**CA-Dance-Practical examination transcript**

(Duration 30 minutes)

(rhythmic guitar music)

Hi dancers, my name is Debra Bell and I'm an experienced HSC dance teacher. My colleague, Cheryl Large has even more experience in these fields than me, and together, we've put together this video for you to discuss, where you should be at with your preparation for the HSC dance exams that are coming up. Following the preparation, we're going to move into talking a little bit more about the actual dance performance exam day. Then we will move onto talking about the dance core composition day, your core composition exam. To conclude our presentation, we have a slide that is going to focus on some must have reading for you. It's going to have the, where you can find the HSC dance syllabus, and that's got your important dance terminology and the dot points that you need for both your interview and your elaboration. We've also got down where you can find the HSC dance marking guidelines, so you'll be familiar with what the examiners are looking for in your exam, so it's worthwhile having a look through them. The third one that we suggest you read, is the dance 2019 HSC exam pack, where you can find some handy hints that the senior markers put together on what they were seeing that was good last year and what they thought needed some attention. So it's really worthwhile reading to have a look at that as well.

We're going to start with your preparation and where you should be at now and what you should be doing to prepare for those all-important days. Firstly, your teacher is your first port of call. So if there's anything that I mention on this video that you find confusing, or that you've got more questions about, you should check with them and get them to clarify something that you might not be all familiar with, or that you might find is making you even more confused. Your teacher is your first port of call. They know you and they know your strengths and limitations, and that's the area that you should be working on right now to prepare for exam day.

You have had a disjointed preparation with what's been going on in term two and what you're dealing with now. So it's important that you focus on what you need to get your body back to your peak fitness. We're talking about your strength, your flexibility, your ability to be able to control and manipulate all your technique, the way that you want, both through the technique and through your performance quality. Now's the time to be working on improving in those areas. Improving your strength, your muscular strength, your muscular endurance and your cardiovascular endurance.

Some of you are going to have the three performance exams on the one day, that's your core performance, your core composition and your major study performance, along with the interviews and elaboration that accompany them. That's a huge ask and something that your body really has to be ready for. Not just your body, thinking about it, it has to be your body, physically and mentally, and also emotionally, really well prepared for the day. This is where that preparation is going to be really important, because if you prepare well now, you're going to have your nerves kicking in on the day and you're going to be able to manage them in a positive way, if you're well-prepared. So what we need you to do, is really be working on the feedback that you've got from your teachers, that is, working on your feedback and acting on it. So where they've given you mark sheets or videos, get with them and be checking them out to see what's working and what's not. What can you give some attention to, to get your performance and your composition to the best level they can be for you. So now you need to be putting that body maintenance that you've learned with knowledge and understanding into practice. You need to be thinking of good nutrition, having a good diet, making sure that you're getting enough rest, trying to avoid those 18th birthday parties for the time being, and also looking into some adjunctive training. Make sure you’re using some training that's going to support what you're doing in the classroom, perhaps yoga or Pilates, swimming, long walks, whatever suits you and your needs at the moment, and don't forget that your emotional and mental needs as well. So the yoga is going to be great for you paying attention to some alignment techniques and maybe some breathing, meditation that you can add to your training program. As well, some of you will be getting back into your dance classes and doing full classes rather than just being in your bedroom or in a small space, like you have been over the last term.

Now is the time to try to get some practice, practice. Practice in, not just for the performances, but also revising your theory and being well prepared for the interviews and the elaboration. But on the practical, it's really important that you now start to move into a performance space that's at least the size that you're going to be performing in, because it's going to be very different on your demands to be in a larger performance space than what you've been doing, practicing in a small space. Controlling locomotor movement, controlling where you're shifting weights, the in-betweens, between your body skills. So all of that needs practice, so you can slip that into your muscle memory, and it can come automatically on exam day. I don't just mean practicing it as a walkthrough pace, I mean really getting up now to performance standard, practicing at full-out, so that you also are including that all important performance quality of what you're doing with performance quality in the core performance stance as well.

Setting your eye lines, setting your levels of projection, knowing where you're going to be, controlling and varying dynamics, working full out with your music. Within that, you want to be really considering if you have energy and stamina left at the end of your dance as well. So you won't know what that feels like on exam day, unless you've practiced it, it won't just kick in automatically. You want to be able to give you best on that exam day.

