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1999 HSC

Classical Ballet

Notes from the Examination Centre

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1999 Higher School Certificate Classical Ballet Notes from the Examination Centre

Introduction

The HSC Classical Ballet examination consists of two parts:

Part 1: Practical Examination

Part 2: Written Examination

Part 1: Practical Examination

1. **2/3 Unit (Common) Course** (compulsory for all candidates)

(a) Performance – Core

- (i) Steps and Exercises
 - (ii) Performance Studies
- Prescribed Works – (2)

(b) Composition – Core

- (i) Improvisation
- (ii) Composition Studies
- (iii) Viva Voce

2. **2/3 Unit Major Elective** (for candidates who choose performance or composition as their major elective)

(a) Performance – Major Elective

- (i) Further Steps and Exercises
 - (ii) Performance Studies
- Prescribed Works – (2)
- Set Pointe / Male Study
- or Personal Solo

(b) Composition – Major Elective

- (i) Original work – a composition submitted on video
- (ii) Viva Voce

3. 3 Unit (Additional) (candidates chose Performance or Composition)

(a) Performance

- (i) Additional Steps and Exercises
- (ii) Performance Studies

Prescribed Works:

- 3 unit set study (pointe or grand allegro)
- Set Repertoire Study (Giselle)

Personal Solo or other set Repertoire

OR

(b) Choreography

- (i) Original Work – choreographed work submitted on video
- (ii) Viva Voce

Part 2: Written Examination

There are three written pages which are related to the relevant unit levels and the Major Elective choices made.

1. 2/3 Unit Related Core Paper – (compulsory for all candidates)

This paper is divided into two sections:

- (a) Section I: Repertory Studies and Ballet Appreciation – both questions are compulsory.
- (b) Section II: Anatomy for Ballet – Part A has two questions – both compulsory
 - Part B has a choice of one out of two questions.

2. 2/3 Unit Related Studies Major Elective – this is only done by those who have chosen the Written Major Elective.

This paper is divided into two sections:

- (a) Section III: History of Ballet in Australia – candidates are required to answer two out of three questions.
- (b) Section IV: Further Anatomy and Physics of Ballet – candidates are required to answer two out of three questions.

3. 3 Unit Additional Paper – this is completed by 3 unit candidates only. It is compulsory to answer two out of seven questions.

HSC Classical Ballet Summary Chart 1999

1. Core Component (Compulsory for both 2 Unit and 3 Unit)

Performance - Compulsory
 Steps and Exercises
 Performance Studies
 Prescribed Works
 – 1st Choice
 – 2nd Choice

Composition - Compulsory
 Improvisation
 Composition
 Viva Voce
 Diary

Written - Compulsory
 Appreciation of 2 Set Ballets
 Other Ballets
 Anatomy, Dance Injuries,
 Nutrition

2. Major Elective (Choose 1 of the 3 Options below – for both 2 Unit and 3 Unit)

Performance
 Further Steps and Exercises
 Performance Studies
 Prescribed Works
 – 3rd Choice
 – 4th Choice
 – Set Study (Pointe)
 – Personal Solo (Pointe)

O
R

Composition
 Original Work - video
 Viva Voce
 Diary

O
R

Written (Related Studies)
 Australian Dance History
 Further Anatomy and Physics

3. 3 Unit Additional (Choose between Performance and Choreography – Written is Compulsory)

Performance
 Additional Steps and Exercises
 Performance Studies
 Prescribed Works
 – 3 Unit Set Study
 (pointe/grand allegro)
 – Set Repertory Study
 Personal Solo

O
R

Composition
 Original Work - video
 Viva Voce and Diary

O
R

Written (Related Studies)
 History of Ballet
 Answer 2/7 Questions

General Comments

In 1999, the general standard of the candidates in the Performance component, in both 2/3 Unit (Common) Course – Core, Major Elective and the 3 Unit (Additional) Course was higher than in previous years. The high standard of the Performance component indicates that most candidates, and their teachers comprehend the demands of the Performance work. Examiners noted that the number of candidates choosing the 3 Unit (Additional) option is increasing. However, there continues to be a small number of candidates presenting for 3 Unit ballet who lack the stronger degree of strength, control, turnout and extension required to cope with the demands of the performance exam.

2/3 Unit (Common) Course

Core Study – Performance

(i) Steps and Exercises

Generally very well done. Most candidates responded quickly to directions given by the examiners and were familiar with ballet terminology. Those who made mistakes were allowed a second attempt without penalty. The steps given were representative of those listed in the syllabus. Strong candidates performed the enhancements correctly, showing technical precision and accuracy, style and presentation, using arm positions which enhanced their balletic lines and demonstrated a recognition of musical phrasing.

(ii) Performance Studies

- Prescribed Works: The candidates performed their choice of two out of the four Prescribed Works. Strong Candidates demonstrated a knowledge of how to interpret balletic movement within each of the studies.
- Lyrical Study: Most candidates showed an understanding of the study and were well prepared. It should be noted that the lyrical quality is the essence of this study and the technique must be understated in the interpretation of this lyricism and in the total projection.
- Virtuoso Study: The candidates who performed this study showed varying degrees of competency. The stronger candidates presented a higher standard this year than in previous years. The examiners note that as this is a highly demanding study to perform, it is unwise for candidates who find it technically challenging to choose it for the compulsory core. The stronger candidates performed the technically demanding aspects of this study well, for example the *fouettè*, *ronds de jambe en tournant*, the *pirouettes en arabesque*, the *cabrioles* and the *brisès*. The weaker candidates left out the *batterie* and substituted simpler versions.
- Grand Allegro : This study was generally well presented. Stronger candidates dealt well with changes of direction, demonstrated control in landings, a good use of *demi plie* and understanding of the quality of this study.
- Dramatic Study: Candidates were encouraged to use their bodies to demonstrate the dramatic interpretation of a role.

