



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Dance

42302

(Specification 4230)

Unit 2: Set dance

Report on Examination

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General Comments

A choice of two dances was available to centres, although of the total entries, *Impulse* was the most favoured. Almost 12,000 candidates performed *Impulse* whilst approximately 2,700 presented *Find It!* for assessment. Performances were marked out of a total of 30 marks against six criteria, which were generic for both dances, and the full range of marks was awarded for both dances. Percentage achievement at each mark on the scale was very similar across both dances, which indicates that both dances provide equal challenge.

It was pleasing to see a number of centres where both dances had been offered and candidates had been able to select their best performance for assessment. So as to best advantage all candidates, centres are encouraged to consider the needs of the individual candidate rather than the centre's own preference of dance.

All candidates are assessed on film, which should be a single, **unedited** version. Assessment is undertaken when the examiner views the recording, so it is perfectly acceptable for the centre to allow a candidate to have several attempts at their dance before the final "take" is sent to the examiner. It was distressing to see examples where quite able dancers had forgotten their dance half-way through but where this had been offered for assessment. In this instance it is always permissible for the candidate to re-dance, but only the final unedited recording should be put onto the DVD or video that is sent to the examiner. If it is not possible to exclude that recording, it should be clearly marked on the running order which version is offered for assessment and which is to be ignored.

A number of centres presented adapted work for candidates with specific physical needs and in the majority of cases, permission had been requested for an adaptation. There were a few instances where this had not happened, causing administrative delays for the examiner. To clarify, AQA approval must be sought if teachers wish to adapt either set dance to meet the specific needs of a particular candidate. An application for approval must be made as early as possible in the year of examination. The procedure for submitting an application for approval is explained in the document *Applying to Adapt the Set Dance* on the AQA website in the Teacher Resource Bank.

The published music tracks must not be altered in tempo, cut, edited or altered in any other way, except in exceptional circumstances to meet the needs of a specific candidate. In this case, AQA approval must be sought before presenting the candidate's work for final assessment.

Specific observations related to the criteria for assessment

Technical ability

Examiners were looking for evidence of underlying technical ability to support the performance. Clearly there was a range of achievement in this criterion but many candidates demonstrated weaknesses with alignment, core stability and control.

Accuracy of reproduction of action, spatial and timing content

Centres do not receive any direct general feedback on the accuracy of the performance of the set dances, so it is imperative that teachers make good use of the *Set Dances* DVD and the *Teachers' Notes* to regularly check what they are teaching against the original. This is particularly important as the dances become more familiar to teachers. Under this heading, any inaccuracies, whether individual or centre-taught, were reflected in the marks the candidates were able to achieve.

Interpretation

Varied interpretations of the dynamic and expressive qualities were evidenced, with some lovely individual interpretations of light and shade. Candidates who attempted to bring some dynamic variety to their work, even if it was at odds with the choreographic intent, did gain marks. However, it is important to encourage an understanding of how *Interpretation* and *Demonstration of Style* work together in a symbiotic relationship.

Demonstration of style

Candidates who had studied the exemplar DVD, and had explored and consequently understood the characteristic features of the style, clearly fared better than those who had not had access to it.

Safe practice as a performer

It was good to see so many candidates who had genuinely made an effort with their appearance for the recording of their work, and they were able to gain up to two marks before they even moved. Conversely, candidates who presented themselves in overlong trousers, bare-midribs, fringes flopping over eyes, etc, all lost marks in this area. There are key moments in both dances where examiners are looking to see if candidates evidence the ability to perform safely, including landing safely from jumps, and actions that take the dancer onto and from the floor. These are critical to the award of marks in this criterion. Centres are encouraged to explore these with candidates so they are fully aware of the importance of executing the work safely.

Overall Performance

Centres are advised to give candidates guidance on how to perform for camera and to give them lots of opportunities to view their own performances thereby helping them reflect and improve. Some candidates do not fully engage with the medium which is evident through a lack of the use of focus and projection. Viewing professional works on camera and asking students to comment on focus, projection, musicality, energy and commitment of dancers may also support their learning in this area.

Impulse

Candidates need to use impulse to initiate movement to fully demonstrate the style of this dance. Generally the use of impulse through the body was lacking in many of the performances, but there were some good examples of candidates who were able to make their own personal interpretations of the dynamics in the free-time section.

The torso often needed to be used more freely in the opening bars (bars 1 and 2). Some candidates lacked a lateral motion which is also a significant characteristic feature of the dance.

The walking steps which move backwards and downstage were often presented inaccurately (end of bar 2 and beginning of bar 3). Often, candidates did not travel downstage, and missed the sense of movement into the diagonal; many presenting it as their own personal circle around a confined axis.

Many candidates presented the run round in a rather constrained way when a more fluid, free, gliding motion was required.

Only a few candidates successfully achieved the full rotation in the elevated hop. Frequently, candidates ended with the pelvis facing USR rather than USL and the leg elevated to the side rather than behind (bar 5 and then the repeat in bar 15).

In bar 7 the full plié was not achieved in a large number of cases. It sometimes resembled a pivot of the hip and remained on a medium level, with the result that the impulse of the following movement and the closing-in of the knee, which initiates the change of direction and subsequent slide, were not achieved.

Overall, the floor section during and after the freetime section was presented very well. Many candidates were able to present some pleasing dynamic variations here and to move in and out of the floor fluidly.

Candidates were required to use a parallel first position. Second position (often with turn-out) was used incorrectly on a number of occasions. Common inaccuracies also occurred in the opening and closing bars of the study, and with the timing.

Find It!

Some candidates failed to achieve both the quirkiness of the gestures during the opening section, and the more percussive dynamic qualities of the study.

The imagery of focusing on something in the hand needed to be presented more convincingly.

