

You are going to read three extracts which are all concerned in some way with extraterrestrial life. For questions 1–6, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## Essential tips

▶ This part of the exam tests your general understanding of a whole short text or text organisation, and some questions may also focus on details. Read each text through in order to get the general meaning before attempting the questions.

▶ Look at key words in each question and see how they relate to the relevant part of the text. The text may use different words from those that appear in the questions and answer options. Look for phrases in the text which convey the same meaning as one of the options. The option you choose must express the same idea as that which appears in the text.

**Question 1:** The answer to this question may not be immediately obvious. What is the magazine trying to do, according to the advertisement? You may find it useful to eliminate the incorrect options first.

**Question 2:** Notice the word 'must' in the question stem. It is important that the completed question stem conveys the same meaning as that expressed in the text.

## Wanted: Assistant Editor for new science publication

Are you a science enthusiast with a journalistic flair? Or perhaps you are a journalist with a passion for science? If so, then you could be the person we are looking for!

In September we will be launching *Is There Anybody Out There?*, a monthly science magazine specialising in astrobiology and astrophysics. It will report on the latest research and findings regarding the study of life in the universe. We are looking for a creative and innovative Assistant Editor to help develop a magazine that will be accessible to the layman.

### Job description

The Assistant Editor will be expected to propose ideas for stories and feature articles and be involved in some of the initial research. He or she will be responsible for editing the news stories and help to set up the magazine's web site. This will include online articles and information services.

### Qualifications required

The suitable candidate will have a Bachelor's degree in journalism or science, and preferably some knowledge of astrobiology and/or astrophysics. He or she will be familiar with standard office computer software and will demonstrate creative writing skills. The ability to handle stress and meet tight deadlines is of the utmost importance.

If you think you fulfil these requirements and are interested, send us your resumé with a covering letter explaining why you think you would be suitable for the job.

- 1 The new magazine aims to
  - A attract a readership of non-specialists.
  - B publish articles about life on Earth.
  - C conduct research into astrobiology.
  - D develop an interest in general science.
  
- 2 To be considered for the job, a candidate must
  - A have experience as a journalist.
  - B know about specialist software.
  - C be able to work under pressure.
  - D have studied astrobiology or astrophysics.

## Essential tips

**Question 3:** Read the options carefully and compare them with what is expressed in the relevant part of the text. Look for a word in the text that expresses the idea of 'flaw'.

**Question 4:** Concentrate on the key words in the question.

# Life in the Universe

Until recently, we have confined ourselves to our own solar system in the search for life, partly because we have not had evidence for the existence of other solar systems. Furthermore, our telescopes have not been powerful enough to detect planets. But not long ago, a technique was developed that could ascertain reliably whether stars have planets orbiting them. Basically, this technique relies upon our ability to detect with some degree of precision how much light a star is giving off. If this changes for a brief period, it is probably because a large object – a planet – is passing in front of it. At first, the technique could only establish the existence of a very large planet with an elliptical orbit that brought it into close proximity to the star. This was one of the limitations of the technique: life could not exist on such large planets. Furthermore, the orbit of the planet would preclude the possibility of other, smaller planets orbiting the same star. Therefore, that particular planetary system could be effectively ruled out in terms of the search for life.

However, astronomers using an Anglo-American telescope in New South Wales now believe they have pinpointed a planetary system which resembles our own. For the first time, they have identified a large planet, twice the size of Jupiter, orbiting a star like the sun, at much the same distance from its parent star as Jupiter is from the sun. And this is the vital point about their discovery: there is at least a theoretical possibility that smaller planets could be orbiting inside the orbit of this planet.

- 3 According to the article, the initial flaw in the technique for detecting new planets lay in
- A its inability to determine how much light a star was emitting.
  - B the fact that it could detect large objects passing in front of a star.
  - C its dependence on the amount of light that was emitted by a star.
  - D its inability to detect a planet where life could exist.
- 4 What is important about the recent discovery in New South Wales?
- A Astronomers have discovered a planet which resembles Jupiter.
  - B Smaller planets may exist within the new planetary system.
  - C The new planet lies as far from its star as Jupiter does from the sun.
  - D There is a possibility that life exists on this new planet.

## Essential tips

**Question 5:** The writer has many positive things to say about the film, but the question focuses on what makes it so convincing.

**Question 6:** Be careful about the use of words in the options! What does the writer actually say about the use of special effects in the film?

