2011 VCE VET Dance GA2: Performance examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The VCE VET Dance performance examination is designed to assess students' technical ability and interpretive skills in performance. Students perform two solo dances of different styles, learnt from the dance repertoire of a choreographer or teacher. Each solo should be presented as a single, live, uninterrupted performance and be between two and five minutes in duration. For further information please refer to the examination specifications and criteria document, which is available on the VCAA website on the VCE VET Dance study page. The dances selected should allow students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge developed in the following units of competence from the Certificate II in Dance:

- VBQU068 Refine basic dance techniques
- VBQU069 Apply basic dance techniques for performances.

While students can select from a wide range of styles, most students chose contemporary, a genre of commercial dance or ballet.

The solos chosen for presentation were generally appropriate in terms of the selection of movement vocabulary. The movement vocabulary was generally stylistically consistent with the stated dance styles. However, there were some instances where the movement vocabulary and use of dynamic qualities in the two solos was very similar.

There continues to be some stylistic confusion about neoclassical as a genre of contemporary dance. Students are required to study two dance styles from a prescribed list of styles in VCE VET Dance. This gives students the opportunity to broaden their employability prospects as it is understood that most professional dancers in Australia need to be proficient in more than one dance style to gain sustainable employment. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to avoid the use of 'generic movement vocabulary' and to select solos that are diverse in their use of dynamic qualities. It is appreciated that there is some overlapping of techniques and the use of some dynamic qualities in some styles, but to maintain the integrity of the study, teachers are encouraged to select solos that are demonstrably different in these areas.

Teachers who have large classes of students with diverse skill sets did well in modifying and enhancing a single piece of choreography to demonstrate individual students' skill levels. Movement vocabulary was generally executed with good awareness and application of safe dance principles. However, in some genres of contemporary dance the level of physicality was beyond the skill set of the students and their execution of falls, turns and elevations was unsafe. In commercial dance solos that used the jazz genre, there was some use of unsafe movements, such as jumping and landing heavily on the knees, unsupported backbends and turning jumps both standing and travelling. If including acrobatic movements, teachers should drill students on safe landings and consider how these movements integrate into the choreography and flow of the dance.

Teachers should avoid creating movement sequences with balances held for 4–8 counts or more. Students are often unable to sustain these balances in their performances and their score in criterion 4 reflects this. Similarly, a series of *fouettés* near the end of a solo can be too challenging for some students and their execution becomes untidy or unsafe. Teachers should be mindful of the tempo of the music selected for solos. It was observed that less skilful students executing very fast dances often lost clarity in their footwork, arm lines became less defined and this affected their performance in criterion 3.

Students are reminded that simple pedestrian actions such as sustained walking and gestures are not sufficient movement vocabulary in any style and will not score highly.

Not all solos were of the correct length. Some solos did not meet the minimum time length required. Some solos were extended to meet the minimum time length required by adding a slow walking entrance (or promenade), posing and an extended bow or reverence. This approach is not appropriate and affects the student's ability to demonstrate a range of technical skills and score highly.

Teachers can assist students by ensuring that the solos presented have defined endings. Often assessors were unsure if a dance had reached its conclusion.

The construction of solos that used the commercial genre of hip-hop movement vocabulary was generally sound, with a reduction in the use of repeated movement phrases and more variety in the use of spatial patterning. Music was better

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edited in these solos with less time between tracks, thus enabling students to sustain their performance qualities with more consistency.

Students generally presented for the examination wearing appropriate attire. However, it should be noted that a romantic-length tutu or floor-length heavy jersey skirt are not acceptable. Students should be encouraged to rehearse in the clothing and footwear they intend to wear during the examination to ensure they feel comfortable in their clothing. This will also bring to light any potential problems with the clothing, such as tops and pants riding up or down, that may impact on the performance or cause embarrassment. Hair should not obscure the face or distract the dancer from the performance.

Most students used MP3 players for their musical accompaniment and this was very successful as students were familiar with the technology. In the rare cases of students using cassettes, teachers are encouraged to ensure students are familiar with the operation of the supplied audio equipment. The use of a notebook computer or laptop to play music in the examination is not acceptable.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Interpretation of Criteria

In order to distinguish between levels of performance in the demonstration of various skills, a common understanding of the term 'skill' must be reached. For the purpose of the VCE VET Dance performance examination, 'skill' encompasses: the level of ability that a student demonstrates in all criteria, the use of a range of skills in each criterion and the degree of difficulty involved in meeting each criterion. The same set of criteria applies for both solos. If a student's dance does not allow them to demonstrate a range of movements in each of these areas, or if the student's technical execution is not proficient in a specific technical area, they will score a lower mark for those criteria. Therefore, the repertoire selected must be suitably technically challenging for the student but within their technical expertise.

The published assessment criteria are designed to assess performance skills and a range of technical dance skills. Each criterion is weighted equally and is marked on an eight-point scale (0–7). The assessment criteria used in assessing both solo performances is the same. The first seven criteria address students' technique, while the next three criteria address interpretation.

The assessment criteria are grouped under two categories – technique and interpretation – and criteria are applied in relation to execution of aspects of technique and interpretation consistent with each selected dance style.

Technique

1. skill in the expressive use of movement dynamics
2. skill in using correct posture and body alignment
3. skill in isolating and coordinating the upper and lower body
4. skill in the dance principle of balance
5. skill in the dance principle of flexibility
6. skill in the dance principle of transference of weight and control
7. skill in the dance principle of stamina

Interpretation

8. skill in the use of individual artistic quality through interpretation and expression
9. skill in the use of spatial arrangements
10. skill in the interpretation of music and rhythm

Generally, the skills and features that were required were evident in the solos presented. In some contemporary solos movement transitions were not 'anatomically logical', and students with a lower skill set found it difficult to make safe and smooth weight transferences. This affected their level of achievement in criterion 6 (skill in the dance principle of transference and weight control).

Teachers are encouraged to ensure that the two solos are taught early in the year (i.e. at the end of semester one). This will then give students the opportunity to present their solos in studio and more formal forums to develop their individual artistic quality and thus enhance their score in criterion 8 (skill in the use of individual artistic quality through interpretation and expression).

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