



General Certificate of Education

Dance 2230

DANC1 Understanding Dance

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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General Comments

The two structured questions in Section A followed the same format as last year. Specific marks are allocated to each part of the question. Knowledge should be expressed succinctly and explanations and analysis focused on a select area of the specification.

The two essay style questions in Section B were marked according to the banding criteria in the mark scheme.

Section A: Items 1 + 2

This proved to be an accessible question that tested candidates' knowledge of structure in dance composition. There were a few examples of candidates who did not attempt to provide a description of 'ternary'.

Item 1

Most candidates knew that ternary is a three-part structure and went on to describe the relationship between the sections, i.e. of the A section being repeated and the B section providing contrast. Descriptions of theme and variation were less successful. Many candidates referred to the theme as being the idea behind the work and were then unable to describe 'variation' within the context of a choreographic device. There was also a significant number of candidates who confused theme and variation with rondo.

Item 2

This item required description of structures and explanation of their significance. Most candidates were able to describe the structures used in two professional works but there was less evidence of explanation of the significance of the structures. Many candidates gained half marks for detailed descriptions; full marks were only awarded when the choice of structure was explained in relation to the choreographic intention. Candidates were most familiar with the narrative structure. Those with no understanding of structure were rare.

Responses to Section A structured questions need to be succinct and focused. Very lengthy responses to item 2 could not earn more than the 6 marks available.

Marks were not always awarded evenly across the two professional works – i.e. 3 marks for each work. Some candidates gave a more sophisticated response for one work and gained 4 marks for a high quality description or explanation. A maximum of 5 marks were available for a very high quality analysis of one professional work but this was extremely rare.

A few candidates identified and described structure in more than two professional works. Marks were awarded for the two highest scoring examples.

It was pleasing to see that making accurate citations has now become a natural part of good practice. While citations did not on their own command a mark, they provided evidence of detailed rather than basic knowledge. Candidates selected examples with care in order to demonstrate their range of knowledge of structure. There were few examples of candidates electing to use two works with the same structure.

Items 3 + 4 + 5

Every part of this question was accessible and attempted by the vast majority of candidates.

Item 3

Most candidates identified strength in torso and leg muscles and some very clear and detailed explanations gained full marks. The omission of strength in the arms and upper back was the main cause for not attaining full marks. Most candidates referred to specific body parts - upper or lower leg - and relatively few were too vague in their identification of body part, for example 'the leg'. Candidates were not penalised for confusing the dancer's right and left leg as marks were awarded for how strength was evident in the weight-bearing leg and the extended one.

There were some common reasons for candidates not gaining marks. Some provided a list of muscles but did not connect them to the position shown in the picture. Others described strength as being located in bones and joints.

Item 4

Questions in the past have required candidates to describe exercises and there was a marked improvement in responses to such questions this year.

Descriptions were mainly clear and most candidates grasped the concept of progressive overload to improve. This was seen in varying degrees of detail, with some simply saying 'repeat' to others providing a detailed account of the FITT principle. The most common reason for not gaining marks was where candidates offered only a brief identification of an exercise, for example, 'squats' or 'jumps'. The question required a description.

Item 5

There were a range of responses to this item. Candidates who identified static stretches tended to describe the principles of the exercise with more success than those who identified exercises such as *pliés*, with simple reference to performing these in first position. Many candidates identified that turn-out came from the hip but few were able to provide detailed knowledge of the hip joint and the muscles that support turn-out. A significant number of candidates correctly identified ballet as the most appropriate genre but at times this was vague and not connected to appropriate exercises or knowledge of the hip joint.

Common reasons for candidates not scoring well in this item were the misunderstanding that turn-out came from the feet and ankles and misreading the question, focusing on strength rather than flexibility.

Section B

There was a significant improvement in the quality of language and analytical skills used to structure and present a discursive essay. Many students were very well prepared for the demands of the essays and the majority understood the requirement to express knowledge clearly within the context of a specific question.

Item 6

There was an enormous range of valid responses to this question. The most successful explained the processes of developing movement rather than the outcomes and the most effective examples were of candidates' own choreography. These essays tended to provide the most focused explanations and allowed candidates to show knowledge of choreographic devices, ways of organising and structuring material, and of different approaches that might be used in the studio. Rarely, however, did candidates analyse the benefits of using these processes and approaches. Similarly, very few wrote about practical experimental studio-based tasks and activities that were used to develop movement material. These rare examples generated some of the best responses.

Some candidates showed significant knowledge of approaches used by professional choreographers – most frequently seen was 'chance' strategy linked to Cunningham and 'improvisation' linked to Davies. However, many candidates did not explain how the movement developed and some of these answers tended to read like lists. The least successful responses were simply attempts to describe each of the four bullet points in the

question. While many candidates showed a general awareness of these processes they were often unable to support this with detailed examples or analysis.

Some candidates took a different approach, focusing on the starting points used by different choreographers in specific works. Some of these essays were of a very high standard, particularly when the movement examples linked directly back to the starting points. However, many essays with this approach were descriptive and lacked detailed analysis.

Item 7

Generally candidates approached this essay with more confidence and clarity than item 6. Most attempted to engage with the discussion and provided appropriate examples to support their points, the vast majority including some reference to every form of presentation. A few candidates did not have first-hand experience of seeing a live performance or of studying a work specifically made for film. However, while examples were then speculative, this did not impact on the range and quality of the discussion and candidates were not penalised.

The least successful responses described the different forms of presentation without discussing what impact this might have on the way we appreciate dance works. These essays tended to be repetitive and limited to one or two simple points – often about the different atmospheres of live and recorded performances. Some contained vague comments that needed support from examples and analysis.

The most successful responses came from candidates who kept the whole question in mind and genuinely considered the connection between the form of presentation and appreciation of dance works. In many high quality discussions candidates shared their own interpretation of specific works and reflected on how the form of presentation had led them to their views. Some excellent responses demonstrated detailed knowledge of works and coherent, thoughtful discussion, particularly of the effect that the audience reaction had on the live performance and of the way that film might be an integral part of the concept of a work. On a few occasions candidates had the confidence to broaden the discussion and include interesting comment about the way that technology has affected distribution and the impact this has had on finding new audiences who might appreciate dance works in different ways.

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