

A-level **DANCE**

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

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Report on the Examination DANC3 2014

This was the fifth year of entry for the new A2 specification and the fifth examination of the written paper: DANC3. This was the second year of examination for the three areas of study and three set works which were introduced last year.

General

For Section A and Section B each question required a response in the form of an essay. Two questions were selected by the students, one from each section. Each question was marked out of 40. A banding system, involving five bands covering 40 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, clear supporting evidence, a coherent structure and clarity in the written expression. Connections were made between content and context with detailed examples. In a number of responses diagrammatic form was used effectively to support the written analysis. An understanding was shown of the command word in each question (Please refer to the glossary of terminology used in written examinations at the end of this report).

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.

Some students are still spending too much time answering the first question chosen and are 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 available.

The previous improvement seen in the quality of essay writing was 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 further increase in the number of scripts where the 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 areas of study which related to dance companies. Students were required to show a relevant response to the question through the demonstration of:

- a knowledge and understanding of the key features of the company and of the different approaches;
- a knowledge of contextual factors;
- supporting evidence through the use of appropriate examples;
- a clarity in the line of argument and in the written expression.

This year it was encouraging to see that there were fewer essays which included everything that was known generally about the area of study with limited reference to the focus of the question.

However, there were sometimes inaccuracies in the knowledge 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. Due to the amount of time available to answer the question it is important that the time is used effectively to respond to the requirements of the question and is not wasted on a large amount of unnecessary information.

As this was the second year of the new areas of study, there was some evidence of pre-prepared responses to last year's questions.

Questions 1, 3 and 5

These three questions focused on the stylistic features of each company. Examination of the key features was required, which could include reference to a variety of points, eg genre, subject matter, movement style, choreographic style, dancers, physical setting and aural setting. The requirement to 'examine' the features involved analysis and discussion.

The more successful responses identified a range of stylistic features and provided explanatory detail. Clear supporting evidence was included which may have related to context and/or practitioners and their works. There was an appreciation of how these features reflected the style of the company and a consideration of their progression/change/development where appropriate.

The less successful responses focused on what was known about the works of one or two practitioners and did not explain how this information related to the actual stylistic features. The broader response to the question was not evident and was often limited to movement style and subject matter. Supporting examples lacked the detail needed to clarify the points made.

Questions 2, 4 and 6

These were popular questions, particularly question 4. The focus was the influences on one practitioner and their connection to the practitioner's contribution to the development of dance within the company. This could refer to a range of aspects, eg genre, style, technique, subject matter, structure, movement content, use of dancers, physical setting and aural setting. Examples from the works of the practitioner were needed to support the discussion.

The successful responses showed a recognition of the requirement of the question to identify the influences and relate them to the practitioner's contribution to dance development in the company. Details of the influences were given and links made to the contribution. Appropriate examples from the choreography of the works were provided. The examples had sufficient detail to clarify their connection to the influence and the aspect of the contribution.

The less successful responses simply focused on reference to a practitioner and her/his works. There was identification of some influences but no attempt to explain their features. The links to the contribution to the development of dance in the company were not considered. Works were identified and general statements were made about the choreography rather than clear examples showing a connection to the question. Some pre-prepared answers to previous questions were written focusing on practitioners and their styles/subject matter. In some responses two practitioners were considered rather than one, which affected the relevance of the response to the question.

Section B

The questions in Section B focused on the three set works and the choreographers. The students were required to show a relevant response to the question through a demonstration of:

- a knowledge and understanding of the features and form of each set work and of the style of the choreographer;
- a knowledge of contextual factors (where appropriate);
- the ability to analyse and interpret dances, providing **clear** examples;
- a clarity in the line of argument and in the written expression.

Question 7

This question focused on the analysis of the **use** of the set and costume in *The Prodigal Son*. The analysis of these two components needed to relate to their support of the choreographic ideas and therefore detailed examples from the choreography of *The Prodigal Son* were required.

The more successful responses gave details of the components from appropriate parts of the set work and analysed their use. Clear examples from the choreography were given, with appropriate interpretations.

The less successful responses merely described the components, often with some inaccuracy. Interpretations were given which did not always show a clear connection to what had been described. The requirement to refer to the **use** of the set and costume was not always recognised and consequently there were few examples from the choreography to illustrate the use of the two components.

Question 8

This question required the consideration of a statement relating to Balanchine's adherence to classical ballet traditions and his development of the genre.

Responses achieving higher marks identified the aspects of classical ballet traditions and ways in which Balanchine had changed/developed them through his modern approach. Examples from the choreography of *The Prodigal Son* and other works by Balanchine were given to show evidence of his respect for classical ballet and his individual approach. The significance of these examples in relation to the validity of the statement was discussed in order to arrive at a conclusion.

Responses achieving lower marks made general statements about classical ballet and Balanchine's approach. Examples from *The Prodigal Son* were limited and lacked sufficient clarity to inform the discussion. Other works were identified but little reference was made to relevant content.

Question 9

This was a popular question which required the examination, ie analysis and discussion, of the range of movement and dance styles in *Zero Degrees*. Supporting evidence of these styles was needed as well as reference to their connection to the choreographic presentation and/or intention.

Responses achieving higher marks identified and explained the features of a range of movement and dance styles which were evident in the work. Some contextual links were made. There were clear examples from the work for each of the styles. Relevant comments were made to show how these examples enhanced the ideas and presentation of the choreography.

Responses achieving lower marks did not always show an understanding of what was meant by a movement or dance style. Identification was often limited to Kathak and reference to Cherkaoui's flexibility rather than to a particular style. Some responses focused on the thematic content of the work and any reference to styles happened by chance more than by intention. Evidence of analysis was limited and examples, if given, did not always show a clear link to a style.

Question 10

The focus of this question was the use of collaboration as a feature of the choreographic process for both Khan and Cherkaoui. Therefore details of the collaborators and the collaborative process were required, as well as a consideration of their importance in the creative process. Supporting evidence was needed from both *Zero Degrees* and other works by Khan and/or Cherkaoui.

Responses achieving higher marks provided clear details of the creative process for *Zero Degrees* with identification of all the collaborators. Collaborators for the other works cited were also identified. Features of the collaborators' contribution to the process were explained and contextual information provided where appropriate. Clear supporting examples were provided from *Zero Degrees* and from other works by Khan and/or Cherkaoui.

Responses achieving lower marks named some of the collaborators but rarely gave any details apart from their occupation, eg sculptor, composer. Some responses only referred to the collaboration between Khan and Cherkaoui with no mention of other collaborators. Some works were identified but further details were limited. The names of the collaborators were sometimes not known or incorrect; occasionally the work was attributed to the wrong choreographer. The supporting examples from *Zero Degrees* lacked sufficient detail and the evidence from other works was usually a general statement about the theme.

Question 11

This question required the identification of the various aspects of the subject matter of *West Side Story*. Relevant aspects might relate to the narrative, themes and context. Clear examples from the **choreography** of the work were needed to show how the aspects of the story were conveyed. The reference to choreography meant that all constituent features could be used as supporting evidence.

Responses achieving marks in the higher bands showed a very sound knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to analyse the choreographic content of the work. Detailed examples were provided, with interpretations linked to aspects of the story. The responses referred to a number of choreographed sections from the work.

Responses with marks in the lower bands identified a few aspects of the subject matter but showed a limited knowledge of the choreography of *West Side Story*. Examples, if given, lacked detail. There were general statements consisting of lists of dance action vocabulary and little specific detail. There was often inaccuracy in the knowledge of the work and interpretations without supporting examples. Only a couple of the choreographed sections were referenced, usually the Prologue and Dance at the Gym.

Question 12

The focus of this question was the significance of *West Side Story* in the development of the film musical. Discussion of aspects of the work relating to its importance was required. These aspects might include reference to subject matter, characterisation, structure, style, movement content, dancers, physical setting, aural setting and collaborators.

The more successful responses showed a sound knowledge of aspects of the set work and their relevance to the development of the film musical. Information was given about the nature of film musicals prior to *West Side Story*. Clear examples were given from the choreographed sections of the set work with an appreciation of their connection to the statement in the question.

The less successful responses did not focus on aspects of the set work which could relate to its importance in the development of the musical. General statements were made, often referring to aspects of Jerome Robbins' life or personal difficulties which were of limited relevance to the question. Little knowledge was shown of the film musical prior to *West Side Story* and there was some inaccuracy in the information given. Clear supporting examples were limited.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

Command Word	Application
Analyse	Identify the elements and examine in detail in order to explain or interpret.
Comment	Express an opinion and/or response.
Compare	Identify and explain the similarities and differences by placing the points alongside each other and changing the focus from one to the other.
Consider	Think carefully about the idea or statement, taking everything into account when reaching a conclusion.
Define	Give the exact meaning in briefest possible terms.
Describe	Give a detailed account of.
Discuss	Refer to the analysis of the idea or elements and describe and evaluate the parts and the whole.
Evaluate	Pinpoint and describe the strengths and weaknesses, concluding with a judgement of which outweighs the other.
Examine	Analyse and discuss.
Explain	Clarify something by providing more detail and the reason(s) for.
Identify	Give the briefest possible information which clearly separates the idea or element from all other ideas or elements.
Illustrate	Make clear by giving explanation and examples.
Justify	Show the grounds on which a decision or conclusion is made; respond to the objections which are likely to be made.

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