

# THE DANCE VIVA VOCE:

## Strategies for preparing students

*The dance viva voce is an integral part of each HSC dance practical examination. The viva voce makes up 20% of both the core and major study examinations. Through the viva voce, students demonstrate theoretical knowledge applied to the works that they perform and compose.*

To maximise students' potential in this area, sequenced learning for the viva voce can be incorporated into programs from early in the Preliminary course. By the time students have reached their trial HSC examinations, the viva voce process should be familiar, and they should feel comfortable with the delivery of their response.

## Strategies

### Questioning and discussion

Terminology related to performance and composition should be introduced from the beginning of the Preliminary year. Students will need to become familiar with the use of terminology as it relates to their bodies in performance, and to the generation and organisation of movement in composition.

Teachers will be able to gauge the extent of the students' knowledge and familiarity with terminology by using questioning techniques after the first few lessons.

Performance examples:

*What is the purpose of this warm-up?*

*What particular body parts is this exercise focusing on?*

*What are examples of warm-up skills we have used in previous lessons?*

*What body parts and muscle groups do you use when moving through these shapes?*

Composition examples:

*What ideas did you draw from the stimulus?*

*Of the movements you have improvised and explored, why did you select that particular movement?*

*How does the movement (you have generated) communicate your idea?*

*How have you used or manipulated particular elements of dance?*

*What effect does this have on the look of the shapes and the phrase?*

Answering these questions encourages students to verbalise their thoughts using correct terminology and to think through a logical sequence of ideas.

### Peer learning

Set a research task (to be completed in one period or for homework) on an area of study, e.g. body maintenance. The task is for each student to develop a viva voce question related to this topic.

At the beginning of the next lesson, students work in pairs:

1. Student A will ask their question to student B.
2. Student B has five minutes to discuss the question.
3. Student A will write down the key points discussed by Student B.
4. At the end of the lesson the process is reversed.
5. At the beginning of the next lesson each of the responses are discussed as a class.

### Interviews

The first assessment task in the Preliminary year provides a good opportunity for students to develop skills in formally discussing their work.

This task may be an interview, where the teacher leads the student in a timed discussion. The teacher might ask several questions which prompt the student through the structure of a viva voce question.

For example, the question *What is the importance of alignment in the performance of your work?* may be asked using the following prompts:

*How would you define alignment?  
Show me the application of*

*correct alignment in two movements in your dance.*

*Why do you think it is important to maintain correct alignment while performing those movements?*

*What conclusions do you draw about the importance of alignment in the safe performance of your work?*

### Process diaries

Students will be developing process diaries related to their dances and works throughout Preliminary and HSC years. Teachers can provide guidance through questions that focus students on particular aspects of their works.

Examples for core and major study composition:

*What is your intent?*

*How have you explored movement related to your intent?*

*What movement was the most interesting to you? Why?*

*What did you like about it?*

*Can this movement be represented as the motif?*

*Describe your motif phrase.*

*How has the motif been manipulated throughout the phrase?*

*How have you structured the sequences to achieve logical development?*

Examples for core and major study performance:

*What technique exercises assist in developing strength and flexibility to perform your dance?*

*How has the element of space been used in the opening phrases of the dance?*

*How have the dynamics been varied?*

*What alignment considerations are evident in the jumps during phrase 3?*

### Structuring answers

Students need to develop skills in structuring viva voce responses, just as they need to structure answers in the written examination. Consideration also needs to be given to how demonstrations are used to provide evidence of understanding.

Students can develop mind maps based on the areas of study for each component. The mind maps can be based on headings and expanded using the dot points in each area of study. Students can elaborate on these points by applying them to their dances and works.

Students should be given practice viva voces with scaffolding for responses, so that they learn to identify the key aspects of the question and how to sequence a response.