## EXTRACT FROM A FILM REVIEW

The Sci-Fi Film Festival retrospective begins this week, and science buffs and UFO enthusiasts might do a lot worse than go and see Zemeckis's 1997 classic, *Contact*, starring Jodie Foster. Foster plays a research scientist called Ellie Arroway who intercepts a message from outer space. This message indicates the existence of intelligent life and it triggers a whole chain of extraordinary events.

The film is based on the novel by the celebrated astronomer Carl Sagan. Its strength lies in the fact that it manages to retain much of the power and compelling nature of the book, while at the same time maintaining a relatively high level of technical accuracy. This is largely thanks to Sagan's involvement in the making of the film. As many of you may know, Sagan died before the film was completed.

The main plot, concerning the discovery of the message, the struggle to interpret it, and the eventual contact between humans and aliens, is interwoven with the intrigues that arise from the ambitions of scientists, politicians and industrialists for fame and power.

As is usually the case with Zemeckis, special effects are used both creatively and effectively, serving to enhance the plot rather than swamp it, and there are fine performances, particularly by Ms Foster, Matthew McConaughey, James Woods and Tom Skerritt. While the method with which Arroway receives the alien communication is a far cry from the advanced technology actually in operation, the story is nevertheless convincing, and contributed to a renewed interest in UFOs and the search for extraterrestrial life.

- 5 The review suggests that one reason the film is so convincing is because
- A Jodie Foster is a very fine actress.
  - B an astronomer was involved in its creation.
  - C it used accurate techniques.
  - D it was directed by Zemeckis.
- 6 In the reviewer's opinion, the special effects
- A are the most important aspect of the film.
  - B effectively suffocate the plot.
  - C are used to the film's advantage.
  - D enhance the actors' performances.

PAPER 1 Reading

Part 1

PAPER 2 Writing

Part 2

PAPER 3 Use of English

Part 3

PAPER 4 Listening

Part 4

PAPER 5 Speaking

You are going to read a newspaper article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the article. Choose from the paragraphs **A–G** the one which fits each gap (7–12). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## Peach of an Idea

Regent's Park in central London was recently the site of a festival of music and fruit, marking the fifth birthday of Innocent, the drinks company set up by three college friends who wanted to bring a bit of nature to the table. It all began five years ago, when Adam Balon, Richard Reed and Jon Wright were contemplating starting their own business. They took 500 pounds worth of fruit to a music festival in west London, made a huge batch of smoothies – fruit drinks blended with milk and yoghurt – and asked their customers for a verdict.

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Looking back, they now admit that they were amazingly naive about starting a business, thinking it would just take off once they had the recipes and packaging figured out. In fact, the three budding businessmen had nine months living on credit cards and overdrafts before they sold their first smoothie.

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The appeal of Innocent's products lies in their pure, unadulterated ingredients, plus a dash of quirky advertising. As one campaign put it, their drinks are not made *from* fruit, they *are* fruit. Innocent's refusal to compromise on this point presented them with some problems when they first started talking to potential suppliers, Adam says. This was when they discovered the truth about the majority of so-called 'natural fruit drinks'.

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'Naivety', adds Richard, who is always ready with a soundbite, 'can be a great asset in business because you challenge the status quo.' Although Innocent's drinks are fiendishly healthy, the company has always been very careful not to preach. 'Everyone knows what they're supposed to do,' says Richard. 'But we just

don't, especially when you live in a city and it's pints of lager and a kebab at the end of the night. We just thought, "Wouldn't it be great to make it easy for people to get hold of this natural fresh goodness?" Then at least you've got one healthy habit in a world of bad ones.'

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In essence, explains Jon, Innocent plans to simply freeze some of its smoothies, possibly with a bit of egg thrown in to make it all stick together. To help testers make up their minds about which combinations work, the yes and no bins will be dusted off and put out again.

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'You've just got to put that in the category of "never say never",' says Richard. 'But the three of us go away once every three months to talk about what we want out of the business and we are all in the same place. So as long as we are excited and challenged and proud of the business, we are going to want to be a part of it.'

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'We have got annoyed with each other,' admits Adam. 'But the areas we have had fallings-out over are things where we each think we have reasons to be right. So it's been about really important stuff like the colour of the floor, the colour of the entrance, or what to paint the pillar.' 'We really did nearly jump on each other about that,' adds Jon. 'Was it going to be blue or green?'

- A** Despite the temptation to do so, they have so far refused all offers. This might not last, of course, but while it does, it will have positive consequences for the fruit drinks market.
- B** At the Regent's Park event the team tried out one of their new ideas – extending their range of products into desserts. 'We always try and develop something that we actually want, and for us there is this problem of Sunday evenings when you sit down with a DVD and a big tub of ice cream and it's nice to munch through it, but my God, is it bad for you,' Richard adds.
- C** Most are made from concentrated juice with water – and perhaps sweeteners, colours and preservatives – added. 'We didn't even know about that when we started,' Adam explains. 'It was when we started talking to people and they said, "OK, we'll use orange concentrate," and we said, "What's concentrate?" and they explained it and we said, "No, we want orange juice."'
- D** 'We originally wrote this massive long questionnaire,' says Richard. 'But then we thought, if you're at this festival and it's sunny, the last thing you want is to fill out a survey. So we decided to keep it simple and ask literally, "Should we stop working and make these things?" We had a bin that said yes and a bin that said no, and at the end of the weekend the yes bin was full of empty bottles. We all went in to work the next day and quit.'
- E** They also seem to have managed to stay friends. They still take communal holidays, and the fact that each member of the team brings a different and complementary set of skills to Innocent seems to have helped them avoid any big bust-ups over strategy.
- F** Innocent now employs 46 people and FruitTowers – as they call their base – has slowly expanded along the line of industrial units. The company has managed to establish a dominant position in the face of fierce competition. This year Innocent became Britain's leading brand of smoothie, selling about 40% of the 50 million downed annually by British drinkers.
- G** Having created a successful business from this base, is there a temptation to sell up and go and live on a desert island? With consumers becoming increasingly concerned about what they put in their stomachs, premium brands such as Innocent are worth a lot of money to a potential buyer.

## Essential tips

- ▶ This part of the exam tests your understanding of how a text is organised and, in particular, how paragraphs relate to each other. For example, a paragraph might give details about an idea mentioned or discussed in a previous paragraph, or it may present another side of an argument discussed in a previous paragraph.
  - ▶ Read through the main text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about. Don't worry if there are words or phrases you don't understand. Find the main idea in each paragraph.
  - ▶ Look for links between the main text and the gapped paragraphs. The gapped paragraph may have links either to the paragraph before it or to the paragraph after it, or even to both.
  - ▶ Look for theme and language links. For example:
    - references to people, places and times.
    - words or phrases that refer back or forward to another word, phrase or idea in the text. For example, if the first line of a paragraph says something like 'This becomes clear when we look at ...', 'This' refers back to something expressed in the previous paragraph.
    - linking devices such as 'firstly', 'secondly', 'furthermore', 'on the other hand', 'however'. These will help you to find connections between paragraphs.
  - ▶ When you have found a paragraph that may fill a gap, read the paragraph that comes before it and the one that comes after it to see that they fit together.
  - ▶ Re-read the completed text and make sure it makes sense.
- Question 7:** The last sentence in the previous paragraph describes how Balon, Reed and Wright 'asked their customers for a verdict'. Which gapped paragraph describes how customers gave their opinion?
- Question 9:** The previous paragraph ends with 'This was when they discovered the truth about the majority of so-called "natural fruit drinks"'. Look for a gapped paragraph which describes this 'truth'.
- Question 11:** In the paragraph following the gap, one of the owners of Innocent implies that something seems unlikely because he and his colleagues are still a good team. Which gapped paragraph poses a question which this paragraph answers?

PAPER 1 Reading

Part 1

PAPER 2 Writing

Part 2

PAPER 3 Use of English

Part 3

PAPER 4 Listening

Part 4

PAPER 5 Speaking

You are going to read a magazine article. For questions 13–19, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## The Beauties of the Stone Age

*Jane Howard views some works of ancient art*

I have just come home after viewing some astonishing works of art that were recently discovered in Church Hole cave in Nottinghamshire. They are not drawings, as one would expect, but etchings, and they depict a huge range of wild animals. The artists who created them lived around 13,000 years ago, and the images are remarkable on a variety of counts. First of all, their sheer number is staggering: there are ninety all told. Moreover, fifty-eight of them are on the ceiling. This is extremely rare in cave art, according to a leading expert, Dr Wilbur Samson of Central Midlands University. 'Wall pictures are the norm,' he says. 'But more importantly, the Church Hole etchings are an incredible artistic achievement. They can hold their own in comparison with the best found in continental Europe.' I am not a student of the subject, so I have to take his word for it. However, you do not have to be an expert to appreciate their beauty.

