

A-level **DANCE**

Unit 3 – DANC3 Dance Appreciation: Content and Context
Report on the Examination

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This was the fourth year of entry for the new A2 specification and the fourth examination of the written paper: DANC3. Three new areas of study and three new set works were introduced for examination this year.

General

For Section A and Section B, each question required a response in the form of an essay. A banding system, involving five bands covering forty marks, determined the mark awarded for each essay.

As in previous years, the more successful responses showed a focus on the question with detailed knowledge and understanding of the area of study or set work, a coherent structure and clarity in the written expression. Connections were made between content and context with detailed supporting examples. In a number of responses diagrammatic form was used effectively to support the written analysis.

The less successful responses did not maintain focus on the question. Although some knowledge was demonstrated, there was a tendency to make general points focusing on identification and description. There were often inaccuracies in the content. Examples were limited and usually lacked sufficient detail to support the point. Written expression was marred by poor spelling and a lack of clarity in the use of English. The structure of the essay did not always have coherence.

As in previous years, some students spent too much time answering the first question chosen and were then left with little time to answer the second question. The inclusion of a list of bullet points when time has run out may gain some credit for factual knowledge but does not have the appropriate format or detail necessary for an essay requiring analysis and supporting examples. Students should allow an equal amount of time for each of the two questions in order to provide a sufficient response to access the range of marks for each question.

Improvement seen in the quality of essay writing continued this year. There was a sense of style in the writing and a logical argument with a relevant introduction, sense of progression and concluding paragraph. However, there has been a slight increase in the number of scripts where handwriting makes the essays very difficult to read, which can affect the communication of content.

Section A

The questions in Section A focused on the three new areas of study which related to dance companies.

As in 2012, some essays included everything that was known generally about the area of study with limited reference to the focus of the question. There were sometimes inaccuracies in the knowledge or chronology which reflected on the degree of understanding demonstrated. Although 40 marks are available for each question the use of the banding system means that the assessment relates to the quality of response rather than to the number of points or length of essay. It is important that time is used effectively to respond to the question and is not wasted on unnecessary information.

As there were three new areas of study this year, there was less evidence of pre-prepared responses to the questions of previous years. However, for the area of study: Alvin Ailey American

Dance Theater, there were still some instances of this pre-preparation linked to previous examinations where *Revelations* had been one of the set works.

Questions 1 and 5

These two questions focused on the contribution of a specified artistic director to the development of the company i.e. the Royal Ballet under Sir Frederick Ashton's directorship and the Netherlands Dance Theatre under Jiří Kylián's directorship. Examination of the key features of their contribution was required, which could include a variety of points e.g. policies, structure, dance styles, teaching styles, touring, repertoire, dancers.

The more successful responses provided some consideration of context prior to Ashton's/ Kylián's directorship, clear knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of how the company developed during their time as director, and explanatory detail. Relevant examples from works, if used, were from the time period of their directorship.

Less successful responses took a narrow view of Ashton's/ Kylián's contribution, focusing on their movement style and reference to a couple of works. The broader response to the question was not evident. The essays showed what the candidates knew about the practitioner rather than the development of the company and Ashton's/ Kylián's role in that development.

Question 3

The focus of this question was the identification and consideration of the origins of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and explanation of their connection to the early development of the company. This could relate to a variety of aspects e.g. policies, structure, dance styles, teaching styles, venues, touring, repertoire, dancers. The reference in the question to the **early** years of the company was not always recognised by the candidates.

Successful responses showed a sound knowledge of a range of origins and an understanding of how the features of each origin contributed to aspects of the early development of the company. Supporting evidence was provided to show the connection between the origins and the company features.

Less successful responses were able to identify some origins but gave little detail of their features. The reference to origins was often limited to Ailey's blood memories. General statements were made, often with some inaccuracy. There was little reference to company features apart from some aspects of movement style and/or identification of works and themes. There was often irrelevant information about Judith Jamison and Robert Battle's involvement in the later years of the company rather than a focus on the early development of the company.

Questions 2, 4 and 6

These were popular questions, particularly question 4. The focus of these questions was the identification of the subject matter used in the choreography of the company. Examples from the works of at least two practitioners were required to show a link between aspects of the subject matter and the choreographic content of the example. The way the subject matter was communicated could link to a variety of features of the choreography e.g. genre, style, dance structure, movement content, dancers, use of physical setting and aural setting.

