



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Dance

42304

(Specification 4230)

Unit 4: Choreography

Report on the Examination

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Unit 4a: Solo Composition

General Comments

This unit really prepares students for the 4(b) task and helps them to develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of the process of choreography. This year students showed more understanding of how to develop material and this resulted in some interesting and well-structured pieces. Many students fully understood the concept of motif and development and its application to choreography. It was also clear that the majority of students had been through an evaluative process even where it was not well evidenced. Some schools had differentiated the task by ability which worked well. Motif length is still an area of concern, with some students working with single actions and others using long phrases of movement which scarcely allow time for development. To allow for creativity, there is no set length but as a guideline motifs need to have sufficient action content to allow scope for development. The best work had used motifs that were already varied in terms of dynamics, action and space. Problems occur when students use motifs that are too similar and offer little contrast which inevitably leads to similar developments. It is important to remember that the three original motifs are a springboard to devising and the end result can be different from the style of the selected work.

Schools approached this task in many ways:

- All students using the same three motifs
- Students making their own choice of work and then selecting their own three motifs
- School choosing work from which five or six motifs were taught and from which the student then selected three.

It was apparent that students had been encouraged to select their own music for this task, which helped them prepare for Unit 4b. Where good choices had been made the accompaniment supported the choreography by providing structure, dynamic quality and contrast. However, where students finished their dance even though the music had not concluded, it inevitably affected the assessment of structure.

Motifs must be selected from the prescribed list of professional works with *Rosas Danst Rosas*, *Perfect*, *Dance Tek Warriors*, *Nutcracker* and *Ghost Dances* being the most popular choices this year.

Specific observations related to the criteria for assessment

Imaginative development of original motifs

The best work used a range of simple and more complex developments. Those that were able to develop the motifs through **action, space and dynamics** were more successful. Weaker compositions relied heavily on changing the use of space. Where students had really focused on the creative process and had experimented with the motifs, the resulting solos were exciting and personal to the student.

Successful integration and linking of motifs into composition

There was a real range of achievement seen in the integration and linking of motifs. The most successful students were able to create new movement material in the same style as the original motifs to link their developments. Students who creatively linked the motifs and integrated them seamlessly within the solo produced the best work. Less successful work lacked transitional material and the dance became a series of developments simply tagged together. Weaker students often performed simple developments of motif one, followed by motif two then motif three. Some students relied too heavily on the addition of new material so that the developments of the three original motifs could scarcely be seen.

Structuring and use of choreographic devices

Most students were able to show knowledge of structure and simple use of choreographic devices, however the more challenging devices such as fragmentation, retrograde and inversion were used by some students to create some very effective choreography. Simple repetition dominated weaker pieces but most students were able to bring the solo to a satisfactory conclusion. The best work included highlights, climax and contrast and well-considered endings.

Analysis and evaluation to bring about improvement

Evidence to support the award of this mark is a requirement of the specification, and teachers had devised some innovative and creative ways to evidence the student's analytical and evaluative skills. Evidence was mainly in written format and in many cases incorporated peer assessment alongside teacher evaluation. Some schools provided very detailed booklets, diaries or video recordings. In other instances, students had relied heavily on description of work done rather than analysis and evaluation and this did not provide sufficient evidence to support the mark awarded.

General moderation comments

Many teachers had used this task as an end of year 10 assessment task. In some schools it was marked at moderation on video whilst in others it was performed live on the day and in some cases a mixture of live and filmed work was seen. Solos that were nearer to 1½ minutes were generally more successful than those that were nearer to one minute in length. It is essential that the moderator sees the three original motifs before marking the work, and schools had devised lots of ways to demonstrate these on the day, but sometimes had forgotten to include them on pre-videoed evidence. This complicated the process and in some cases made it difficult to recover them when marking was taking place many months after completion of the task. Moderators reported that students' notes on the motifs and the developments they had made were very useful and a good way to key into the process and the solo.