In fact, it is the wider significance of the etchings that is likely to attract most attention in academic circles, since they radically alter our view of life in Britain during this epoch. It had previously been thought that ice-age hunters in this country were isolated from people in more central areas of Europe, but the Church Hole images prove that ancient Britons were part of a culture that had spread right across the continent. And they were at least as sophisticated culturally as their counterparts on the mainland.

News of such exciting discoveries spreads rapidly, and thanks to the Internet and mobile phones, a great many people probably knew about this discovery within hours of the initial expedition returning. As a result, some etchings may already have been damaged, albeit inadvertently, by eager visitors. In a regrettably late response, the site has been cordoned off with a high, rather intimidating fence, and warning notices have been posted.

An initial survey of the site last year failed to reveal the presence of the etchings. The reason lies in the

expectations of the researchers. They had been looking for the usual type of cave drawing or painting, which shows up best under direct light. Consequently, they used powerful torches, shining them straight onto the rock face. However, the Church Hole images are modifications of the rock itself, and show up best when seen from a certain angle in the natural light of early morning. Having been fortunate to see them at this hour, I can only say that I was deeply – and unexpectedly – moved. While most cave art often seems to have been created in a shadowy past very remote from us, these somehow convey the impression that they were made yesterday.

Dr Samson feels that the lighting factor provides important information about the likely function of these works of art. 'I think the artists knew very well that the etchings would hardly be visible except early in the morning. We can therefore deduce that the chamber was used for rituals involving animal worship, and that they were conducted just after dawn, as a preliminary to the day's hunting.'

However, such ideas are controversial in the world of archaeology and human origins. Dr Olivia Caruthers of the Reardon Institute remains unconvinced that the function of the etchings at Church Hole can be determined with any certainty. 'When we know so little about the social life of early humans, it would be foolish to insist on any rigid interpretation. We should, in my view, begin by tentatively assuming that their creators were motivated in part by aesthetic considerations – while of course being prepared to modify this verdict at a later date, if and when new evidence emerges.'

To which I can only add that I felt deeply privileged to have been able to view Church Hole. It is a site of tremendous importance culturally and is part of the heritage, not only of this country, but the world as a whole.

## Essential tips

- ▶ This part of the exam tests your detailed understanding of a text, including the views and attitudes expressed.
- ▶ Read through the text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about. Don't worry if there are words or phrases you don't understand.
- ▶ The questions follow the order of the text. Read each question or question stem carefully and underline the key words.
- ▶ Look in the text for the answer to the question. One of the options will express the same idea, but don't expect that it will do so in the words of the text.
- ▶ The final question may ask about the intention or opinion of the writer. You may need to consider the text as a whole to answer this question, not just the last section.

**Question 13:** An option can only be correct if all the information contained in it is accurate. Look at option A: are the images in Church Hole 'unique examples of ceiling art'? The text says they are 'extremely rare in cave art' – is this the same? Look at option B: are the images in Church Hole 'particularly beautiful'? And are they 'paintings'?

**Question 15:** Look at option A. What does the writer say about the discovery of the images being made public? Look at option B. If something is 'vulnerable to damage', what might happen to it? Look at option C. The text says 'many people probably knew about the discovery within hours of the initial expedition returning'. Is this the same as saying many people visited the cave within hours? Look at option D. Have the images definitely been damaged? When may the damage have taken place: before or after the measures were taken?

