

Dance 2019 v1.1

Unit 2: High-level annotated sample response

September 2022

Examination — extended response 1

This sample has been compiled by the QCAA to assist and support teachers to match evidence in student responses to the characteristics described in the assessment objectives.

Assessment objectives

This assessment instrument is used to determine student achievement in the following objectives:

1. demonstrate an understanding of the elements of dance, structure, production elements and dance skills in a selected dance work
2. apply written literacy skills using relevant dance terminology and language conventions to communicate ideas and meaning
4. analyse and interpret elements of dance, structure, production elements and dance skills used in a selected dance work
8. evaluate the selected dance work, justifying the use of elements of dance, structure, production elements and dance skills to communicate stated meaning.

Note: Objectives 3, 5, 6 and 7 are not assessed in this instrument.

Task

Analyse and interpret the manipulation of motif and dynamics in *Nameless* choreographed by Akram Khan. Evaluate and justify how effectively these dance concepts have been used to communicate concepts of loneliness, despair and hope in the face of a disaster.

Sample response

This is a high-level response because the student:

Demonstrates an understanding of dance concepts and skills making clear interconnections, using relevant examples from the work *Nameless*, that focus on the choreographer's use of motif and dynamics

Analyses and interprets dance by deconstructing choices made in terms of these dance concepts to communicate meaning in the given purpose and context of the Japanese tsunami disaster in 2011

Evaluates effectively and shows well-reasoned justification, with discerning examples that reveal the interrelationship between purpose, context and meaning of communicating loneliness, despair and hope in response to the disaster

Applies written literacy skills, through articulated ideas and controlled structure, enhances communication of meaning about the dance concepts and skills within the given purpose, context and text. Sentence structure shows clear and logical development of ideas, with the use of appropriate spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout the extended response that enhances the communication of meaning about the dance work.

From the opening moments of *Nameless*, it is apparent that there is a sense of desolation and loneliness. A single figure sits on a stool in stillness, centre stage, surrounded by darkness. The eeriness of this moment is heightened by a solitary, solemn, wailing voice. Motif and dynamics combine powerfully to evoke a sense of loss and loneliness, but also impending chaos, supported by simple choices of staging and accompaniment that create a mood of the anguish and despair following a disaster. By sustaining all these elements throughout the work, the sense that this is not short lived but a constant reality is reinforced for those who have lost everything.

Khan's unique motif choices are both mesmerising and brutally confronting in conveying the plight of those impacted by a disaster of such magnitude. When Khan rises from the stool, he immediately collapses with force to the floor, signifying the 'weight' of despair he is succumbing to. As he sinuously winds his way up, Khan's motif of despair develops into sustained sequences of rapid, almost chaotic arm movements, transferring energy through the body and collapsing with force into the floor, symbolising being overcome by the events. His focus is unclear, and his eyes are often directed down. These movement choices — the 'ebb and flow' between sustained 'chaotic movement', and forceful collapsing into the ground — combine with the directionless focus to effectively create a mood of desperation. As he searches for things lost — his home; loved ones — he is weighed down by the enormity of his circumstance.

The horror of this disaster is powerfully communicated through Khan's clever development of wave motifs, which are abstracted, sustained and manipulated through the dance. Sinuous, wave-like movement through his fingers and hands, rolling through the arm and into the torso, seeming to 'suck' his body into and out of the floor and across the stage, are powerfully suggestive of both the literal force of the tsunami, and metaphorically as 'waves of despair', in the wake of the disaster. In one such moment, Khan is bent forward, legs apart. A wave-like pulse begins in his fingers and expands through first one arm, then both, extending into his shoulders, like the pulsating waves. These waves propel Khan across the largely bare stage as he reaches forward with a strong extended arm, driving through the space and thrashing around his body. The sustained wave motifs are brutally effective in reinforcing the enormity of the tsunami disaster, but also as a powerful metaphor for the constancy of the 'waves of despair' experienced by this person, and their frantic attempts to fight against them.

The real power of this work, however, lies within Khan's manipulation of dynamics through masterful use of choreographic devices and form. His frenetic burst of high-energy, sinuous, sustained wave-like pulses through the arms, lightning-fast spinning and rapid collapses into the ground contrasts with poignant moments of stillness. At one point, Khan begins a sequence where facing backwards, he lunges forward, then retracts into a spin, and steps backwards, drawing his right arm in toward his body in a wave-like action. He repeats this sequence, turning 90 degrees each time in a box-like formation, but each time, the movement grows in energy, the lunges become deeper, and the

spins become more rapid and furious. This use of repetition and accumulation of dynamic phrasing, from calm to frenetic, creates a sense of the growing 'swell' of frustration, anger and anguish for this man, in response to the disaster experienced.

Another evocative moment appears towards the end of the dance. Again, Khan employs repetition to build an accumulated dynamic, using a wave-like motif with hands joined in front of his chest, rolling the wrists to instigate a wave pulse through the arms. This continues, with the movement growing in size and energy of every wave pulsing until the motion extends around the head, enveloping and engulfing Khan in a wild wave-like flurry. These dynamically manipulated motifs speak powerfully to the literal and metaphorical 'inundation' of this disaster, and individuals becoming overwhelmed by its scale.

Khan masterfully builds a sense of humanity, resilience and hope through this work. In contrast to the overwhelming sense of desolation, loss and loneliness, he has employed sustained moments of stillness at points following his frenetic and chaotic sequences. This structural choice deeply communicates the resilience and hope of this man. This is particularly evident through a moment following a frenetic sequence conveying the enormity of the 'wave' and attempts to drive through it, where Khan then drops to the ground in a squatting position, his left leg extended, and arms dropping limply from the shoulders in front of him as he stares blankly forwards, symbolic of surrender to the surrounding disaster. The intense sense of resignation is further compounded when he crawls along the ground toward the lone stool centre stage, grabbing and dragging his legs as if injured and incapable of walking. He finally drags himself up onto the stool. He sits facing forward, hands on knees, resuming the same position he occupied at the start of the dance. In this moment of continued stillness, he looks upwards — a spiritual moment, searching for hope. Khan creates a powerful sense of the man's awareness of his situation, and this is a moment for reflecting and regrouping, and finding strength to carry on. The combination of dynamic contrasts of frantic movement and stillness powerfully conveys a man despite all odds maintaining hope and finding a safe place amidst the chaos.

Khan's skill at crafting evocative movement lies in his unique dynamic manipulation of abstracted motifs, contrasts of frenetic movement phrases and stillness, supported by basic staging and mood-enhancing sound. *Nameless* has powerfully captured both the literal and metaphorical devastation of the tsunami, but more importantly, speaks of the resilience of individuals and humanity in times of extreme adversity.



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