With your composition, again, let's talk about what's working for it and perhaps what's not working. So what's working is what your teacher was happy with in your trials or perhaps your last assessment task, and also what you've noticed when you've looked back over the video of your performance. You can tell that's working, hmm, that's, I don't know if that's so clear in there. Have I got too much repetition happening with that one motif? Does it look like I'm just tacking it on to the movement? and That's kind of irrelevant to what my intent is trying to say. So have a look at those kinds of things, because remember that when you get there on your exam day for your core composition, the markers are only going to see the performance of your composition once. So it needs to be clear in its development, and that's what you need to be sorting out now. Get rid of what's not working and really try and highlight a beginning, a development and some sort of resolution, depending on what your intent is. So remember too, that you also need to be very well practiced to perform your own composition this year, and that means, it needs equally the attention of you performing it full out. Often, there's a lot of intricacies in the way your motif is moving and guiding your phrases of movement, and there's a lot of repetition or similarities, so you don't want to be getting confused on the day and having your memory drop out. You want to be comfortable with it, and it's the practice that's going to do that.

Now's the time for you to sort out those do's and don'ts. Now I'm going to move into some housekeeping on things that you need to make sure you've got ready for your exams, well before you’re trying to get organised that morning to get there on time. Firstly, your music, it needs to be cut and ready. A lot of people like to have a backup and often that's sorted out with your teacher. With your time limits, it's really important to realise that both your core performance and core composition between three and five minutes. And it's not that the markers will start timing when your music starts, they actually start timing when you start to move and they finish when you stop moving. So don't be caught out by losing marks for being under or over time, you really need to have that sorted. Your dancewear, make sure you're practicing what you're going to wear. It's no good just pulling it out on the day and hoping that it fits from last year, you don't want straps falling down or feeling uncomfortable in what you've chosen to wear on the day. Remember it should be close-fitting dancewear, and make sure you've had a practice in what you intend to wear, the same as what you're going to put on your feet. It's your choice for what you put on your feet and what you wear, but you need to be practicing with that on your feet, and especially when you're dancing full out. So you know how you're managing and controlling it through the complex movement. Remember that in that dance, you'll be showing your strengths, so you need to make sure that you know how you dance, where it's going to highlight you working through those strengths. Also, you'll be planning to have excess jewellery removed, you should have as much gone as possible and sort out what you're do with your hair. It's no good having hair flying in your face, so that sort of affects how going to confident you are with your performance quality and how you're getting your interpretation across.

So here we are, and it's your performance exam day. Arrive early, so you can have a thorough warmup, and remember, that this warmup needs to prepare you physically, mentally and emotionally. So you're going to be doing gradual warmup, general warmup and specific warmup for the performance. Remember, that you're wanting to make sure that when you go into that exam, you're going to highlight your strengths within your practical core performance exam. So you're wanting to run through your dance, perhaps visualise, and when you're doing your visualisation, think about those in-betweens, not just the technical complex skills, but the way you're coordinating the in-betweens within the movements and the phrases, so that you're dance, really looks well controlled throughout. Remember, you need a strong beginning and you need to still be strong at the very end of your dance. So this is where that performance beforehand with your body maintenance, et cetera, is really going to pay off. Also, when you arrive on the day, if you're well prepared, you're going to be able to use the nerves that you're feeling in a positive way. Use your nervous energy to give yourself that little bit more of a spark in the performance. You want to feel like you're dancing on the opera house stage, not that you're going into a school hall. Again, if you've practiced your performance quality levels, this is how you're going to perform. So you need to be confident and well warmed up before the examiner opens the door to welcome you in for the performance. Okay, so with your nerves, make sure that you listen to your music, gone through your performance. Maybe beforehand, just take some nice calming breaths, just to calm yourself down and get some new oxygen through your system, and really be ready to go in and be well prepared for what's ahead. When the examiner welcomes you in, she'll let you know how the examination is going to proceed. For your core performance, you're going to start with your solo dance, you might take some water in so that you can use that in your one minute cooldown, and even a jacket if it's cold. Take your time getting ready for, to start the performance, you've given your music in, and you'll have a couple of minutes just to get yourself in the space, make sure you're familiar with where you're going to be dancing and comfortable with how you feel before you indicate that you're ready to start. So with your performance, you only have once through. You can't stop and start and say, "Oh, I'm going to start again”. You really need to be confident with once through the performance. If you do happen to have a wobble or forget, try to pick up with the music and keep going. The markers will indicate to you and encourage you to do that. Remember that they're here to help you through the exam. But if you've well-prepared, you're very likely to just get through without the hiccup of memory loss, your kinaesthetic awareness is going to kick in, and you're well prepared with showing your own strengths through the performance. So if you're doing sensationally, and then you have a bit of a wobble off balance, or you're not quite managing a turn, make sure that you're ready to just get back into the performance and not be concerned with that, because it's very unlikely that that little hiccup is going to affect your mark at all. The examiners will be marking what they see, not looking for your mistakes.