**Question 17:** Sometimes you will find words from the options in the

- 13 According to the text, the images in Church Hole cave are  
A unique examples of ceiling art.  
B particularly beautiful cave paintings.  
C superior in quality to other cave art in Britain.  
D aesthetically exceptional.
- 14 What is the cultural significance of these images?  
A They indicate that people from central Europe had settled in Britain.  
B They prove that ancient Britons hunted over large areas.  
C They reveal the existence of a single ice-age culture in Europe.  
D They suggest that people in Europe were more sophisticated than Britons.
- 15 According to the text,  
A the discovery of the images should not have been made public.  
B the images in the cave are vulnerable to damage.  
C many people visited the cave within hours of its discovery.  
D the measures taken to protect the images have proved ineffective.
- 16 Why were the images not discovered during the initial survey?  
A They were not viewed from the right angle.  
B People were not expecting to find any images.  
C Artificial light was used to explore the cave.  
D The torches used were too powerful.
- 17 What conclusions does Dr Samson draw from the lighting factor?  
A Rituals are common in animal worship.  
B The artists never intended to make the images visible.  
C The images were intended to be visible at a certain time of day.  
D Ice-age hunters worshipped animals in the cave.
- 18 According to Dr Caruthers,  
A we cannot make inferences from cave art.  
B the images in Church Hole do not serve any particular function.  
C experts know nothing about life 13,000 years ago.  
D the function of such images is open to question.
- 19 It seems that the writer  
A can now envisage the life of ice-age hunters more vividly.  
B was profoundly impressed by the images in the cave.  
C has now realised the true significance of cave art.  
D thinks the images should receive more publicity.

text. Be careful: the meaning in the text is not necessarily the same as that in the answer options. Here, option D says the hunters 'worshipped animals in the cave', but the text says the cave was used for 'rituals involving animal worship', which is not the same thing.

- PAPER 1 Reading
- PAPER 2 Writing
- PAPER 3 Use of English
- PAPER 4 Listening
- PAPER 5 Speaking

- Part 1
- Part 2
- Part 3
- Part 4

You are going to read a newspaper article containing reviews of performances. For questions 20–34, choose from the reviews (A–D).

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

## Essential tips

- ▶ In this part of the exam, you are required to read one or more texts to find specific information, which may include an opinion or the expression of an attitude.
- ▶ Read the instructions, the title and the questions.
- ▶ Skim through the text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about. Don't worry if there are words or phrases you don't understand, especially since this text is long.
- ▶ Read each question again and make sure you understand what it is asking. Underline the key words in the question (the words that show you what you should look for in the text).
- ▶ Scan the text for ideas or words that relate to the question. Read the relevant part of the text carefully.
- ▶ Remember that the part of the text that gives the answer for each question will almost certainly not use the same words; instead, it will express the idea in a different way.

**Question 22:** The word 'reminded' is used in the statement. Think of other words or phrases that convey this idea and scan the text for them. Then check that the part of the text you find also expresses the idea of an experience that was both unusual and enjoyable.

**Question 26:** If the statement is expressed in difficult language, you need to examine it carefully. What is meant by 'the conventions' of an art form? This must refer to the conventional or usual way of doing something. Find a performance that was unusual in relation to a conventional or ordinary performance of that art form (opera, puppet show, jazz or theatre).

In which review are the following stated?

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| Performers worked seasonally at one time.  | 20 ..... |
| The venue did not allow for a performance of a particular art form.                | 21 ..... |
| The performance reminded the writer of an unusual performance he had once enjoyed. | 22 ..... |
| The performers were free to devise their own programme.                            | 23 ..... |
| The performers had been recommended to the writer.                                 | 24 ..... |
| The behaviour of the performers was contrary to the writer's expectations.         | 25 ..... |
| The performance challenged the conventions of an art form.                         | 26 ..... |
| Performances of this sort used to be very popular.                                 | 27 ..... |
| The performance prompted someone to reconsider a prejudice about an art form.      | 28 ..... |
| The performance had unexpectedly sophisticated requirements.                       | 29 ..... |
| An element of the performance was distressingly realistic.                         | 30 ..... |
| One of the artists performed despite a handicap.                                   | 31 ..... |
| The performance comprised a number of extracts from various works.                 | 32 ..... |
| The performers derived pleasure from audience participation.                       | 33 ..... |
| One participant revealed an unexpected talent.                                     | 34 ..... |

**Question 28:** A 'prejudice' is a negative opinion someone has about a person or thing. Find a section of a review that describes how someone reconsidered an opinion or changed their mind about the art form.



# That's Entertainment!

Felix Masterson decided to engage artists to put on performances in his own home for his family's private enjoyment. Here is his report.

