

2000 HSC Notes from the Examination Centre Classical Ballet

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Classical Ballet

Introduction

The 2000 HSC Classical Ballet examinations consisted 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 chose 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) (candidate 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 were three written papers which 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 was divided into two sections:

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

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

This paper was divided into two sections:

- Section III: History of Ballet in Australia – candidates were required to answer two out of three questions
- Section IV: Further Anatomy and Physics of Ballet – candidates were required to answer two out of three questions

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

Part 1: Practical Examination

General Comments

In 2000 the general standard of the 52 candidates in the Performance Component, in both the 2/3 Unit (Common) Course – Core, Major Elective – and the 3 Unit (Additional) Course, was high. Examiners noted that the number of candidates choosing the 3 Unit (Additional) option had decreased.

2/3 Unit (Common)

Core Study – Performance

(i) Steps and Exercises

This part was 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 enchaînments 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 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:

Those candidates who performed this study showed varying degrees of competency. The examiners note that 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 similar versions.

Grand Allegro Study:

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

Candidates generally performed very well in this part. Steps included pointe work for females and steps of elevation for males.

(ii) Performance Studies

Prescribed Works:

(third and fourth choice). Stronger candidates demonstrated a knowledge of the different styles of movement in the studies.

Set Pointe/Male Study:

This was generally very well performed.

Personal Solo:

This was generally well presented. Stronger candidates demonstrated the candidates' personal ballet skills and qualities to their advantage. Weaker candidates included steps which were beyond their technical and performance capabilities.

3 Unit (Additional)**Performance****(i) Additional Steps and Exercises**

Stronger candidates performed their enchaînments 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)

This was generally very well prepared and performed. Female candidates performed their 3 Unit set study with placement and lightness of pointe work, while male candidates performed Grand Allegro with breadth of line, strength of movement and strong elevation.

Set Repertoire Study (Giselle):

This was generally very well prepared and presented. Stronger candidates demonstrated a strong dance quality and presented a performance with style and character.

Personal Solo or other repertoire study (Coppelia: Dawn Prayer, Swan Lake Les Sylphides).

This was 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**

In 2000, the general standard of the Composition component was higher than in previous years. The higher standard of the Composition component indicates that most candidates, and their teachers comprehend the demands of Compositional and Choreographic Studies. Examiners noted that the number of candidates choosing the 3 Unit (Additional) option has increased.

Core Study – Composition

(i) Improvisation

Candidates are encouraged to understand that movement in improvisation should be free and not necessarily constrained to a classical base. Candidates are advised to interpret the music and not see this section as a series of steps. Stronger candidates improvised with imagination, invention and musicality.

(ii) Composition Study

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding and application of the basic compositional elements. Stronger candidates demonstrated an understanding of the craft of composing variations, in an imaginative way.

(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 articulate about their work and showed an understanding of basic compositional terminology and concepts. Examiners expressed 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 of 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.

(ii) Viva Voce

Please refer to the previous comments on Viva Voce

Choreography

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

The stronger candidates showed clear thematic development together with an understanding of the various elements of composition to produce a highly original and innovative work.

(ii) Viva Voce

Please refer to the previous comments on Viva Voce.

Part 2: Written Examination

2/3 Unit Related Studies

Core Paper

General Comments

Most of the 52 candidates handled the paper with competence, showing sound preparation and an understanding of the expectations of the paper.

Section I – Repertory Studies and Ballet Appreciation

In general most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the complexity of the set repertory study, Graeme Murphy's *Nutcracker* and the issues of historical context and choreographic style. Most candidates also displayed considerable skill in the analysis and interpretation of a 'recent ballet performance'. This critical appraisal and evaluation of performance demonstrated an ability to make judgments with knowledge and appreciation. The stronger candidates were well prepared and able to discuss the questions in an impressive way with articulate and intelligent responses.

Section II – Anatomy of Ballet

Most candidates were able to apply their knowledge of anatomy and nutrition to training and performance.

Major Elective Paper

Of the 52 candidates, only 3 chose the written Related Study as their elective. The general standard of candidate answers was high.

Section III – History of Ballet in Australia

Most candidates demonstrated an ability to explore and investigate the historical development of ballet in Australia. The stronger candidates showed a competent and well-prepared response to the questions.

Section IV – Further Anatomy and Physics of Ballet

Most candidates demonstrated skills in applying anatomical knowledge to performance, and in explaining the forces affecting classical ballet movement.

3 Unit (Additional)

History of Ballet

Of the seven topics available on the paper the most popular was 'Romantic' which was answered by 10 of the 12 candidates. The quality of the answers to these questions was impressive as most candidates were able to define and interpret the styles and qualities in classical ballet of two historical periods. The stronger candidates provided an analysis of each period.

Marking – 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 impression 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 answers with examples; and
- analyses and critically debates the issues.

The B Response:

- shows an understanding of the demands of the question;
- gives relevant examples; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- shows no familiarity with the general topic.