So at the conclusion of your performance, and hopefully you were as a strong on that very last phrase of movement, as you were in the beginning, very strong performance quality throughout. Using your projection, clean, clear lines with your quality of line, and really manipulating your space, working with your music and showing beautiful quality in the dynamic control. So you've now got one minute, cool down before you're going to start your interview. That one minute, you can use to do some stretching or walk around, have a drink, use it how you need, but be prepared to still be a little breathless when you're called back over to begin the second part of the exam, which is your interview. It's really natural that you'll still going to be searching for your breath when you start the interview, and the examiners are well aware of that. The second part of your core performance exam, will be your interview. And you've got six minutes in this interview time to explain and demonstrate. And that is for you to make a connection between dance technique, safe dance practices, performance quality, in line with the dance that you've just performed. It's a conversation, and it's really okay for you to ask the examiners to ask a question again, if you're not sure of what they were asking. There's no one way in our dance syllabus that dance technique, safe dance, and performance quality is taught. So there's no right and wrong, and you should feel confident with the way you've been led by your teachers to respond in the interview. As long as you're doing your best to show what you're doing, how you're doing it, and why you're doing it that way, making connections of what you're trying to do, perhaps even what you're not doing in relation to coming out of a jump or in relation to a certain skill. So as long as you're doing that, then you're doing fine.

Regarding performance quality, that's an area that I've noticed over time that people are often not quite as familiar with the syllabus terminology. So make sure you know, your performance qualities terminology, and you're able to show how you've applied that terminology in the dance that you've just performed. Even have some ideas ready of where projection's been important or quality of line. Not so you can quote it like a wrote learned passage, but just so you can make some good links with that and your technique. So for your interview, be prepared to listen to the questions. There will be no set way that those questions are delivered. Be ready to respond to what the examiner asks, and if you're not sure, ask them again. Respond confidently, demonstrate where you need to, and use the opportunity to make links between the dance you've just performed and technique skills, safe dance practices, and performance quality. These should be a personalised response, where you highlight your strengths and talk about how you've managed your own limitations. Don't be concerned if they're small moments where you have to pause and think, and there's moments of silence, that's fine. You need to think about what you're going to say, how are you going to say it, and there's no problem with that at all. Don't be embarrassed by moments of silence. So think on your feet and demonstrate where needed, and the six minutes will fly by. This is where if you prepare well now, you're going to feel very confident about performing your dance performance and your interview, best of luck preparing and best of luck in the exam.

So now we're moving on to your composition exam. Prior to arriving, make sure your music is cut and ready, and remember the time limits are important. So you also need to have your rationale ready. And I'm going to go into some, a little bit more detail about the rationale. 300 words is the limit on the word limit, and so you should really keep it to around 300 words. It's not a benefit to go double the distance and put in 600 words that the examiners then have to try to analyse and decipher in a very short time that they're allowed for reading the rationale. It's up to you to be highlighting the processes that you've used, and that's what you're in going to include in your rationale. So that's why it needs time to be well prepared and thought out, and not really just done the night before your composition exam. You need the three copies because there may be three or even sometimes more people in the exam room, but you just need to produce three copies for the day. The rationale needs to highlight the most important choices that you've made in your composition across the three areas of the syllabus. So that is, you're generating movement, you're organising movement and you're organising the dance. You won't be able to put something about every dot point and you probably haven't used every dot point in your composition. So choose the most important points to cover in your rationale. Perhaps it could be to do with your intent, so I'm talking, generating movement, the intent or ways that choices you've made with the elements of dance, important choices you've made in that area, might be to do with abstraction. In your organising of movement, you might address motif or manipulations, something to do with the phrases or the way you've used motif interphase, choose something there that's important for you to highlight for the examiners to understand.

With organising the dance, you could address the formal structure that you've used. Perhaps you'd like to mention how you're having variation and contrast between sections, you might mention something about the logical development or something important that you've used to produce a resolution or even to achieving unity, and just the most important points that you'd like to highlight and probably discuss more when you go in for your elaboration. So what's important is that it's been important to you, and it will often be a starting point for the elaboration. The markers will have read through, and they'll decide to ask you something relating to what you've written in your rationale or something extra that they'd like to know. So the examiner comes to the door and welcomes you back for your composition. In you go with your music and you're ready to this time, start the elaboration before you do the performance of your composition. Remembering that this year is a little bit different. You're not bringing in a dancer, you're going to be doing the composition yourself. So once again, you need to be really well-prepared with having that refined and being able to show your intent clearly. The examiners will let you know that you're going to have six minutes in your elaboration, and that's to respond and demonstrate. Again, it's a conversation, and it's a chance for you to highlight to the markers, what you feel is important for them to know before they see your work. Remember that they only get to see your composition once. So they're really going to be trying to make meaning from what they see in your practical composition, what they've read in your rationale, and what you say and demonstrate in the elaboration.