Unit 4b Solo / Group Choreography

General Comments

There were more group choreographies this year and many were outstanding. Moderators and teachers alike commented on how the use of assessment criteria has clarified the awarding of marks and they particularly like the fact that each criterion is evenly weighted. Most schools provided good choreographic outline sheets detailing the title of the piece, how the initial response had been developed, the overall intent, the initial starting point, a copy of picture/poem etc (where applicable) and these all helped to inform the moderator about the dance before viewing it.

Specific observations related to the criteria for assessment

Creative and imaginative response to the selected stimulus/starting point

Moderators reported seeing some excellent choreography, using a wide range of starting points and stimuli, although a few students continue to choose starting points which are very broad, leading to work which is clichéd and literal. Students need to select from the prescribed list in the specification, but teachers should encourage students away from more stereotypical themes and work for greater creativity. Where students had been encouraged to thoroughly research their starting point, and where the starting point was original, it was easier for students to access higher marks. In some schools all students picked from the same stimulus/ starting point which resulted in dances that failed to demonstrate a personal connection with the dance idea.

Selection of action content and its application to relationships where appropriate

Students who explored an original range of actions were able to access the higher marks. Many students were able to explore movement in a creative and original way, building an appropriate vocabulary of action content and then crafting it to meet the needs of the dance idea. Some able students lost marks because they used movement from a taught repertoire rather than creating new material to complement the dance idea. Weaker students struggled to develop creative and relevant motif/s that allowed them sufficient scope to develop their choreography. There were some instances where weaker students had used re-used motifs and movements from Unit 4a and the set dance.

Selection of dynamic content

Moderators reported an improvement in the use of dynamics this year with students articulating the reasons for their choices in their programme notes.

The strongest students were able to use a range of dynamics with subtlety, using acceleration, deceleration and sustainment. However there are still a few schools where students do not fully demonstrate appropriate variation in dynamic qualities.

Selection of spatial content and relationships content where appropriate

Generally this was done well, with students using a variety of levels and pathways and considered use of relationships and patterns. Sometimes students used lots of variety in spatial choice just for the sake of it and did not consider choices in relation to the dance idea or starting point. These dances were not as successful choreographically as those where particular choices had been made which cross-referenced the dance idea. There was greater variety in the use of directions but air pathways were less well-considered.

Some group choreographies demonstrated a very sophisticated use of relationships with some lovely contact work and clever choices made in the use of number, with unusual entrances and exits.

Overall form and structure

Students seemed to have a clearer understanding of use of structure this year; beginnings, middles and endings seemed stronger and far fewer students stopped mid-phrase without consideration of the

end of their music. Many students had written about structure in their programme note which demonstrates understanding, but this was not always evident in their practical response. In some instances transitions were weak and did not always have a sense of logical progression. More successful dances had clear sections or followed a clear narrative, rather than just ‘rambling’ with movement. Success in this criteria is very clearly related to preparation, research and planning at the commencement of the task.

Use of choreographic devices and principles

Schools that had used choreographic devices well in Unit 4a, also used them well in 4b, demonstrating clear progression from one task to the other. Many students clearly understand the use of motif development as a choreographic tool and more successful choreographies showed very interesting transitions, lots of contrast and a good use of highlights and climax. Weaker students still struggle with the use of climax.

Choice of aural setting

Most students made good choices of accompaniment and the aural setting contributed to the overall piece. The fact that students can very easily edit music/accompaniment to structure their choreographic ideas has resulted in a much more positive approach to selecting and creating appropriate accompaniment. The breakdown of how marks were awarded for this criterion was used by many as an effective teaching tool in guiding student choices. A number of students used instrumental versions of popular songs but these were not always a good choice where rhythmically the pieces lacked contrast.

Overall communication of meaning, mood or dance idea

Most students had made clear links to their starting point and their ideas were communicated well. Even the simplest of ideas could be evidenced in the outcome, and students had generally given thought to this criterion, which was further evidenced in their programme notes. Those that chose a broad dance idea were not so successful in communicating any real meaning or mood.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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