Major Elective Study – Performance

(i) Further Steps and Exercises

Generally performed very well. Steps included *pointe* work for females and steps of elevation for males.

(ii) Performance Studies

Stronger candidates demonstrated a knowledge of the different styles of movement in the studies.

Prescribed works (third and fourth choice)

- Set *Pointe* / Male Study: Generally very well performed.
- Personal solo: Generally well presented. Candidates should note the time limit restrictions for the Personal solo. This solo is to be one and a half to two minutes in length. Stronger candidates demonstrated personal ballet skills and qualities to their advantage. Weaker candidates included steps which were beyond their technical and performance capabilities.

3 Unit (Additional) Course – Performance

(i) Additional steps and Exercises

Stronger candidates performed their *enchainments* at an advanced level, with correct turnout, and a strong degree of strength control and extension, while demonstrating classical ballet posture placing and line.

(ii) Performance Studies

Prescribed Works:

- 3 Unit set study (*pointe* or *grand allegro*): Generally very well prepared and performed. Female students performed their 3 Unit set study with placement and lightness of *pointe* work, while male students performed *Grande Allegro* with breadth of line, strength of movement and strong elevation.
- Set Repertoire Study (Giselle): Generally very well prepared and presented. Stronger candidates demonstrated a dance quality and style and presented a performance with harmony of movement.
- Personal Solo or other repertoire study (Coppelia:Dawn/Prayer, Swan Lake, Les Sylphides): Very well presented. Stronger candidates demonstrated their personal ballet skills and qualities to their advantage and performed with artistry, musicality and confidence.

Composition and Choreography Component

General Comments

The standard of the Composition component indicates that many candidates, and their teachers do not spend adequate classtime focusing on the demands of the Composition and Choreography Studies.

Core Study – Composition

(i) Improvisation

Many candidates had difficulty with this section and appeared apprehensive. Candidates are encouraged to understand that movement in improvisation should be free and not necessarily

constrained to a classical base, as any shape and movement can be choreographic. Candidates are advised to interpret the music and not see this section as a series of steps.

(ii) Composition Study

Candidates need much more guidance in this section, in order to demonstrate an understanding and application of the basic compositional elements. Stronger candidates demonstrated an understanding of the craft of composing variations, in an imaginative way, making use of simple music.

(iii) Viva Voce

This section generally needs more preparation including an understanding of the craft of composition. Examiners advise that candidates should be able to articulate a knowledge of the elements of composition – space, time, force. Stronger candidates were able to articulate about their work and showed an understanding of basic compositional terminology and concepts. Examiners expressed increasing concern over the number of candidates presenting poor diaries. While diaries are not marked by examiners, they are essential in order to authenticate and validate the composition process and provide an invaluable insight into the candidates working method.

Major Elective Study – Composition

(i) Original Work – an original composition submitted on video.

While this section of the syllabus is a valuable component, it was felt that the quality work in this section was poor. Candidates analyse the creative process using composition. Candidates need more assistance in order to be able to coordinate others to perform the composition. Help is needed to make a video that is well lit and has a contrasting background. The submitted video must be taken with the camera (fixed) centre front, with the full performance space in view throughout the whole performance. No close-ups or different camera angles are to be used. Care needs to be taken in choosing music that is not too complicated for inexperienced composers.

(ii) Viva Voce

Please refer to the previous comments on Viva Voce.

3 Unit (Additional) Course – Choreography

(i) Original Work – an original choreographed work submitted on video.

Stronger candidates choreographed a work combining the elements of composition with design, costume and stage craft.

(ii) Please refer to the previous comments on Viva Voce.

Music

- It is recommended that candidates be made aware that they can use the Board of Studies taped music for any of the Set Studies – Performance Studies, Prescribed Works, Set Pointe, Male Study, Personal solo, 3 Unit Set Study, Set Repertoire Study.

Dress requirements

- Very little time is allowed for changes of dress during the examination and it is important that candidates wear only simple costumes for personal solos.
- The optional chiffon ballet skirts should be above the knee, and preferably plain not floral in order to see the dancer at work.

Related Studies – Core Paper

Most candidates handled the paper with competence, showing sound preparation and an understanding of the expectations of the paper. In a small but still significant number of cases, students ignored the direction in Section II Part B and answered both questions 5 and 6.

The area of the paper which presented most difficulty was Section II, Part A ‘Anatomy of Ballet’, which exposed weaknesses in the depth of understanding of muscle and joint function. Most students could list muscles and joints yet could not explain their functions in the context of the question. The standard of these responses, across the total candidature was noticeably lower than in the other sections of the paper.

Another significant feature of candidates’ work which showed scope for improvement occurred in Section I Question I where students were required to discuss narrative structure in the ballets set as repertory studies. While most students could describe the ballets, there were few candidates presenting a discussion of an in-depth nature, which was able to support the statement embedded in the question. At the heart of the issue is the ability to recontextualise knowledge so as to present a line of discussion which is satisfactorily responding to the question. It is recommended that teaching time be spent in discussion and analysis of the issues relevant to the works, to develop the ability to present a point of view.

Section I – Repertory Studies and Ballet Appreciation

Question 1

‘In the two set ballets, the characters of Clara and Swanhilda are developed in different ways’.

Discuss this statement with particular reference to the narrative structure in each ballet.

