilet. He hides in the luggage rack, counting prime numbers to calm down. Eventually the train arrives in London.

This station is even more confusing than Swindon. Siobhan's voice talks him through how to find his way, and Ed's tells him how to safely board an Underground train. Finally getting a train, Christopher arrives at Willesden Junction and asks a shopkeeper how to get to '451c Chapter Road, London NW2 5NG.'

Judy arrives home with Roger (Mr Shears) to find Christopher waiting outside. She comforts her son, takes him inside, in spite of Roger's reluctance.

Later, Ed arrives from Swindon and argues with Judy. Ed is allowed to see his son and tries desperately to apologise, but the policeman returns and escorts Ed from the house. Judy and Roger argue over how long Christopher can stay, but Christopher announces that he needs to go back to Swindon to sit his Maths A Level. Judy later tells him that she has postponed his exam, which sends him into a panic. Roger is drunk and grabs at Christopher. Judy pulls him away and promises her son it will never happen again. They take the car and drive back to Swindon.

At Christopher's school, Siobhan says that the A Level papers are still there and they are arranging for the Reverend Peters to invigilate the exam. Christopher is very tired but wants to do the exam. When he attempts the paper, though, he goes into a wild panic and can't even read the words. He counts cardinal numbers to calm down and is soon able to answer a question – Siobhan suggests that he could explain it to the audience after the play has finished.

Ed begs Christopher for five minutes of his time. They need to talk: Ed can't cope any more with being shunned by his son. He asks if they can start a project to spend more time together and promises everything will be OK. He presents his son with a dog. It will stay at Ed's house but Christopher can visit at any time. Christopher names him Sandy.

At school, Christopher receives his exam result. He has an A*. He tells Siobhan he's spending much more time with his Dad, who has also arranged for him to take a Further Maths A Level next year. Christopher is making plans to go to university. He knows he can do it because he went to London, solved the mystery of Wellington, found his mother, was brave and wrote a book.

Rehearsal Process – David Nellist

As the new cast of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time prepare to take the stage, David Nellist, who will play Reverend Peters, takes us behind the scenes of a typical day in the rehearsal room.

It's Week 2 of The Curious Incident rehearsals and the company are all bonding well. The boot camp is in full swing; we start each morning with an hour's physical including circuit training which is tough but great. We then spend the next 2 hours getting to know the physical side of the show. Soon our world is full of "Tube Nightmares, Swindon 5s and Calippos!"

The afternoon is spent working our way through Act 1. It's great that we have 4 cast members who are currently performing in the show so they can nudge you when you go left when everyone else is going right. To be fair that's just me!

The speed at which Joe (Ayre) and Tom (Dennis), our 2 Christopher's are learning the show is mightily impressive and really pushes the whole company on. The great thing about being an actor, unlike most other jobs is the fact that someone like Joe or Tom (who have just left drama school) can lead a company comprising of actors with decades of experience and it's never questioned. Everyone's point of view is as valid as anyone else's. We learn as a team and look out for one another. A rehearsal room is a place not of competition but of encouragement and goodwill. The 4 actors who have been in the show a year already, and have to perform in the evenings, show as much commitment and energy to the piece as us newbies. This is what theatre is about!

Today we watched the scene where Christopher puts the giant train track together, and the excitement at seeing the train go round for the first time was palpable. However, Elle our director, like British Rail is keeping us waiting patiently on the platform as the train is delayed.

The first stagger through of Act 1 on Friday afternoon went really well, and everyone was buoyed up by how well the story holds up without the set and costume etc. Joe really held the story together as the play travels very fast. The atmosphere was supportive and it felt like the company has garnered a really good solidarity, which will hold us in good stead through the coming year.

Today I saw 15 tired actors, so this week was a good week.

Actors Rehearsal Process – Step By Step

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____

Types of lighting



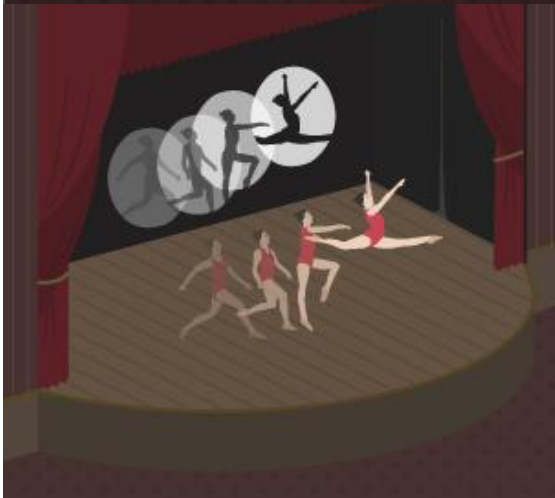
Lighting is a very technical area and there are many types of lights (or lanterns). **Coloured gels** can be added to the front of some lanterns so that they throw coloured light onto the stage. Some can also be fitted with what is known as a **gobo**. This is a sheet inserted on a frame at the front of the light with a design cut into it. It filters the light, creating a picture effect on the stage. For example, a gobo could be used to create a dappled lighting effect to look like the leaves of a forest, or could be cut to create strips of light onstage which look like the bars of a prison.



Spot - has a hard-edged effect, used to light characters or elements on the stage. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



Fresnel - used for a softer edged effect, with a diffusing lens in front of the lamp. It's useful for good overall light when used with others. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



Flood - produces a clear wide-angled light, but there's little control over the spread of the light. Coloured filters can be used with this lamp.



Strobe - a flashing light, used for special effects. It's often used to give the effect of old movies. It produces a jerky effect on the movements of actors when used on its own.

Costume design

Costume is what the actors wear onstage. This can have a huge visual impact, as well as alerting the audience to character, place and the period of history in which the play is set. Choice of costume will vary according to the demands of the play. The costume designer must know the play well and be



aware of the pace and structure of the piece. For example, it wouldn't be practical if a character was working as a fireman and wearing an elaborate costume in one scene and relaxing at home in his own clothes in the next one. The symbolic addition of a hat in the first scene might be enough to represent the role and wouldn't interfere with the flow from one scene to the next.

Costume Design Task

Design a costume for Christopher.

Annotate your design to show colour, fabric and fit.

