

Part 5

You are going to read an extract from an interview with a young choreographer, someone who creates and arranges new dances. For questions 31–36, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Interview with a young choreographer

Martin Fields talks to Miranda Ellington about her life and work.

At 25, Miranda Ellington has already achieved a great deal as a choreographer, creating works for a long list of theatres and dance companies. On top of that, she still dances from time to time. 'Being a dancer again reminds me of what it feels like to be in the studio taking orders from demanding choreographers, and how tense and frustrating that can be. Choreographers can lose sight of what it's like to be rehearsing all day long,' she tells me.

As a choreographer, she is essentially in a teaching role and enjoys working with young students. 'A dancer who's just starting out is often receptive to exploring new ideas. In some ways, working with students is easier than with professionals because they're open to taking risks. They're hungry for success, but they don't yet have a clear sense of their strengths and weaknesses. The incomplete picture they have of their skills ensures they take on board even quite harsh criticism. They might still challenge what I say sometimes, though when they do I welcome their honest feedback.'

When Miranda starts working with a new group, the music dictates what she does. 'There may be a piece of music I'm not keen on, but I still make sure I come up with the best possible dance routine to accompany it. If dancers aren't responding well to a particular composer's music, that can be frustrating, but I'm still required to find solutions. That won't involve going back to the drawing board and selecting a new piece, though. Ideally, I'd like to be more experimental and be given the option of switching to different pieces – it'd certainly help to lift the mood when things get tough in rehearsals. Unfortunately, these days

I'm always working on big productions – the musical score has already been written by the composer and it isn't negotiable.'

The conversation turns to the recent documentary on professional ballet dancers and choreographers. 'This one attempts to give viewers an accurate portrayal of life inside a dance company. There was one scene where a young dancer is getting endless corrections and I smiled in recognition when I saw it. She knows she's not getting it right but just can't make her body do what's required. It's painful to watch but not at all manufactured for the cameras. The amount of work and dedication involved in ballet is underestimated by the public.'

I'm curious to know what makes a great production. 'It's when everything the company has invested in – the music, the costumes, the lighting, and the dancers – all come together. Aiming high is appreciated by audiences and will allow you to get away with a few wrong artistic decisions or choices. I've even been involved in productions where the dance steps are great but something about the costumes or props completely distracts. And that's just disappointing.'

Miranda has done such a range of work I wonder how she sees herself: is she a modern dance choreographer or a ballet specialist? 'People seem to want to put a label on you and I can't quite understand that. And there's the modern tendency to encourage the development of expertise in a narrow area, too. I tend not to go along with that, though the time may come when I'm happy to have a reputation largely for doing one thing. For now, I just want to widen my horizons.'

- 31 Miranda says that she dances occasionally so that she
- A can convince other choreographers to be more understanding.
 - B can find ways to reduce the workload for everyone involved.
 - C responds appropriately to any guidance she is given.
 - D remains aware of the pressures dancers face.
- 32 What does Miranda say about the students she works with?
- A Their lack of confidence means they rarely question instructions.
 - B Their inexperience makes them willing to listen.
 - C Their determination to succeed can sometimes cause misunderstandings.
 - D Their enthusiasm sometimes means they do not see their faults.
- 33 When discussing the music she works with, Miranda points out that
- A she is unable to ask for changes to be made.
 - B she often varies it to create a happy atmosphere.
 - C she sometimes gets annoyed with the attitude of the composer.
 - D she produces a better dance routine if she appreciates the music.
- 34 What does Miranda feel about the scene in the TV programme she mentions?
- A She is unhappy about the way the dancer was treated.
 - B She is worried that it exaggerates how hard dancing can be.
 - C She is pleased that it reveals the truth about being a dancer.
 - D She is proud of the dancer's attempts to improve herself.
- 35 Miranda says that productions she's worked on can sometimes
- A combine too many elements in one performance.
 - B be spoilt by a problem outside her control.
 - C fail to win people's complete approval.
 - D lack the resources that she expects.
- 36 In the final paragraph Miranda says that she
- A resists attempts to define her in a particular way.
 - B feels that others may have the wrong opinion of her.
 - C is confused by the number of career options available to her.
 - D doubts that specialising will benefit her in the long term.