General Comments

Most candidates could detail the story of the two ballets *Coppelia* (The Australian Ballet, 1990) and *The Nutcracker* (The Australian Ballet, 1994 – choreography by Graeme Murphy). It was apparent that students and teachers had spent considerable time viewing the works and were very familiar with the characters and the storyline. Some of the better answers made specific reference to dates of performances, names of performers and specific scenes of the ballets.

As noted above, the most significant feature of answers to this question was the propensity to describe the ballets in accurate detail yet a distinct lack of confidence in focussing on the ‘ways ... characters are developed differently...’ as a result of the differing narrative structures of each ballet.

In the case of *The Nutcracker* very few candidates made reference to the ‘three Claras’ or could discuss with confidence the impact of ‘flashback’ as opposed to chronological presentation. *Coppelia* was discussed in less detail by candidates. Most were able to see the character development as more one dimensional.

The weaker candidates did not understand the concept of narrative structure and how it is central to the Contemporary re-working of a ballet such as Murphy’s *The Nutcracker*.

Stronger candidates were able to place both set works in an original historical context and were able to make relevant comparisons between the works. Students with an understanding of the origins of *The Nutcracker* were best able to discuss Graeme Murphy's work.

Above Average response

The characters in the two set ballets, Clara from *Nutcracker – Clara's Story* by Graeme Murphy and Kristian Fredrikson and Swanhilda from 'Coppelia' by Petipa revised by Peggy Van Praagh. We see two different characters developed in many different ways. Contrastingly the time period of each is different therefore through their costumes we see them develop in different ways. *Coppelia* is set towards the end of the romantic period and therefore bellshaped flowing skirt is worn with tight bodice. Costumes uncover certain characteristics of a character.

Both characters fall in love Swanhilda with Franz and Clara with the beloved officer, this also helps reveal their characters. *Nutcracker* is set out in a different way to *Coppelia*. It is looking back into the past at Clara's life. We see three different stages in her life danced by Margaret Scott, Vicki Attard and Siobhan Elsmann. It is the story of a former Russian ballerina and it tells of her turbulent and nomadic life. It is the connection and combining of her past and present into one, which becomes the eternal. From this we feel closer to Clara as we are seen and taken on the journey through her life. In contrast to *Coppelia* where it is more a classical/narrative. There is a true romance that is developed and we are passed with less powerful themes in turn we don't feel as close. *Coppelia* is the story of a doll, who Franz, a peasant boy falls in love with, making Swanhilda jealous. It expresses themes of love, jealousy, joy, anger as the story unfolds. *Coppelia* is a surface view of the character Swanhilda danced by Lisa Pavane. Whereas *Nutcracker* seems to create a closer relationship with the audience and Clara. Using scenes from the past and the present. Clara and Swanhilda are developed differently due to the stories setting, costumes, themes and emotions. Although they possess different lives and emotions their experiences are still similar, of love, happiness, sadness and despair.

Comment:

This is an example of a competent and well-prepared response to the question.

Question 2

Choose a recent work performed by an Australian dance company that shows how the choreographer has extended the balletic technique.

Do NOT choose the set studies.

Most candidates chose appropriate ballets which did extend balletic technique and showed detailed knowledge of the works. Difficulties arose with specific examples of how the balletic technique was extended. eg. off-centre work, use of low levels. In some cases it was clear that candidates were struggling to articulate the conventions of classical ballet and therefore found it extremely difficult to discuss how their chosen work demonstrated variations from the conventions.

The weaker answers neglected to include details of the context of the performance such as the name of the choreographer or company.

Some confusion seems to surround the issue of 'recency', in the teaching of this area. ie. 'choose a recent work....'

The Syllabus states:

‘Students should be provided with opportunities to study recent ballet performances in Australia. Study should cover the past decade, with an emphasis on the two years preceding the year in which the student will be a candidate for the Higher School Certificate’.

Board of Studies NSW, 2/3 Unit Classical Ballet Syllabus, 1994, p 25

While it is understood that some students will not have the opportunity to see live performances of recent works, there are videos available of works performed in the past decade which adequately address this area of the Syllabus.

Above Average response

In the performance at the Australian Ballets production ‘Trilogy’ which is the fusion of three works. In the middle somewhat elevated ‘rites’ and ‘At the edge of the night’ we are displayed one work in particular that extends the balletic technique.

That work is ‘In the middle somewhat elevated’, choreographed by William Forsythe and composed by Thom Willems. In this work it uses the dancers strengths and extreme classical technique to produce a ballet that uplifts the audience to the edge of their seats.

Forsythe stretches and manipulates classical technique. He displaces the hips and throws their balance off-centre. Dancers, that performed in this work are Vicki Attard, Justine Summers, David McAllistar, Stephen Heathcote, Miranda Coney and Lucinda Dunn all dancers of the Australian Ballet. The costumes used also added to the effect of extending the classical technique. He used the colours black, a strong powerful colour, and teal green, full of energy and power. It enhances their strength and sharpness. The ballet was choreographed into duos, trios, and quartets. All for the sole reason to manipulate and lengthen the classical line into a transformed contemporary based feeling. The music with its dynamic high and low points helped to emphasise the strengths and power showed in the dancers and create a frantic atmosphere.

Forsythe cleverly added depth to the stage when he decided that he wasn’t going to use wings in his piece. Therefore, although it became a distraction, it helped to achieve a more extended line.

It was difficult to imagine a classical company performing this abstract piece but in the end created a new dimension to the classical ballet heritage.

Forsythe did a remarkable job in altering his technique with off-placed *grand battements*, obscure lifts and contemporary style *jetes*. But its true in saying it’s a ballet about the act of dancing a clear example of the extended balletic technique.