The successful responses showed recognition of the requirement of the question to identify the aspects of the subject matter. These were explained and links made to examples from the choreography of the works with discussion of the connection.

The less successful responses simply focused on reference to practitioners and their works and the students wrote what they knew about them with limited focus on the question. There were few clear examples showing a connection to the subject matter. Some pre-prepared answers to previous questions were written focusing on practitioners and their styles. Consequently the reference to subject matter and its communication through the choreography of the works became less evident in the response.

Sometimes an aspect of the subject matter was identified and linked to the theme of the work but there was no consideration of how the theme was conveyed through the choreography. Occasionally works were used which were neither created nor performed in the relevant time period or, although created by the practitioner, had not been performed by the dance company.

Section B

The questions in Section B focused on the three new set works and the choreographers.

Question 7

This question required the identification of the various aspects of the biblical story on which *The Prodigal Son* was based. Clear movement examples from the work were needed to show how the aspects of the story were conveyed.

Responses achieving marks in the higher bands showed a very sound knowledge of the story and the ability to analyse and evaluate the movement content of the work. The candidates had recognised the need to provide **movement** examples and provided detailed evidence with interpretations linked to aspects of the story.

Responses with marks in the lower bands identified a few aspects of the story but showed a limited knowledge of the movement content of *The Prodigal Son*. Examples, if given, lacked detail and/or focused on the use of costume and props with no reference to movement content. There was often inaccuracy in the knowledge of the work and interpretations without supporting examples.

Question 9

This question required explanation of the significance of the body casts in *Zero Degrees*. Details of their influence on and use in the movement content, as well as their origins, formed the focus of this explanation. As with questions 7 and 11, clear examples from the movement content were needed to show the use and influence of the body casts.

Responses achieving higher marks provided clear details about the body casts and were able to identify a range of points relating to their importance, influence and use in the work. Clear examples from the movement content were given and there was discussion of the link between the example and the significance of the body casts.

Responses achieving lower marks showed a limited knowledge of relevant movement content from the work. General statements were made and there was occasionally some inaccuracy in the description or location of the example. There was limited reference to different aspects of the

significance of the body casts. Statements relating to relevant parts of the work involved description with little or no attempt to establish a link between the example and the use/influence of the body casts.

Question 11

This question focused on the identification of various aspects of the relationship between the Jets and the Sharks and how these aspects are communicated through the movement content of *West Side Story*. Clear examples were needed as well as discussion of the connection between the interpretation of the example and the aspect of the relationship.

Responses achieving higher marks were able to identify and discuss various aspects of the relationship between the two gangs. A very sound knowledge of the set work was demonstrated through detailed movement examples which showed a clear connection to the different aspects of the gangs' relationship. The responses referred to a number of choreographed sections from the work.

Responses achieving lower marks were limited in their identification of aspects of the relationship between the two gangs. This identification was often restricted to rivalry and conflict and made reference to only a couple of the choreographed sections, usually the Prologue and Dance at the Gym. There was limited evidence of analysis with many general statements consisting of lists of general dance action vocabulary and little specific detail of the movement content. There was occasionally some inaccuracy in the knowledge of the content and the actual location of the examples in the work.

Questions 8, 10 and 12

The focus of each of these questions was the significance of the set work in the choreographic career of Balanchine, Khan/Cherkaoui or Robbins. A key requirement was contextual knowledge and an understanding of the chronology and phases of their choreography. Identification and details of aspects of the set work and other works by the choreographer were needed with consideration of their similarities and differences. These aspects might include subject matter, style, structure, constituent features and collaborators. Clear examples from the set work and from other works by the choreographer were required to support the points made.

The more successful responses showed a sound knowledge of aspects of the set work and reference to the choreographer's background and career with accurate identification and detailed discussion. There was reference to other works and an appreciation of their location in time and in the progression of the choreographer's career. Clear examples were given from the set work and from other works by the choreographer.

The less successful responses did not recognise fully the contextual demands of the question. They focused on some aspects of the set work, mainly linked to style and theme, and made general statements about the content. There was little reference, if any, to other works and therefore little attempt to place the set work in the context of the choreographer's career. Reference to the chronology of the works, when given, was not always accurate. A few candidates did not follow the requirement for the *Zero Degrees* question to refer to either Akram Khan or Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and wrote about both. Consequently the amount of detail or relevant information which could be provided in relation to one practitioner was reduced, resulting in a limited response to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion