**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Dance   **DANC1**

(Specification 2230)

Unit 1: Understanding Dance

Report on Examination

General Comments

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

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

Section A

Questions 01 and 02 were linked
This proved to be an accessible question that tested candidates' knowledge of the use of choreographic devices in dance composition. Generally most candidates could identify ways of developing and manipulating dance material. There were very few examples of candidates not attempting this question.

Question 01

The vast majority of candidates could name at least one choreographic device and most could identify or simply describe two. The most successful responses were when a clear device such as climax, transition, canon, retrograde or unison was described and candidates had clearly understood the difference between a device and movement. Many candidates were not clear of this distinction, and the additional mark for **detailed** description of devices was only achieved by the more able candidates whose knowledge of choreography was sound.

Question 02

This was a challenging question. Very few candidates achieved the full six marks. The most successful candidates provided a succinct description of how movement was developed or manipulated and explained how the device was used for specific reasons within the context of their work. These included: reflecting the same structure as a poem or piece of music to create a close connection between the two; providing contrast to suggest a change of mood; using unison to build a climax; using canon to show how the plague was spreading by being passed on from one person to the next. However, many candidates provided detailed description of movement without explaining how that movement was used as a device to communicate their ideas.

Some candidates who did not identify or describe a device clearly in 01 **did** go on to explain how they had communicated their ideas by manipulating and developing material, and they were awarded marks for that explanation.

A few candidates identified and described more than two devices. In these cases, candidates were awarded for the device that was explained in 02.

Questions 03 and 04 were linked
This was the most accessible question on the paper, with many candidates scoring high marks.

It was pleasing again this year to see that using accurate citations is becoming a natural part of good practice.

Question 03

Generally this was answered well, with most candidates often able to achieve half marks or more. Most demonstrated a sound idea of the main features of the costume. There was a sense that the majority of candidates understood that clear, concise descriptions were required in order to achieve full marks.

Most candidates described two costumes.

Occasionally, candidates described two costumes from the same work and they were awarded for one costume.
There were many examples of candidates providing detailed and valid descriptions of one costume worn by many dancers.

Question 04

Many candidates scored well and provided several succinct pieces of analysis for each costume. It was encouraging to see the majority of candidates able to clearly explain the significance of the choice and use of costume. Less able candidates tended to continue to describe rather than provide explanation.
A few candidates lost sight of the focus of the analysis and wrote lengthy answers that strayed from the point. These candidates found it difficult to manage their time in order to complete the two essay questions in Section B. It was pleasing to see the wide range of works being covered by teachers.

Section B

Last year there was a significant improvement in the quality of language and analytical skills used to structure and present a discursive essay. This year that improvement has continued and the quality of writing and focus of analysis has again improved. It was clear that many students were very well prepared for the demands of the essays and that the majority of students understood the requirement to express knowledge clearly within the context of a specific question; there were very few examples of candidates losing focus.

Question 05

It was disappointing to find that a worrying number of candidates were not able to gain any marks for this question because they did not understand the term 'aural setting.' This often affected whole centres. Some very able candidates offered insightful, clearly written analysis of the physical setting but still gained no marks. It is important for teachers to use the specification as a key resource when preparing candidates for the examination in order to make sure that every aspect of the course has been covered.

For the majority of candidates who did access the question, the responses demonstrated sound knowledge of the professional works. However, the knowledge of the aural setting was often less detailed and accurate which resulted in candidates making general points that were not always supported with specific examples.

The most successful responses shared common traits:
- the ability to connect the aural setting with the choreographic intention rather than dealing with each as separate elements
- selecting specific moments within a professional work that allowed a clear point to be made
- comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the aural setting and controlled and accurate use of specialist vocabulary
- the ability to analyse, rather than describe, with a focus on the **use** of the aural setting within the context of the choreographic intention
- selecting examples that covered a range of different kinds of aural setting and different types of relationships.

The less successful responses were less focused in their discussion and frequently displayed the following tendencies:
- using general examples rather than identifying specific moments for analysis. Weaker candidates tended to latch on to one type of aural setting and discuss it generally rather than specifically, for example, 'the aural setting used in *Swan Song* was call and response' or 'direct correlation is the aural setting used in *Nutcracker*!'
- vague understanding of terms that described relationships between aural setting and movement – the most misunderstood term was 'direct correlation'

- treating the aural setting and the choreographic intention as separate elements and not making a connection between the two
- descriptive rather than analytical essays
- limited range of types of aural setting selected.

The most complex and interesting responses tended to come from discussion of use of sound effects, natural sound, voice and silence, rather than music itself. This was often because use of music was discussed in more generic terms, such as 'the music was slow, reflecting love'. This was particularly noticeable in discussions of music within a narrative structure, and analysis often became vague. However, there were also some examples of extremely proficient analysis where candidates showed thorough knowledge of the aural setting and engaged in complex discussion, offering some original interpretations that were well supported with evidence.

Candidates who chose to discuss a range of different types of aural setting tended to offer discussions that demonstrated greater breadth and depth of knowledge than those who discussed three examples of the same type of aural setting.

There was a sense that most candidates had studied a range of works that allowed them to discuss all types of aural setting.

Question 06

There were very few examples of candidates making no attempt to answer this question and the full range of marks were accessed. Most responses tended to follow a similar structure of describing an exercise, sometimes in considerable detail, and then offering some explanation. However, the quality of explanation varied considerably. Many were generic, such as 'helped me keep my balance,' or 'I could hold my leg higher.' Candidates at this level could mention types of stretching but tended to be vague or confused about the vocabulary. This was particularly the case with passive, active, PNF, static, and dynamic stretches and explanations were confusing rather than accurate and clear.

However, there were also some outstanding responses where candidates provided detailed explanation of training principles and processes, demonstrating comprehensive knowledge of different types of stretching, progressive overload and alternative practices, for example the use of the breath in yoga. They provided detailed explanations of how this would impact on the quality of performance. They were more engaged with the focus of the question and really tried to consider why it was needed for specific parts of their solo or group work, or what specific element of their training it had helped. Some candidates used a significant amount of specialist vocabulary to identify parts of the body or a particular muscle. However, the top marks were also accessed by able candidates who did not use technical or specialist language but did have the ability to explain training processes and principles clearly and accurately.

Some candidates introduced healthy diet into their discussion. However, there were very few examples of candidates who successfully linked this to developing flexibility or strength.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results Statistics** page of the AQA Website.

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