Comment:

This is an example of a student who was well prepared and able to discuss the question in an impressive way.

Section II — Anatomy for Ballet

PART A

Question 3

Explain the action of the joints and major muscles groups used when executing a *grand plié* in second position.

Use anatomical terms in your answer.

(a) Joints

The majority of candidates could identify the joints being used but did not fully explain the actions. The best answers could identify the type of joint eg. ball and socket, hinge.

(b) Muscle groups

Most candidates knew the names of the muscles but were unclear about their function.

The stronger candidates could describe muscle action with confidence, including identification of action type, eg. concentric, eccentric, agonist, antagonist.

Weaker candidates used the 'scatter-gun' approach, listing names of every muscle which may have had relevance. These answers did not detail any actions at all.

Question 4

Name the position shown in Figure 1. Discuss the alignment demonstrated by the dancer.

Use anatomical terms where appropriate.

Most candidates identified the fault in alignment of the dancer and could name the position accurately.

The stronger candidates identified the alignment problem and then confidently discussed the effect this had on the alignment of the rest of the body. The best answers used anatomical terms to effectively describe the alignment.

Weaker answers provided very general analysis of the body without any evidence of knowledge of anatomical terms.

PART B

Answer either Question 5 or Question 6

Question 5

What practices can be established in the ballet class to ensure a dancer's long-term physical health?

The stronger candidates were able to discuss a range of practices which were significant for a dancer's long term physical health, eg. SMART DANCE, awareness of psychological issues for dancers, appropriate studio facilities, etc.

Weaker answers were able to identify at least one practice but failed to elaborate on its significance to establishing long term physical health.

Question 6

(a) *List two effects of anorexia nervosa.*

(b) *What precautions can a dancer take to avoid anorexia nervosa?*

(a) The strongest candidates gave specific effects of anorexia with detailed information to support their choices. They also discussed the effect(s) over time. Weaker answers gave very general responses with little information to explore the effects.

- (b) The best answers were able to put forward a range of precautions, canvassing physical and psychological aspects. They were able to discuss the importance of nutrition and a balanced diet but were able to go beyond these considerations into issues of self-esteem and lifestyle.

Weaker answers gave brief, non-detailed responses, showing a superficial consideration of the complexities of the disease.

Major Elective Study

Of the 42 candidates, only 5 chose the written Related Study as their elective. The general standard of candidates' answers was high.

Section III

History of Ballet in Australia

Candidates were required to answer 2 questions.

Question 7

Choose an Australian choreographer who has made a work for the Australian Ballet in the last decade. Discuss the nature of this choreographer's contribution to Australian dance.

The candidates who selected this question focused on Graeme Murphy. Responses showed good knowledge of his works and details of choreography yet found the assessment of his 'contribution to Australian dance' difficult to articulate.

Question 8

Early visiting ballet companies left a legacy that has influenced ballet in Australia. Choose ONE of the following and discuss how the Australian Ballet company reflects this heritage.

- *de Basil's Ballet Russes*
- *Ballet Rambert*
- *Anna Pavlova's company*

This was the most popular question and all students demonstrated sound knowledge of the visiting ballet companies. The strongest candidates were able to outline the process whereby the chosen company influenced the Australian Ballet company and could provide details of repertoire and technique. The concept of heritage was well understood. Weaker answers discussed the chosen visiting company but were unable to link it with the Australian Ballet in the context of a lasting legacy.

Above Average response

De Basil's Ballets Russes visited Australia throughout the 1930s. These tours provided Australians with a vital opportunity to experience renowned performers such as Olga *** and Anton Dolun and to view works from the Diaghilev Ballets Russes, many choreographed by Massure and Fokine. Such animated and professional production left a very discerning Australian audience.

An apt solution growing interest of many Australians towards classical was provided as Eduardo Boranowsky chose to remain in Australia in 1938, while on tour with de Basil's Ballets Russes. The aforementioned notion is clearly a definite means through which the future role of classical in Australia would be influenced. The probability of this influence was further clarified as Borowansky open a ballet school in Melbourne in 1939, and only one year later establishing the Borowansky Australia Ballet company. This company was successful for the following twenty years producing many prominent figures, including Garth Welch and Marilyn Jones. Borowansky died in 1959 and three years later on 2nd November 1962 The Australian Ballet was born.

This notion and the abovementioned details of Borowsky provides an explicit and direct means through which the Australian Ballet reflects this heritage – the foundations of the company are derived from a dance of de Basil Ballets Russes. One means through which The Australian Ballet reflects this heritage is through many of the works of the company's repertoire. In Borowsky's company many classics were performed including 'Swan Lake', 'Les Sylphides' and 'Coppelia', the ballets are still included in the company's current repertoire. Borowsky also encouraged and utilised the use of the Australian environment as a stimulus for new innovative and unique works. This concept is still applied by many choreographers of the company today as in the themes of Stanton Welch's 'Red Earth' (1995). An example of a work created by Borowsky, derived through stimulus of Australian elements is 'Terras Australis'. Therefore it can be seen that the current Australian Ballet company reflects aspects of its heritage.

Question 9

Choose ONE Australian dance company and discuss how its international tours have promoted Australian dance.

All candidates selecting this question based their answers on the Sydney Dance Company. Responses showed excellent knowledge of the company its impact overseas, and the contribution it has made to the recognition of and growth in stature of Australian dance.

Above Average response

The Sydney Dance Company was established in 1969, coming under artistic directorship of Murphy and Vernon in 1976. Murphy and Vernon rapidly established a unique reputation for the company. Over the past thirty years this company have travelled extensively overseas successfully upholding and creating the company's unique and individual identity. Such an identity as this abroad has been crucial in expressing the innovative and professional standards of Australian dance.

In 1997 the company toured to New York with its work 'Free Radicals' choreographed by Murphy. Such a work as this is apt in depicting how these international tours promote Australian dance. This work is immensely successful in presenting the previously mentioned aspects of innovative and professional standards. Such a showcase of – these Australian works create an international position for Australian dance within an international spectrum.

Also the high technical standards of the dancers at the Sydney Dance Company are pertinent in determining / depicting the technical standard that does indeed exist within the Australian dance scene. Thus it can be seen that the technical and creative characteristics displayed in the works of the Sydney Dance Company's international tours are responsible for promoting Australia's dynamic dance identity.

Question 10

Explain the aspects of physics demonstrated when performing a series of pose pirouettes en diagonale.

The majority of candidates chose only one aspect of physics to answer the question. There was evidence of rote learning rather than an ability to make a connection between the theory and the specific example.

The strongest candidates realised there was more than one aspect of physics involved and could provide concrete examples.

Initially to accelerate from a balanced position, weight is placed on the back foot shifting the centre of gravity producing a retarding force which moves the body forwards onto the front foot. As the back foot leaves the floor it also acts as a torque (turning force) propelling the body into rotational motion.

To maintain balance while turning the centre of gravity needs to be placed so as to form an equilibrium to the responding force away from the front of central force on the floor. Also as the body moves into rotational motion the rotational momentum increases as distribution of body mass is brought in closer to the central rotating axis.

Question 11

Explain the effect of turnout on travelling jumps.

Most candidates could write about the physics demonstrated but did not show a thorough understanding. The best answers provided a detailed discussion of the impact of decreased turnout in effective travelling jumps.

A well-prepared candidate's response is included:

In travelling jumps as body travels vertically and horizontally the forces created by use of turnout muscles can restrict the height or overall effect of the jump. An example of this is seen in a grand jeté to second. If turned out the angle made by the foot when applying force against the floor and moving into rise is minimised if the foot is maximally turned out, hence the area over which the retarding force is received is small ultimately affecting the height of the jump (as height of jumps is determined by vertical force/weight). If the foot is not maximally turned out therefore the area over which the retarding force is exerted is greater providing a greater force for the dancer to travel a greater vertical distance. In other words a slight sacrifice of turnout in a travelling jump may actually enhance overall effect/appearance of the jump.

Question 12

A specific kind of dance floor is essential for the safe practice of classical ballet technique'. Do you agree?

All candidates agreed that a specific kind of dance floor is essential and most candidates indentified a sprung floor and a non-slip surface. The weakness in the answers was the failure to refer to aspects of physics pertinent to the question, eg. failure to refer to steps of elevation as central to ballet technique.

3 Unit (Additional) History of Ballet

Of the seven topics available on the paper the most popular was 'Romantic' which was answered by 21 of the 22 candidates.

'Diagheliv' attracted 9 responses, 'Ballet in America' 7 responses and 'Renaissance' 5 responses. No candidates attempted the question on 'Pre-Romantic' while only one answer was presented on 'British Ballet' and 'Russian', respectively.

Question 1

Many of the gestures and courtly mannerisms that are still part of traditional classical ballet originated in the period of the Renaissance.

Discuss and give examples.

Students who attempted this question demonstrated detailed knowledge of the Renaissance period and coped well with the demands of the question ie. showing the connections between Renaissance gestures and the traditions of Classical Ballet.

Above Average response

Many of the courtly gestures and mannerisms from the Renaissance period, are still present in Classical ballet today. The developments of these mannerisms in the Renaissance period are greatly influenced by many historical figures of the era, including, Catherine de Medici, Louis XIV, Pierre Beauchamps and Jean Baptiste Lully. These four figures contributed to the evolution of classical ballets renoun gestures that are still present in traditional classical ballet.

Catherine de Medici was originally an Italian but moved to France to marry Henry II. De Medici is perhaps the most important figure from the Renaissance period as she began ballet as what we know it today. The first ballet created by de Medici dates back to 1581. It was entitled 'Ballet Comique de la Reine' and was produced in honour of the queen's daughter in law in the French courts. The ballet itself was a mixture of old testament tales and Greek and Roman mythology, thus consisting of roles with characters of high status meaning that this ballet was performed with a very.... upright posture. This was the first step of the development of the courtly mannerisms present in traditional ballet.

Louis XIV also known as 'the Sun King' one of his renoun roles in a ballet, was an extremely brilliant at the art of ballet. Louis XIV dance master Pierre Beauchamps was the reason for Louis elegant and graceful style and what Pierre Beauchamps taught to Louis is perhaps the basic foundation of traditional ballet.

However even before Louis XIV there was court dance, where men danced with their feet turned out in order to display their calf muscles. This was the beginning of what later developed into turnout. Louis XIV gestures were all based upon similar characteristics of court dance incorporating a rigid upright torso with a turned out supporting leg. That can be summed up in Gestures that are harmonious and symmetrical all opening from a central axis supported on the base of a turned out leg.

Pierre Beauchamps used these foundations for what he formulated as the principle foundations for ballet, when Louis XIV ordered him to record the codification of arms and feet, which are still existant in traditional ballet, and all forms of ballets today. Beauchamps codification of feet and arms can be recognised a first position, second position and so on, and was developed from the beginning of men turning out their feet in court dance to display their calve muscles. This is a significant step in the Renaissance period and in ballet itself.

In 1661 Louis XIV granted Beauchamps charter to the Royal Academy of Dance in which Beauchamps was the director, later Jean Baptiste Lully became the director, in 1671 and combined the Royal Academy of Music with the Academy of Dance and Lully was introduced to the Palais Royale which was the introduction of a proscenium arch stage. This greatly affected the evolving art of ballet at the time, due to two major factors. Firstly the proscenium arch meant that audience could only be seated directly in front of the stage as opposed to all four sides like the 'Ballet Comique de La Reine' that was not performed on stage. With the audience only in front meant a change of focus in the choreography and therefore meant that travelling sideways became essential, thus developing and accentuating turnout to make travelling sideways easier. Secondly the performers were separated from the audience which meant movement had to change to be visible thus emphasising the balletic gestures.

The Renaissance Era developed many mannerisms and gestures that are still a part of traditional classical ballet, as seen in the codification of arms and feet and the upright and harmonious gestures that evolved from this era.

Question 2

How did the staging of ballet affect choreography in the pre-Romantic era?

There were no responses to this question.

Question 3

Name the two Romantic ballets that are still included in ballet repertoire.

What Romantic features contribute to their continued popularity?

As stated above, this question attracted the largest number of responses which, in the main, demonstrated a sound knowledge of the Romantic period and Romantic ballets. The majority of candidates chose *La Sylphide* and *Giselle* as the two ballets for discussion.

The issue of 'continued popularity' and ascribing reasons for this proved a difficulty for some candidates who were able to give reasons for the popularity of the ballets in their time, but not analyse the reasons for continued appeal in the present day.

The best answers grappled with the issues well and presented a convincing line of discussion. This can be seen in the following sample answer.

Above Average response

After the Renaissance period the foundations of classical ballet had been already put in place. During the pre-romantic period people like Jean Georges Noverre otherwise known as the father of classical ballet took ballet to new heights but at the completion of the French revolution and the Napoleonic era (1815) ballet was ready for radical changes. This saw the beginning of the Romantic era.

People had just suffered the effects of war and the developing Industrial revolution saw the continued poverty and devastation of the majority of people in Europe. Ballet changed to suit the needs of this new audience.

Theophile Gautier helped to throw Europe deepest into the romantic era. He was a poet, writer and drama critic with a great passion for ballet. He was extremely influential, shaping public taste by promoting dance with a new aesthetic driven by passion and a yearning for the unattainable. This period provided audience with romantic love, fairy tales, beautiful dreams fantasy and most of all an escape from the world outside the theatre.

Because of what was going on at the time, the subject matter had to change to suit the public's longing for the supernatural, unattainable and fantasy world. The stories involved woodland creatures falling in love with mortal men or dead maidens rising from their graves to haunt unfaithful lovers. ie. 'La Sylphide' and 'Giselle'.

These two ballets being among the greatest ever created. They still sustain places in the repertoire of present day companies. The character of Giselle being one of the most sought after roles for all ballerinas. Both typical of the era. 'La Sylphide' was choreographed by Phillippe Taglioni to star his daughter 'Marie Taglioni' who was the first to dance on pointe. It created the illusion of floating and being higher than everyone else. She wore wings and the bell tutus were introduced in this ballet as they shimmered as the girls floated around the stage.

Theophile Gautier wrote the libretto for Giselle with the title role being created by Lucile Grahn, a protégé of Gautiers. In this ballet the dead women come back as wilis. Ghostly creatures of the night.

These ballets still endure success and popularity today. Like then it is still an escape to see these ballets. Something spectacular and seemingly unreal. They contain all the features of the romantic era helping it to create that illusion.

Both ballets are love stories. Involving creatures and characters of another world. The costumes consist of longer flowing dresses that take longer to fall down when leaping in the air so as to look like the dancer is in the air for longer. Pointe shoes are worn with couru being a popular step to make the dancer seem as if she is hovering over the stage.

The movements themselves have the torso pushed forward over the body, with limp broken wrists, and movements are executed with ease and weightlessness. The body is lifted up and out of the floor to avoid connection, to seem more ethereal.

Often people want or need tradition. These ballets are still performed traditionally and provide interesting stories with an element of fantasy. They also supply challenging choreography for dancers and are fully of dramatic expression, especially the character of Giselle.

'La Sylphide' and 'Giselle' contain all features of the romantic period and still provide all they need to, to survive in the repertoire of present day companies.

Question 4

There was only one response to this question.

Question 5

There was only one response to this question.

Question 6

Diagheliv cultivated a new interest in ballet. How did he achieve this?

Most candidates were able to discuss the Diagheliv era convincingly.

The best answers made specific references to key people and events in this revolutionary time and were able to identify the factors which were of most significance in cultivating the 'new interest' eg the collaborative, creative process.

Weaker answers did not analyse the reasons behind the 'new interest'.

The sample answer attached gives an indication of the strength of candidates' responses.

Above Average response

Diaghilev cultivated a new interest in ballet through his collaboration with different artists from all areas and his ability to create them into one wonderful company.