## A Opera Recital

For the first of our 'home performances' we decided on opera, a form of art that especially moves me. The other art form that I adore – ballet – could hardly be performed in the confined space of a normal house, no matter how much ingenuity was employed! My wife and I were particularly looking forward to the performance by Footstool Opera, a touring company that specialises in mounting productions in confined spaces, often coming up with a programme to order as suits the occasion. When I was planning the event, I imagined the opera company would bring with them a high-quality sound system of some sort to provide musical accompaniment, but the manager informed me that all they required was 'a piano in good working order'. I hastily arranged for our ancient upright to be tuned, and to my relief, pianist Antonia Holmes pronounced it entirely satisfactory when she tested the instrument before the performance. We had made it clear that no particular requirements would be imposed upon the performers, so they gave us a medley of familiar pieces from popular operas, and my daughter – who had previously been of the view that opera was unspeakably idiotic – was entranced. If I were to be brutally honest, I would have to say that the performers, apart from one tenor, were not in the top class. But I don't imagine many people would notice this, and it certainly didn't detract from our enjoyment of the evening.

## B Puppet Show

Having grown up with that curiously British phenomenon of puppet theatre, the Punch and Judy show, I was determined to find one of the traditional practitioners of the art and secure his services. Alas, times have changed. There was once a time when no seaside resort in the country was complete without a Punch and Judy show on the pier, but today puppet theatre of this sort can hardly compete with video games at holiday resorts. Besides, who can afford to

work only during the summer months? Consequently, there are, according to the theatrical agencies I contacted, none of the old-fashioned puppeteers left. However, I did manage to find a puppet theatre company called Little Man Theatre that included traditional Punch and Judy shows in its repertoire, so I went ahead and booked them. They arrived with a surprising number of boxes and cases. Naively, I had expected a miniature theatre to require a minimal amount of equipment. In this case, the size of the venue did indeed present a problem, though the nature of the difficulty was the reverse of what I had feared. We actually had some trouble making out the words of the crocodile character, largely – I suspect – because William Daniels, one of the two puppeteers, was suffering from a terrible cold, complete with high fever and a voice virtually reduced to a croak. Like a true pro, though, he struggled through the performance bravely. And once the first act was under way, I began to appreciate why so many props were needed. This wasn't Punch and Judy as I remembered it but a twenty-first century version of the story, requiring a staggering number of scene changes. A breathtaking performance, and though I felt sad at the demise of the old-time favourites, our children enjoyed it immensely.

## C Jazz Concert

I had initially set myself the task of finding performers of whom I knew absolutely nothing, simply by sitting down with the Yellow Pages, when a colleague of my wife's started raving about a particular jazz ensemble. It seemed churlish to do otherwise than engage them and The Hot Jazz Quintet turned out to be a group of highly professional musicians who appeared to make a point of being scrupulously polite and tidy. It was as though the stereotype image of the egocentric musician were being overturned in front of my very eyes: a surprising experience for anyone old enough to have seen The Who smash their instruments live onstage several decades ago.

Despite being in such close proximity to the musicians, it had not occurred to me that we would be required to adopt a more active role until the saxophone player handed my son a set of bongo drums and invited him to join in. As luck would have it, Mike is a percussionist with his school orchestra, and he was able to acquit himself creditably, to the delight of the professionals performing for us. Not being a connoisseur of this type of music myself, I had frankly not been prepared to enjoy this evening as much as the other members of my family. This perhaps makes it more of a tribute to the Quintet that I found myself getting quite carried away by the intricate rhythms and spectacular solos.

### **D Murder Mystery Theatre**

We invited Murder Incorporated, a theatre company that specialises in murder mysteries, to perform *Death Calls* for us, and to those of you who have not been initiated in the workings of 'murder mystery theatre', a word of explanation is needed. This is no ordinary production. In fact, one could claim that it doesn't really come under the category of theatre at all, and it

is not normally presented on a stage, either. The basic idea is that a murder is 'committed' just out of sight of the audience. After the 'body' is found, the task of the audience is to work out who the murderer is by following up on certain clues.

A few moments after the actors had arrived, when we were still under the impression that preparations were being made for the performance, a piercing scream caused us all to rush out into the hall. There we stumbled – literally – over a body oozing fake blood that was so convincing it almost caused my wife to faint. Yes, it had started. As we followed the actors around the house for scenes in various locations, we tried to work out who the murderer could be. It was a fascinating experience, and I have to report that my wife proved to be a brilliant sleuth, solving the mystery in record time. *Death Calls* was a masterpiece of condensed theatre that had me fondly recalling a production of *2001, A Space Odyssey* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, which featured a cast of two, an audience of two and an old car as the venue. Highly recommended.