So it's important that you get any of the important messages that you'd like to, across in this time. You're trying to highlight the how and why of the processes that you've chosen through composition. So, I think it's a good idea to have some examples that you might call on in the exam, especially to do with a motif or perhaps manipulations that you know are important, and that you're proud of. Maybe you'd like to have some phrases at the ready that you think these really highlight the way I've used contrast between the sections. So if you've had a think about those in your preparation and even worked out ways that you're going to describe them, it's going to be like an automatic recall for you, and you're going to feel comfortable that you're getting as much information through to the markers as you can. This is not to say that you should be learning it off by heart, like a wrote preparation, but just be aware of what you're doing. What are you doing with the elements of dance? What are you doing with your levels? Levels is always a common one that people talk about, and it's great, you can do so much with it. But think beyond what you've done with levels, with your space exploration, are you using a pathway or a floor pattern that's important? Are you facing directions that have something to do with your story? What about you time and dynamics? How have you used those? Is there variation, contrast within time and dynamics or the energy, the effort you're putting in within certain phrases or sections? This is the time for you to get those explanations cross, so you make sure that the markers are aware of the important choices you've made. Remember that the markers get once to see your work and they're looking at what you've done, how you've done it and why you've done it, relating to what you've stated is your intent in your rationale and how you've explained it in your elaboration.

Now it's up to you to perform your composition. Hopefully it'll run smoothly, but if there is a small patch that you just happened to forget, be ready to pick up, be guided by your music, to pick it up and keep going. There's a lot of intricacies often involved with manipulation of motif and things like that within your phrasing. And once again, this is going to pay back if you've had good preparation for performing that composition full-out. Make sure you have a clear motif, and that your manipulations are varied. It's no good to just have one simple motif that you have tacked on to movement that's doesn't even seem related to what you've said your intent is related to. So look beyond the act with when you're developing your phrases. I'm just giving you some little do's and don'ts to think about with your dance now. The other one, is I've mentioned the choices that you can make with elements of dance, there's a myriad of choices. So really look at how you can explore the elements of dance, especially if you've looked at your work and thought, or somebody else has thought, it's a little bit repetitious. You're just doing that over again. So look at way ways you can manipulate and vary your use of the elements of dance. Again, they are going to promote your story or intent.

Composition is a challenging process to get right, and once again, this dance syllabus is a creative art and it's taught in many different ways. There's no right way to be taught, so be confident with the way you've been taught about the processes composition. The way you've been taught to generate movement, come up with a motif, manipulate your motif, and relate your story to an intent that people can see on one viewing and get some meaning from. Just be careful about murky in the middle. Sometimes when you're organising your dance, I've noted that people have really started very creatively and it's looked like it's going to take you on a beautiful journey. It does to begin with, but sometimes it gets a little bit lost in the middle. It can go back to then having a fabulous resolution and you can see the beginning and the end, very clearly related to what was said in the rationale or the elaboration. But it just gets a little bit lost as to its purpose in the middle, so be careful with that. Alternatively, it might start really well, starts to take you on a journey, and then falls a bit flat and looks like you've run out of time with the way you finished it. So make sure that you've looked back over, and seen that it has a beginning, it has a development and it has a resolution, or that it has unity. Remember that it's between three and five minutes, and the timing is taken from when you start to move and when you finish moving, so don't lose marks for being under or over time.

When your practical exams are done, don't forget that you now have the majority of your dance core course finished. You've now got 80% covered, and all you will have remaining is to complete your written appreciation. So this is why I'm telling you that to be well prepared for these exams is so important. Because then, you'll reap the rewards. And after you finish your composition or your major study, you will to be really feeling proud and confident and glad that you've put the extra time and effort in. Where you're at now, it's a bit like a cake, you have the foundation, you've baked the cake, and you can present it as is if you like, but it's not the best it can be. So are you going to put the icing on your cake? Get it the best it can be. It's worth it, as it is with the cake. Prepare your body, practice your dances, revise your theory. Do your best, be proud of your efforts and go well in your dance practical exams year 12.

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