Diaghilev (1872 – 1929), was born in Perm Russia into a wealthy and artistically inclined family. He went to study law at St Petersburg university and it was there that his interest in ballet started. He met a group of people including artists such as Beneis and Balcest and through them he was introduced into the world of ballet. After being successful as a co–editor in the publication of “The World of Art”, and is exporting art, operas, and concerts he decided to have a go at transporting Russians Ballet to Paris. In 1909 a new radical choreographer Michel Fokines ballets, Beneis and Balcest’s designs and dancing by Vaslav Wijnisky and Anna Pavlova took Paris by storm thus starting a wonderful era. Diaghilevs company was a continuing success for twenty years until his death in Venice in 1929. Throughout this time he managed to cultivate a new interest in ballet by bringing together fantastic choreographers, composers, dancers, and designers to create ballet for the changing audience. Through the time Diaghilev strated hisballet company, changes in the social and political sides were bringing a new audience in to see his ballets. Now not only the wealthy people and aristocrats could watch but a lot of the lower classes came. Diaghilevs first Choreographer – Michel Folkine produced ballets like Firebird with music by Stravinsky, Petrushka with music by Stravinsky and designs by Beneis Carnavale with music by Schumann and designs by Golovine and Daphis and Chloe with music by Ravel and designs by Balcest.

With this great combination of Music, choreography, design and dancing he created a new interest in ballet as the audiences became more wrapped up in his ballets. Then with other choreographers such as Nijinsky who choreographed ‘Rites of Spring’ with music by Stravinsky and design by Roerich an Afternoon of Faun with music by Debussy and design by Balcest his themes varied from exotic places to different characters.

Diaghilev achieved a new interest in ballet by first of all having his themes vary from the Polovitsian dances to Petrushka to the Prodigal Son and Firebird, his ballets never had anything in them that wasn’t necessary for the ballet (Folkines 5 principles), some of his ballets were scandalous therefore attracting a large audience, his equal use of music, choreography, designs etc., he brought different styles of dancing into his ballets to create interest eg. from Poland, Greece, Hungary, he had famous dancers like Karsavina, Njinsky in his ballets. His costumes were inspirational to fashions of the time for example Leon Balcest designs, he made ballet more accesable to the less wealthy people, he brought all this to Paris which is particularly open to different innovationsand ideas in Art. Diaghilev was a pioneer in ballet history and if it werent for his work ballet wouldn’t be where it is today. Diaghilev did cultivate a new interest in ballet through all his innovative ideas some successful, others not quite but everything he did sported a new interest in ballet and saved the artistic fate of ballet from being lost forever. It was through his innovative ideas that his ballets cultivated a new interest in ballet.

Question 7

Choose a choreographer who helped to give American ballet a particular identity.

Discuss the contribution and repertoire of this choreographer.

The quality of answers to this question was impressive. All candidates chose George Balanchine as their choreographer and showed good knowledge of his heritage and how this contributed to the creation of a new American style.

Candidates coped well with the demands of the question, detailing repertoire and acknowledging the impact of the establishment of the ballet school, The New York City Ballet.

Above Average response

Classical ballet was slow to get started in the United States. Many artists found fame, eg. Fanny Essler in the 1800's, in America. Diaghilev's touring company took part in a 12 month tour during 1916, simultaneously Nijinsky visited American shores between 1916 and 1917, while Anna Pavlova was there during 1910. Though these dancers and many more endured success, they were unable to sustain enough interest to evoke any permanent rise in American dancers. It wasn't until Diaghilev's Ballet Russes was reestablished in Monte Carlo by Rene Blum and Colonel de Basil, that ballet in America began to rise. Resident choreographers were Leonide Massine and George Balanchine. Balanchine going on to be probably the most important figure in ballet in America even til this day.

George Balanchine studied at the Imperial and Music Conservatorium before joining Diaghilev. After Diaghilev's death he joined Blum and de Basil but in 1933 he left Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and at the request of Lincoln Kirstein resided in New York to form the American Ballet. Their idea was to give ballet in this country stature but in an American way. They aimed to create a new American art form. This company's first performance was in 1934 'Serenade' choreographed by Balanchine. In 1946 they were asked to join with the city Centre of drama and music. It was now the 'Ballet Society'. In 1948 the company first performed under the name of New York City Ballet. This company being even now America's most well known company with the majority of their repertoire choreographed by Balanchine. With this company Balanchine shaped ballet in the United States. He abandoned Diaghilev's style and went back into Petipa and Ivanov but without the frills. His choreography was neat, clean streamline and American classicism.

At first Balanchine was ridiculed by the public. America believed modern dance was its own. Balanchine created Neo-Classicism.

Balanchine worked with modern dancers. He spent an evening with Martha Graham on 'Episodes' and out of it came a spidery dance for Paul Taylor.

Balanchine believed music was the floor of all dance. He didn't believe in promulgating 'stars'.

Balanchine didn't just repeat history. Everything he did was in America, so all his contribution aided American ballets reputation around the world. When working in America he took ballet past previous limits. He use a variety of idioms and brought together the two great dance ideologies.

He created works typically American. Seen in 'Western Symphony' and 'Stars and Stripes'. Other famous works of his are 'Agon' and 'Apollo'. He even re-choreographed traditional ballets like the 'Nutcracker'.

Balanchine's works are still performed by many companies in America. Namely the two most prominent, New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre! His choreography an important and large part of American repertoire.

Balanchine's contribution to dance in America was huge. He even choreographed for Broadway. He raised the status of ballet in this country, giving it, its own identity.

His neo-classical style, one very much his own is central to the great ballet companies, works and dancers today. He has his own identity, with his choreography being well known and distinguishable.

The Written Papers

Sample scripts from each question were selected for pilot marking. These samples represented a possible range of answers, and were graded into categories, A – E as described below. Markers spent pilot sessions categorising scripts to confirm their impressions of the range of responses, then discussing and consolidating the process of allocating marks.

The A response

- shows an excellent understanding of the demands of the question.
- addresses each part of the question in a logical and coherent way.
- substantiates the answer with examples.
- analyses and critically debates the issues.

