

# GCSE Dance 2016-2018

## Infra

Choreographed by Wayne McGregor

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Overview:

## Choreographed by Wayne McGregor

English choreographer Wayne McGregor was appointed Resident Choreographer of The Royal Ballet in 2006, becoming the first contemporary choreographer to hold the post.

## Performed by The Royal Ballet

Today the Royal Ballet is one of the great ballet companies of the world. Under the leadership of Kevin O'Hare, the repertory includes works by Founder Choreographer Frederick Ashton and Principal Choreographer Kenneth MacMillan as well as a new canon of work by Wayne McGregor, Christopher Wheeldon and Liam Scarlett.

## Premier Date

13 November 2008 at the Royal Opera House, London.

## Dance Style

Contemporary ballet.

McGregor's dance style is distinctive for its speed and energy and for the dynamic, angular, sinuous and hyperextended movements that push dancers to physical extremes.

## Choreographic Approach

McGregor starts the process by researching the topic on the internet until he finds an idea that is interesting and related. Various bits of research gives him ideas for the studio. However, he doesn't want to create a literal portrayal of events but the research gives the piece imagination. His method of working is not typical of classical ballet whereby dancers are taught repertoire move for move, year after year.

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McGregor uses three methods to generate movement vocabulary for the piece:

1. SHOW a phrase to the whole or part of the cast – dancers watch and either recreate the phrase exactly or create a version.
2. MAKE a phrase on a target dancer or dancers – others watch and copy or develop.
3. TASK – set a choreographic task for dancers to complete or pose a choreographic problem for dancers to solve. Typically the task or problem involves imagery as a stimulus for creating movement.

The movement vocabulary is then structured into longer “sentences” and “paragraphs”. These get developed, fragmented and erased as he works musically with the structure and pieces it all together like a jigsaw.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPPxXeolzRY> - This video demonstrates his choreographic process in real time and demonstrates the three stages of his process.

## Stimulus

The title *Infra* comes from the Latin word for 'below' and the work presents a portrait of life beneath the surface of the city. This abstract ballet delves beneath the surface to present a moving meditation on human interactions.

- “Under the brown fog of a winter dawn. / A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many.” T.S. Eliot: *The Wasteland*.
- The idea for *Infra* came from this idea of ‘*Vida Infra*’, the Latin for ‘See Below’. He wanted to create a piece that kind of saw below the surface of a city or an individual of a person.
- It came in a context where in 2007 there were the London bombings and London had a very particular feeling at that time. It was exposed in a really extreme way to an act of violence and people behaved very very differently and there was a different type of humanity in the city that you don’t normally see. We are all so busy usually when we are in this city of getting to where we are going ignoring all the other people that are

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around us, and kind of just being very mono track very focused on our needs and those bombings in London actually broke open the city, where people really genuinely did have an empathy and a feeling and a care for one another.

- He found the tension between people and the city also very interesting.

## Choreographic Intention/ subject matter

The subject matter is, a human subject matter and is about an emotional content, where people are revealing themselves in ways they haven't done before.

Infra is about seeing below the surface of things. Quite literally in this case, below Julian Opie's design. You can see people, walking in the street. Infra is about people and the choreography has found a pedestrian language which is recognizably human. When you look at a body on stage, you have some understanding of what that body is doing. The piece is about inferences. It infers particular types of relationships and therefore the emotional content implies itself.

One of McGregor's choreographic aims is to help the audience's eye in watching a complex structure. But in Infra, McGregor has purposefully left open the full visual field to let the audience make their own selections.

## Dancers

12 dancers (6 male / 6 female) Brief appearance of a crowd who cross the stage.

He likes to chose half of his dancers that he knows very well and the rest of the dancers are young and new to his work. This is to ensure everyone is creating something different during the choreographic process. He needs dancers that are willing to try new things, create, improvise and experiment.

The dancers are ballet dancers who have excellent classical technique and strength,

## Duration

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28 minutes

## Structure

Infra is a one-act ballet but the structure is based around a series of kind of little episodes or units of material, musical material and physical material that each have a particular idea:

- accumulating piece,
- a piece that was building in rhythm and building in numbers,
- with all of the company that started with just two people in a box.
- And then you bring some counterpoint language on, so this is two couples now dancing and you start to see relationships between.
- you have six couples in boxes.

The ballet comprises solos, duets and ensembles with many arresting moments, for instance 6 couples dance duets in six squares of light and a crowd surges across the stage, unaware of one woman's private grief.

## Aural Setting/ Accompaniment

Music by Max Richter (performed by The Max Richter Quintet with Jonathan Haswell).

Sound design by Chris Ekers.

The music is both electronic and orchestral. The score mixes melancholy string melodies with electronic sounds and everyday sounds such as train-whistles (manipulation of sound and found sound).

## Costume

Costume designs by Moritz Junge. Fitted shorts, vests, t-shirts in flesh, black, white, grey colours for the dancers. One female dancer wears a short wrap-around skirt. One male dancer wears long trousers. The females wear pointe shoes, Street clothes are worn for the brief

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appearance of the crowd. He wanted them to wear pedestrian clothes that enabled them to relate to their character but enabled ease of movement.

## Lighting

Lighting design by Lucy Carter, with whom Wayne McGregor has developed a strong creative partnership.

The lighting, which relates closely to the structure, lights the width of the stage and often focuses downstage. Occasionally dancers are lit by shafts of light and at one point 6 rectangles of light frame 6 duets. Colours are used to highlight different sections.

## Performance Setting

Proscenium arch/theatrical setting

## Staging/ Set

Set design by artist Julian Opie.

An 18m LED screen is placed high on the black back wall. It runs the width of the stage, along which there is a mesmerizing flow of electronic walking figures.

## Key Moments

- Pedestrian movement vocabulary such as walking, running, sitting, very kind of normal actions which are developed and made richer. There are moments with very low physicality. He didn't want these movements to be balletic, he wanted them to resemble human body language which is very anti-balletic which would provide a really interesting tension, for audiences to be able to feel what was happening on stage.
- Masses of people walk past a woman during a very intimate moment (the woman in private grief). If you could imagine that moment actually when you pass somebody who has sadness in their eyes, in the street, you have that all of the time.

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## Section 1 - Relationships between 3 men

### Actions

- Standing, running, scoop, gallup, lunge, turn, walk, ripple, kick, fan arm, curves arm, coupe turn, placing hand on shoulder, arms in 5th position, arms in 3rd position, circle on the arms with palm on top of hand, attitude turns, grande battements (high leg kicks), jété, retiré, wafting hands, fouetté performed with a contraction and the leg in attitude devant (as opposed to a la second), slash arm into a side lunge, slide, inverted/ flexed wrists, undulations of the spine, hyperextended reaching arms, lunge in 4th position, side tilt, cabriolé, fouetté a la second, reach, chaînée, thrashing torso from side to side, suspension/ rise,
- When all three dancers perform in unison, their movement vocabulary is very stylistic of ballet. Movements include, grande battements, 5th position of the arms, arabesque, picque. it is only when they perform as soloists where the movement is more abstract and unpredictable.

### Space

- Dancer 1 (soloist) stands DSR faces upstage before runs in a circle pathway towards US-C.
- Soloist 2 runs CS and performs towards the left hand of the stage
- Dancer 3 emerges from US- C.
- Grey t-shirt dancer exits SL. and dancer 4 enters from USR.
- Soloists exit. The duet moves USL
- Dancer 5 (female) dancer enters from SL and walks over to dancer 4. Now there is a triangle formation where there are two soloists in DSR and DSL and the duet are US-C.

### Dynamics

- Sudden, soft, continuous, fluid, rapid, suspended, controlled

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## Relationships

- Dancer 1 and dancer 2 - solos
- As a third soloist emerges from the shadows, dancers 1&2 create a duet
- Returns to 2 solos and dancer 3 remaining static US.
- Dancer 1 and 3 form a duet as dancer 2 remains as a soloist
- 3 solos
- A duet forms initially mirroring each other but then they both perform in unison facing the same directions
- Unison between all 3 dancers
- 3 complimentary solos
- Duet - contact - the dancers make shapes and the partner interweaves/ dodges these shapes. The soloist in the white t-shirt seems to be supporting and guiding the dancer in the black t-shirt

## Aural Setting

- Electronic sounds - sounds like morse code
- After a minute, classical instruments start to subtly layer over the electronic sounds until the classical score is the most prominent for the remainder of the duet.

Lighting - 3 white overlapping spotlights downstage. Overtime, a white wash of light is added to illuminate a majority of the stage. US is kept in darkness to allow people to 'emerge'.

Physical setting - the projection of the walking people signal the start and the end of the section but are not projected during the main body of the section. This is so the focus remains on the dancers.

## Section 2 - Relationship between a male and female

Relationship - duet, eye contact, call and response



Dynamics - strong, controlled, fluid, sharp (at times)

## Actions



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- Duet - male/ female - swing, lift, hands brushes across the shoulders, demi plié in 5th, kiss on cheek, grande plié, holding hands, male grabs females throat repetitively, body ripple, thrusts, male spins the female whilst her foot is in passé and her arms are in 5th position, lift, back bend, spin, stroke the man's back, peers out the audience, pointe work, woman lifts her leg into retiré as the man holds her leg and spins her around, when lifted she curls her body over his shoulder like a fireman's lift, man places hand on her stomach to cause a contraction or folding from the pelvis, intertwining limbs, man controls the woman into a needle, lift with her legs in a straddle,
  - Actions are at times sexual such as using body ripples, undulations of the pelvis and spine, kiss on the cheek, being in very close proximity, eye contact, lifts implying that this is a romantic relationship. This actions were in occurrence when two other soloists were on stage perhaps portraying a 'public image' of their relationship. This is supported by the woman peering over the shoulder of her partner towards the audience 3 times. The body ripple motif is repeated several times throughout the solo to suggest that they are making up.
  - Actions also suggest that the male is physically aggressive or manipulating towards the female especially when the dancers are the only dancers on stage i.e. what happens beneath the surface of things are more commonly known as 'behind closed doors. The man performs a number of lifts which involve the woman being held in a contortionist manner. Her limbs are often scrunched up (her legs are folded right up to her groin or her back is bent backwards) or he manipulates her movements to be unnatural/ painful looking; for example, she performs a beautiful attitude but he grabs her arms and leg forcing them upwards above her head to make a needle (pictured). The tension between these two is further supported by the almost constant use of eye contact. At one points he walks calmly towards the audience as she kicks her legs around and struggles and another time he grabs her neck repeatedly.



Motif	Motif Development
<p>Undulations of the spine and pelvis (rippling to body)</p>	<p>Embellishment - the male adds additional movements such as a lift/ swing (in image 1) and a push of the spine (in image 3)</p> <p>Repetition</p> <p>Direction - A lot of the motifs at the beginning of the section are performed with the woman facing the audience (back to the man) but over time, it is performed face to face</p> <p>Levels - in picture 2, the female is lower than the male</p>
	
<p>The male manipulates and folds the female by holding her leg</p>	<p>Embellishment - There are multiple variations but generally stem from changing the shape of the legs.</p> <p>Level - adding a lift</p> <p>Instrumentation - In the middle he also manipulates her arms.</p> <p>Plane/ axis - Diagonal (picture 1) during a tilt; horizontal when the female folds backwards and forwards (picture 2 and 5) and vertical (picture 3 and 6)</p>
	

Circling hands over and around their partner's body.

Embellishment - adds contact such as holding hands, hug or a choke. She also performs the choke motif on herself.  
Force/dynamics - sometimes he makes the gesture stronger and faster to appear more aggressive and controlling  
Repetition - the choke motif is seen early into the duet and towards the end when the female is lying on the floor.  
Tempo - in picture 3 & 4, he frantically runs his hands around her torso  
Intention - When the female circles her hands, it appears to be determining personal space. When the male does it, it appears possessive and/or protective



Physical setting - There was no projection during the solo, further implying that this duet was representing private home life.

Aural setting - The music uses melancholy strings throughout but the section ends with the male slapping the floor.

Lighting - A white wash.

## Section 3 - 2nd Male and Female duet

Actions

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- The duet from the previous section pull at each others' legs and the female lies on top of the male. It's sexually suggestive as the woman kicks her legs, the man thrusts his pelvis and the woman wraps her arms over her head but it is performed in the shadows in DSR. It is not the main focus.
  - Man picks up the female and travels her towards centre stage, arabesque, scooping of the arms, leaning, interweaving, tilt, push, turn, curl, flapping of the arms, pirouette with arms in 5th position, duck, lift, chaine turn, body ripples, supports, grande battements, layout, link arms/ body parts, arms in first position, placing palm on the forehead, balance.
    - This duet seems more supportive and loving than the previous. The male plays the part of supporting, rather than controlling, the woman by lifting her and supporting her during pirouettes. The female seems stronger in her use of dynamics that portrays an essence of independence. She tries to manipulate herself into abstract shapes and the male assists her in her independence, rather than forcing her.
    - The body ripple motif is also featured in this section, further implying that this is another romantic relationship. However, the motif is less prominent in this section and the female performs the movement with increased tempo in comparison with the previous female.

### Space

- A man and woman enter facing one another from DSR. He picks up her towards DS-C
- The couple from the previous section are DSR in the shadows and perform on a low level (floor work). Once they have finished their routine, they face one, the man watches the woman walk across the stage to exit DSL and he exits in the nearest wing (DSR).
- Main duet - Use all levels but particularly medium and high levels to show equality and support.
- Mostly performed centre stage

### Dynamics

- Strong, elegant, fluid, certain, determined.

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## Relationships

- Duet
- Complimentary choreography
- Unison

## Aural Setting

- A fast paced piano score with cello. It has much more of an uplifting mood
- The song ends with a sustained low note to indicate that the section has ended.
- Direct correlation - the pace, structure and style of the music matches the pace, structure and style of the music.

## Physical Setting

- The piece starts with the projection of walking people.

## Lighting

- A parcan light with a green gel creates a very large circular pool of green light, filling most of the stage.

## Section 4 - 6 duets

Actions - frequently used are in bold.

- A very classical movement vocabulary. Highly technical and stylistic of ballet; **pirouette**, **battement**, saute, arabesque, tilt, chaine, attitude turn, grande jete, frappe, **retire**, cabriole, wrap, **spin**, **penche**, drag, walking, **twist**, picque, tendu, **hook**, **undercurve**, drop, reach, 5th position of the arms, place, wave.

There are obvious repetitions but no clear/obvious motifs.





## Space

- The female enters from DSL, walking to DS and into the central square
- The male enters from SR, walking towards CS and into the central square
- All dancers exit by travelling US into the darkness but all exit differently showing the nature of each of their relationships.

## Dynamics

- This really depends on who is performing - they all perform with different intentions. The main couple are very strong, powerful and sharp. However, there are other couples who perform with elegance and softness. This determines the type of relationship that they have with one another - affectionate, gentle, aggressive, tumultuous, etc



## Relationship

- Duet
- Eye contact & physical contact
- 2 further duets join - all 6 perform in unison
- Another couple joins and contrast/complimentary choreography is used. Couples 1 and 3 perform in unison, then couples 2 and 4 perform in unison simultaneously.



- 6 duets perform in total all performing similar, but different duets. However, there are moments with 2 duets perform in unison (above).
- None of the duets are focusing on anyone other than their partner. They are oblivious to other couples around them. They all perform with different intentions



#### Lighting

- 6 white squares of light towards DS

#### Aural Setting

- Strings such as violin and cello.

#### Physical Setting

- The walking characters remain consistent throughout the piece to compliment the content of the scene. Despite there being 6 couples dancing furiously, they all ignore each other as do the walking characters. This represents the theme/ subject matter.

## Section 5 - 3rd Duet

#### Actions

- Reach, attitude, gallop, plié, ripple, jété, push, tilt, attitude turn, penché with arms in parallel, back bends, reach, leg kicks, balances, leaps, splits, body ripple, tendu, high release, twist.
- This is a highly technical dance once again that uses a lot of classical vocabulary.

Motif/ frequently used movements	Developments
1st positions of the	

arms in a contraction.

The contraction derives from Graham Technique and is now well established in contemporary choreography. Graham called the torso 'the seat of emotion' and a contraction is supposed to portray emotional anguish. This motif shows the woman being vulnerable and the male is supporting and comforting her. However there are times that he also performs the motif, suggesting that perhaps it is a shared pain such as loss. People often mourn in private which could link to the stimulus of 'below the surface'. There is a lot of love and support shown in these motif developments.

Developments used include:

Levels





Embellishment - adds head movements and plié on pointe.



Travel and direction





Flipping the dancer	 <p data-bbox="764 443 902 478">Repetition</p>
Assisting the dancer in pirouettes, attitude and penches.	<p data-bbox="526 510 1393 615">These supports actually make the woman look strong and in control. Perhaps this is suggesting that she is gaining confidence and gaining control of her emotions/ vulnerability.</p> 

## Space

- Male performs a solo centre stage. Upstage there are a couple moving slowly on the spot.
- Duet - stare, penche, moving each others' arms around in a circular motion, tilt, lift, drag, grande battement, fall into his arm, holding hands, linking arms, folding, supporting, pirouette, lean, counter-tension, back bend, flip, 1st position, grande plie, twist, lunge, shoulder lift, walking backwards, rond de jambe, croisé, chainée turns.

## Dynamics

- Soft, fluid, controlled, strong, elegant.

## Relationships

- Solo
- Duet - unison, complimentary choreography, contact, eye contact, canon

## Aural Setting

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- metallic/ electronic sounds, a pulsating sound that sounds like a train and a high pitched noise that sounds like a train whistle - representative of the stimulus of people in the city. This stops when the soloist exits.
  - The cellos create an empathetic and almost, sad atmosphere.
  - The electronic sounds re-emerge towards to signal the end of the phrase.

Lighting - a harsh yellow wash. White side lights.

Physical Setting - walking pedestrians projected onto the syc signal the beginning of the section and walk continuously throughout the piece, perhaps to show that life goes on.

## Section 6 - Helping One Another

### Actions

- Walking, penché, arabesque, lift, flapping of the arms, holding hands, assisted pirouettes (male holds the female's hand above her head as she spins), reach, lean, wrapping arms across chest, looking over her shoulder, pointing, sitting, kneel, coupé turn, contractions whilst sitting, moving arms from 1st to 2nd position during a contraction, pull/ drag, picqué turn, fouetté, holding foot.
- This is representative of Wayne McGregor's research. He was fascinated by how people roped together during the London bombings by helping when normally people in the city tend to ignore and avoid interaction despite being in close proximity with one another. One woman from the previous section is left to dance on her own in grief whilst the others perform a series of lifts, balances and supports There is also the use of iconic gestures such as pointing, hugging and carrying to suggest aid is being given. Scooping arm actions are also used to suggest they are searching for something and the dragging their partners could be representative of finding it.

### Space

- The soloist dances mainly in the centre and towards the end of the section dances towards DSL on her own.

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- The duets mainly stay US and USSR and dance in close proximity to one another. Once the soloist moves towards DSL, a third duet takes centre stage.
  - The trio were mainly based towards SL.
  - Low level are used to show pain or grief, high levels are used to show support.

#### Dynamics

- Sharp, sudden, swift, graceful, strong

#### Relationships

- Dancer to dancer
  - solo (the female who is left to dance alone)
  - A number of duets who dance in unison
  - A trio - the male partner from section 5 joins a duet to create a trio.

#### Aural Setting

- The music suddenly picks up in pace and pitch. The use of violins are used more than the cellos which featured in the previous section. The switch was very quick, again to suggest that life goes on and that people can ignore problems around them.
- The violins kept the pace whereas the cellos create a slightly sombre/ serious atmosphere.

#### Lighting

- White parcan lights shone from above and from the wings. This is clear by the shadows cast by their movements. The edges of the stage remain dim indicating that a wash or flood light was not used.

#### Physical Setting

- On the syc, there are lots of walking figures walking towards each other. It shares a strong resemblance to people walking to and from work in a busy city.

## Section 7 -

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Actions - main focus is on the male:

- reach, leaning backwards, touching wrist, placing, curling/ contracting, touching face, touching pelvis, wiping eyes, leaning, lifting foot, holding, looking, pointing, crouching, dusting the floor, kneeling, lying on his side/ back
  - Personally, I think there are some images that can be interpreted as visiting a grave. People often look down at a grave, dust of the headstone and kneel beside it.

Space

- The male soloist performs DSL, starting on a medium level and ending on a low level. The lower he gets to the floor, the more emotional and fragile the dancer looks.
- The females dance CS but divide towards the end of the section with one ending in CS and the other towards DSR.

Dynamics

- Sustained, controlled, fluid, soft (girls)
- Occasional, hesitant, soft, fragile

Relationship

- duet
- Unison
- Complimentary choreography
- solo

Aural Setting

- The pace of the violins stop suddenly as the dancers grab the soloist's arm. This creates a tense atmosphere of suspense as if something has happened.
- A minimalist piano score

Physical Setting - walking projections. Not as prominent as the last section.

Lighting

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- A drastic change in lighting - very dim lighting with a single white parcan light being shone from either the SL wing or DSL to cast a pathway of light on a couple and a lone walking figure.
  - The scene ends with two blue diagonal lights being shone from DSL and DSR. A white overhead light is being shone on one of the female dancers who is standing CS

## Section 8 - Ignoring the soloist

### Actions

- Soloist - Staring, crying, panting, cradling her head in her hands, collapsing over her legs, screaming (silently), collapsing on the floor,
- Ensemble - walking, two dancers stops to look at her but do nothing but chose to stare ahead.

### Space

- Soloist remains CS.
- Ensemble walks from USR to SL.

### Dynamics - pedestrianized

Aural Setting - Almost cinematic in sound. Very emotional and dramatic - heavy use of strings.

Physical Setting - Projection

Lighting - Dark stage, singular white side light from SL.

## Section 8 - Romantic duet



Actions -

Penché, lift, spin, contraction, hug, reach, kick, lunge, embrace, holding hands, kissing her hand, interlocking

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arms, high release, cradling his head, moving her arms and legs, tuck jump.

This section is the most romantic of them all. The female and male embrace lovingly with softness and elegance showing that amongst chaos and the hustle and bussle of life, love is universal and a vital contributor to our happiness, anguish and being. I wouldn't say that there are any motifs but certainly there are movements that feature heavily.



The woman performs several penchés and the male spins her around; she often performs a high release (when she leans backwards and looks upwards) suggesting openness, hope and happiness as well as a multitude of lift variations.



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Revision checklist:

Can I name the type of stage used?

Can I explain the choreographic approach used?

Can I state 2 motifs that show the theme/ stimulus using action, space and dynamics?

What structure was used to create this piece?

What choreographic devices were used?

■ Motifs, motif developments, repetition, contrast, highlights, climax, manipulation of number, unison and canon

Can I explain what the choreographic intent was behind the piece?

Can I describe the set/ staging referring to colour, features on stage and shape?

Can I describe the lighting referring to colour, angles, direction, intensity and placement?

Can I discuss the set, costumes and/ or costume's use or function?

Can I describe costume referring to colour, material, texture, flow, shape, fit, weight?

Can I state the costume's purpose?

Can I state how many dancers there are and their gender?

Can I describe the aural setting referring to the song used, instruments used, spoken word, pitch, rhythm, silence, natural sound, body percussion, style structure etc?

Can I state the similarities and differences between the costume, lighting, set, aural setting and movement components of Infra with other works in the anthology?

Can I explain how the characteristics above help the audiences understanding of the work?

Can I explain how the relationships between the choreography and production features work together to enhance the audience's understanding of the work?

Can I explain the purposes or significance of the performance environment?