



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Dance

42301

(Specification 4230)

Unit 1: Critical appreciation of dance

Report on the Examination

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General comments

It was pleasing to see some well answered scripts, where it was clear that students had been given the opportunity to study professional works in their entirety. Students were also able to articulate their understanding of different aspects of practical work in detail including motifs/movement phrases. Students are advantaged when they read through the entire question paper before deciding to name their dance work 1 and dance work 2, as many questions are linked, and some of the questions may not suit a particular dance work. Students who wrote in continuous prose usually explained their points in more detail and were awarded marks accordingly. It was pleasing to see how successfully students could write about a hypothetical piece of choreography. The vast majority of students attempted most questions and there were some outstanding responses to the painting 'Great Wave'.

A small number of students answered the questions based on unnamed works, and therefore it was very difficult to award marks. A small number of students cited both Christopher Bruce works and answered the questions using both *Swansong* and *Ghost Dances*. The specification clearly states that either Bruce work can be studied for Unit 1, but not both. These students are significantly disadvantaged as only questions relating to one work can be awarded marks. Teachers are advised to consult the specification regularly throughout the course and to use information from the AQA fact file.

Once again, the most popular works studied were: *Swansong*, *'Still Life' at the Penguin Cafe*, *Ghost Dances*, *Perfect* and *Nutcracker*. It was pleasing to see that students using *Bird Song* and *Rosas Danst Rosas* understood that the works are abstract and thus did not attempt to give the works a narrative.

Question 1(a), 2(a) & 3(a)

These questions were generally well answered and many students gained full marks. Most students cited the full name and most were correctly spelt. Marks were awarded for phonetically correct spellings, although students lost marks when they put the names the wrong way around. Answers were variable across schools.

Question 1 (b)

A well answered question with the majority of students achieving full marks. A significant number of students included contributions when asked only to 'describe' – no marks are awarded for including contributions in these questions. Students could access marks here in various ways, through features of set design and/or lighting, including props, projection or camera work.

Question 1 (c)

Students achieving full marks in this question clearly understood how the use of aspects of lighting contributed to the mood/atmosphere of their chosen dance work, eg intensity, use of colour etc. Some students answered by using general contributions of lighting rather than relating specifically to the mood. Students who chose *Bird Song* or *Rosas Danst Rosas* found answering this question difficult due to the abstract nature of those works.

Question 2 (b)

Only the very best students attained all 4 marks for this question. Students understood what set design was but did not always link to developing understanding of the work. The more successful responses clearly showed an understanding of the contribution set design makes. Many students achieved 2 - 3 marks. Some responses referred to mood/atmosphere when the question asked for a contribution other than this.

Question 2 (c)

This question was generally answered well, but many students confused a stimulus/starting point of a dance work with the theme. A few students omitted to answer this question.

Question 2 (d)

Many students achieved 1 mark for this question but few managed to give two examples of how the stimulus informed the dance idea.

Question 3 (b)

This was a very well answered question with the majority of students being awarded all four marks. There were good clear detailed descriptions of contrasting costume with colour and type of clothing. These were the most popular choices. Students were not awarded any marks if they had not answered the question in the space indicated for each dance work.

Question 3 (c)

There was a range of responses to this question. Some answers relied heavily on description and did not offer any link to effectiveness; therefore no marks could be awarded. Many students gave detailed explanations of the contribution that costume made to their chosen work and gained marks. Many answers, however, appeared to be formulaic. Few students offered evaluative comments but when they did, it was clear that the work and its context had been clearly understood. Students who gave bullet point contributions e.g. “*costume contributes to the gender of the dancers*”, without giving a further explanation to clarify the link, were not awarded marks.

Question 4

Students generally scored well on this question and had the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge that they have gained through their practical work in preparation for Unit 4.

Question 4 (a)

There was a wide range of responses to this question, ranging from literal responses such as the shapes of the waves to more creative responses. All were valid responses.

Question 4 (b)

Many students answered this question very well with a clear description of a motif referring to action, space and dynamics in their response. Often the detail in the answer meant that the dance motif could be visualised. Answers that were general in their description did not gain marks as there was no real understanding of what a motif consists of.

Question 4 (c)

Those students who understood how to use choreographic devices responded well to this question, often gaining full marks. Good use of vocabulary was shown and an understanding of how to develop a motif was evident. Weaker students tended to list devices without linking them to their described motif in 4(b).

Question 4 (d)

There was a range of responses to this question. Weaker students interpreted structure as space, describing how they would position their dancers. Stronger students offered binary, ternary, episodic and narrative as the most popular answers and then went on to show clear understanding of that structure for a second mark.

Question 4 (e)

Where students identified a build-up of some sort, they often scored 1 mark. In many responses students did not reinforce the idea that this should be the biggest moment or the highest point in their dance and were too general in their response. There was strong reference to action content to create a climax with fewer students referring to use of dynamics or space in their answer. Students who gained two marks offered good reasons for their choices, or provided a detailed description of a climax.

Question 4 (f)(i)

This was a well answered question. Students were aware of how to think about either the start or the end of the group dance. Many responses were interesting to read and referred to action content as well as space, dynamics, number of dancers and production elements such as accompaniment.

Question 4 (f)(ii)

Many students were awarded 1 mark on this question with only those students who were better prepared gaining full marks. General comments such as *“it makes it interesting for the audience”* did not attract any marks. Students who truly evaluated their answer in 4(f)(i) and wrote in detail about the effectiveness of the start or end of the group dance did well. Some students lost marks for writing about the end of their dance when they had referred to the start of the dance in question 4(f)(i).

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available at www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html .

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