Strength and control in the torso needed to be evidenced in the shoot-out to plank in bar 3 and also in bar 6 with the body release and leg gestures.

Many candidates missed the fluid and continuous quality in the free-time section (bars 9 and 10), and appeared to find this harder to achieve than the more percussive gestures.

A more explosive quality was needed in the final travelling section (bar 11), although candidates generally managed to really move down the diagonal pathway.

The point of focus in the final moment of the dance was presented in a variety of ways, not always correctly facing DSR. Often candidates did not evidence control through the centre, nor accurately reproduce the final position.

Administration and Documentation

Most centres followed the guidelines and completed the documentation successfully which was a great help to examiners. However, problems and delays to marking did occur for a number of reasons. It would be helpful if all centres could ensure that an attendance sheet has been included in the pack which clearly indicates any absent candidates.

Candidate Record Forms (CRFs) must be:

- completed and included for every candidate being assessed
- collated in the order that candidates appear on the DVD
- completed in a clear, legible hand. It was sometimes difficult to read the candidate's name
- printed or copied with both sides of the Candidate Record Form on a single A4 sheet so that the examiner can mark on the grid
- completed with a useful indication of each candidate's appearance as they appear on the film so as to help the examiner make a secure identification. Where this was left blank, examiners could not cross-reference what they were seeing on screen. Likewise, the same description for every candidate (e.g. 'black leotard and tights') did not help to identify individuals
- completed with candidate names in exactly the same format as on the film and the attendance sheet. Alternative names cause confusion for examiners and jeopardise the marking process

- left blank on the marking grid. The examiner needs to use this and the centre should not mark this unit.

Recordings

Many centres provided really good quality recordings which helped examiners to make a successful assessment. In a few cases, candidates were disadvantaged because the centre had not given sufficient care to the filming process. In some cases a technician had transferred the material onto DVD but this had not been properly checked by the teacher. There were several instances of candidates being cut off half way through the dance. In cases such as this, the examiner makes a reasonable attempt to contact the school, but in rare circumstances, marking takes place after the centre has closed for the summer holidays, in which case the candidate may be seriously penalised. Teachers are encouraged to check the DVD carefully before sending it off to the examiner.

The most useful presentations were offered on a DVD, with each candidate's performance easily accessible via an individually tracked recording. This was enhanced where centres provided a tracking system on their DVD with the candidate's details featured on a root menu screen. Equally, where this was not available, a sheet with written candidate details held directly in front of the camera was perfectly acceptable. When candidates introduced themselves, it was sometimes difficult to hear the name, so oral announcement is not recommended as the sole method of identification.

When presenting work on video tape it is helpful if the work is filmed from the beginning of the tape and cued up ready for the examiner to access easily. Although centres may submit recordings on tape, it is much easier and quicker for examiners to access if it is transferred onto DVD and this would be much appreciated whenever possible.

Examiners have to mark what they see so poor filming can affect the final mark awarded. Examiners are keen to help centres avoid pitfalls which may disadvantage candidates and therefore offer the following advice in respect of filming:

- Include one piece of footage per candidate. Examiners can only mark one candidate per viewing and it is often awkward to return an untracked DVD to the start of a section with two candidates. If both candidates are to be assessed using the same footage, please make this clear, or copy the footage again for the second dancer, to avoid confusing the entire running order.
- When more than one dancer appears in shot, it is vital that the examiner can correctly identify which candidate is to be assessed.
- Try to avoid clipping the ending of the recording. In some cases the examiner could not see how the candidate finished the performance and this affected assessment of "overall sense of performance".
- Always film candidates from the front, as if the camera is the audience. In several cases the candidates had been filmed from behind which made the assessment of "overall performance" very challenging as it was difficult to assess facial expression, focus and projection.
- Ensure that the space being used for filming is clear of furniture, equipment and other candidates standing around the edges. These obstacles sometimes obscured the overall view of the dancer or detracted from the performance.
- The studio needs to be well lit by any direct light source from **behind** the camera operator. Where natural light flooded in from windows behind the dancer, the examiner viewed the candidate in silhouette which made for very difficult marking.

- Filming which goes in and out of focus during the performances makes assessment very difficult. In some cases the film was so blurry it was impossible to assess the candidate properly.
- Always try to film the candidate straight-on with the camera representing the audience. Filming from an odd angle made it difficult to see presentation skills and facial expression. It is acknowledged that this is sometimes difficult in a small space, but the purchase of a wide-angle lens can improve this.
- Ensure that extraneous noise is kept to a minimum. This sometimes affected candidates' performances and made it difficult to hear the soundtrack.
- The best filming occurred when the teacher, or someone who knew the dance well, operated the camera. The action could then be followed and the frame zoomed to $\frac{3}{4}$ full with the candidate.
- Where the candidate was filmed from some distance without the zoom facility being used, it was virtually impossible to engage with the performance and make a secure assessment of "overall sense of performance".
- Try to avoid using a fixed camera as problems occur when candidates go off screen for a few bars. In such a short piece this is critical and makes it virtually impossible to successfully assess accuracy of content.
- Where black curtains are the background, candidates are advised to wear light coloured clothing, so as to be seen clearly.
- Use a tripod to stabilise the camera.

Before sending the filmed work it is essential that the centre:

- double checks to ensure that all candidates have been correctly identified and that they appear in the correct place and with the correct name on the DVD/video
- checks that DVDs are labelled clearly on the upper surface and that they have been finalised and will play in an ordinary, domestic DVD player
- has made a copy of all materials sent
- ensures the materials are packed safely and carefully. There were several instances of videos and DVDs arriving in a cracked, smashed, or unplayable condition; but thankfully in most cases the centre was able to provide another copy.