The B response

- shows an understanding of the demands of the question
- gives relevant examples
- begins to grapple with the complexities of the issues raised by the question.

The C response

- shows a limited understanding of the demands of the question.
- fails to give sufficient supportive details or examples.
- reiterates the general history of the topic
- provides factual knowledge of the topic unrelated to the question.

The D response

- shows a lack of understanding of the question
- gives insufficient information or irrelevant information
- may give incorrect information
- fails to analyse the issues

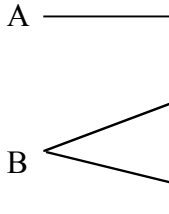
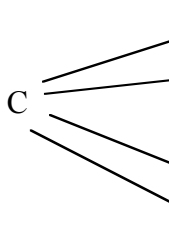
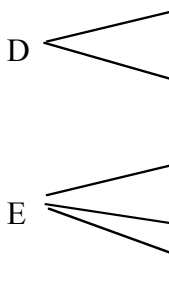
The E response

- is very short
- reveals little or no understanding of the requirements of the question and lacks knowledge
- shows no familiarity with the general topic

**1999 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
CLASSICAL BALLET**

LITERAL GRADES AND NUMERICAL EQUIVALENTS

(for a mark X/10)

Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 3
above average or upper range	30% of students		10 9 8
average or middle range	40% of students		7 6 5 4
Below average or lower range	30% of students		3 2 1 0 and non-attempts
NB Stage 1 requires an 'impression' in broad terms. Stage 2 requires a 'refining' of the impression. Stage 3 requires 'specifying' the level of the work, numerically.			

**1999 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
CLASSICAL BALLET**

MARK EQUIVALENTS FOR GRADES

Impression	Grades	Numerical	Equivalents
above average upper range approximately 30% of candidates	A5 B4	10 9 8	20 19 18 17 16
above average middle range approximately 40% of candidates	C3	7 6 5 4	15 14 13 12 11 10
Below average lower range approximately 30% of candidates	D2 1 EO <u>X</u> 5	3 2 1 0 <u>X</u> 10	9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 <u>X</u> 20

MARKING CRITERIA

1999 HSC CLASSICAL BALLET 2/3 UNIT (COMMON) COURSE AND 3 UNIT(ADDITIONAL) COURSE

Performance Component

The following marking criteria have been included to assist candidates' preparation for the performance component.

Steps and Exercises

- Technical precision
- Response to music
- Artistic representation
- Balance and harmony of arms and head

Performance Studies (Prescribed Works)

Lyrical Study

- Technical Precision/balance/control
- Body lines and directions/lyrical extension
- Artistic interpretations of music
- Flowing, poetic expression of movement

Virtuoso Study

- Technical precision/skill/balance/control
- Expressive aptness
- Aerobic readiness

Grand Allegro

- Extension through space/alignments
- Quality control of landings/technique
- Quality in grand elevation
- Technical precision/balance and control

Dramatic Study

- Interpretative response to music
- Interpretation of theme
- Expressive projection to convey character and emotion

- Free expressive movement
- Technical precision / balance and control

Set Pointe

- Footwork and *pointe* strength
- Precision and technique
- Presentation and projection

Male Study

- Control of elevation and *pirouettes*/ technique
- Interpretation of music
- Upper body poise/presentation/characterisation

Personal Solo

- Interpretation/music
- Level of difficulty
- Performance ability

Additional Steps and Exercises

- Management of space
- Technical precision/*pointe* strength
- Response to music
- Artistic representation
- Management of space
- Technical precision/*pointe* strength
- Response to music
- Artistic representation

3 Unit Performance Studies (Prescribed Works)

Female = *Set Pointe* Male = *Set Grand Allegro*

- Technical Precision/balance/control
- Stamina/physical readiness
- Artistic expression and interpretation of music

Set Repertoire Study – Giselle

FEMALE = Giselle, Peasant *Pas de Deux* + Coda

MALE = Peasant *Pas de Deux* (either) without the Coda

- Technical Precision/balance/control
- Interpretation of character
- Expressive/artistic quality

Personal Solo

- Presentation of skills
- Personal expression/suitability of choice
- Performance ability

OR

Other Repertoire Piece

FEMALE: Coppelia – Dawn/Prayer MALE: Swan Lake/Les Sylphides

- Lyrical quality
- Interpretation of theme/music
- Expressive projection
- Technical precision/balance and control
- Musicality

Composition and Choreographic Component

The following marking criteria has been included to assist candidates' preparation for the Composition and Choreographic Component.

Improvisation

- Presentation, musicality and technique
- Expression
- Achievement of integrity and unity

Composition Study

- Thematic development
- Choice of movements
- Compositional components (Repetition, spatial design, use of time/music, artistic unity, flow use of dynamics, level)
- Performance ability

Viva Voce and Diary

- Clarity of expression of ideas and thoughts
- Discussion of compositional elements

Compositional Piece

- Thematic development
- Compositional elements (space Intro, Floor design, conclusion
time: rhythm, Accents, pauses, syncopation flow: quality, artistic unity
dynamics)

- Suitability of music selection for student's ability
- Costumes and props

Choreographic Piece

- Thematic Development/costumes/props: Use of introduction/climax/conclusion
- Elements of composition
 - Unity/variety/contrast/cyclic form
 - Repetition/alliteration/rhyme
 - Spatial floor design
 - Relationship to music
 - Artistic form/group organisation
- Creation of original movement
- Knowledge of choreography by research
- Evidence of collaboration with musicians, composers and designers

Vive Voce and Diary

- Clarity of purpose
- Explanation of motivation/stimuli
- Discussion of compositional elements