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General Certificate of Education

Dance 2230

DANC1 Understanding Dance

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

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Report on the Examination DANC1 2009

This was the first year of entry for the new AS specification. The written paper, DANC1, was therefore examined for the first time in this series.

General

Section A

The two questions in Section A were in the same style as the structured questions of the legacy DAN3 paper. They aimed to test the understanding of theory by requiring identification, description and explanation. Specific marks were allocated for each part of the question.

Question 1

This question compared with last year's Q1 and Q4 on the DAN3 paper. It was an accessible question testing higher level skills as it progressed.

In part a) most candidates scored 2-3 marks out of the 3 available.

Candidates who identified generic skills (strength, flexibility, focus) rather than those skills that are more specific to group work (awareness of other dancers, timing) were awarded marks for identification of a skill but were most in danger of losing sight of the duo/trio context in b).

This resulted in many candidates not scoring highly in the more demanding c) part of the question that linked the skill to the final performance within the context of the duo/trio. Very few candidates achieved full marks on this part of the question.

The most common response was for candidates to talk generally about feeling more confident, being pleased with the result, without linking the improvement of the skill to the effect of the performance.

The mark scheme awarded candidates who explained a number of different effects, for example, aesthetics, emphasising highlights, clarifying a particular intention, as well as candidates who talked in detail about how one particular effect was significant.

There were examples of candidates referring to their own solo work.

A number of skills were not dance specific and needed to be qualified in order to be awarded; for example, 'trust' which was valid only if the candidate connected it to contact/support work.

Question 2

This was a very accessible question. The vast majority of candidates could describe developments and there were very few examples of candidates who did not understand the idea of motif development. Full marks were achieved regularly for clear explanations.

A wide variety of responses were offered – many the opposite of what might be expected – the pain and loss of war rather than the violence and aggression was a common response. And there were some thoughtful, sensitive and imaginative responses. Some candidates developed the 'Peace' motif from their own development of 'War' which was acceptable.

Candidates whose descriptions were too vague or impossible to do were not able to gain explanation marks. Many less able candidates did better on the c) and d) part as they set into the question.

Occasionally candidates analysed the existing motif rather than any development they had made. There were some rare occasions when the development had clearly not come from the original or had been developed for a group dance.

Section B

A new approach

There were two essay-style questions in this section, marked in accordance with the published bandings in the mark scheme.

Perhaps one of the most significant adjustments from the legacy specification to the new one is in the candidates' opportunity to select their own examples in order to illustrate a particular point, rather than previously where they were restricted to the more structured approaches.

This meant that examiners received wide ranging responses - very interesting discussion from able candidates and strange choices of examples from less able or less well prepared candidates.

Two of the main pitfalls for candidates not used to writing extended essays were firstly, the ability to order thoughts and secondly, to respond to a specific question. In the legacy DAN3 paper, marks were not available if candidates strayed away from the specific question. On the new DANC1 paper, able candidates were able to follow their own line of thought and be credited for comments because they could create their own context. Many candidates engaged in discussion.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to engage with the question at some level. Marks awarded ranged from 0 to 20.

For many candidates there was a link between the number and range of works that they knew and the quality of the response.

Candidates who could select from a wide range of works were more able to discuss the question in an interesting and complex way, making links between their points and following a train of thought. However, candidates who selected all abstract or narrative works or works by the same choreographer often found they were already limited in the scope of their discussion.

It was pleasing to see that some teachers had really taken the opportunity to introduce their candidates to a wide range of interesting and varied works and many candidates referred to live performances that they had seen.

Less able candidates' work was generally characterised in the following ways:

- writing down everything they remembered about three works with accidental comments about selection and use of dancers

- selecting works that were quite similar within the context of the question and the discovering that it was very difficult to make a range of points
- lack of connection between comments about selection and use of dancers and the choreographic intention of the work
- talk about number, gender, physique and role but in a descriptive way with very simplistic or no analysis
- only two works used
- making vague comments, for example, 'there were loads of dancers'; 'all the dancers played a character...'
- inaccuracies
- description and analysis of small sections of a work without an understanding of the whole work
- poor use of language leading to unclear work.

More able candidates' work was generally characterised in the following ways:

- pertinent and carefully selected examples from a range of works that supported interesting and engaging discussion – using words like 'however'; 'although'; 'in contrast'
- using a single example to make a number of points that revealed perceptive interpretation of a work. For example, the Zebra in *'Still Life' at the Penguin Café* was used to make points about the physicality of the male dancer; the juxtaposition with the females linked to the contrast in the movement vocabulary, and then a point was made about women's fashion and exploitation of animals, directing the analysis back to the choreographic intention
- making links between selection and use of dancers and other constituent features in a relevant way
- insightful analysis
- covering all aspects of the question
- structuring the essay by using gender, role, physique and number of dancers rather than writing a bit about each work. This allowed candidates to make one very simple point about one work, almost in passing, and yet use another work in some detail depending on the appropriateness of the example
- articulate expression, wide vocabulary, and accurate use of language.

Question 4

This was a big question that covered a number of different aspects of safe practice. Most candidates covered all areas to some extent but there was a sense that a significant number ran out of time. Marks from 0 to 20 were awarded.

Warm up/cool down and diet were usually covered in more detail than alignment and posture which was the vaguest and often discussed in the context of aesthetic rather than safe practice.

The most able candidates used specialist vocabulary appropriately and approached the essay in a holistic way. Discussion followed a logical pattern that was not always in the order of the list on the question paper. The focus on safe practice was sustained. Essays were succinct.

Less able candidates often included technical words and phrases that they clearly did not understand. Answers were sometimes quite lengthy and repetitive and had little substance or detail and contained inaccuracies. A number of candidates offered descriptions which were very rarely relevant about what to wear; the size and temperature of the studio; obstacles and spillages and sprung floors.