

Pina bausch essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Arlene Croce (The New Yorker), once described Pina Bausch as, ‘ a pornographer of pain’. What do you think she meant by that and do you agree? (You might like to consider the differences between Bausch’s early and late work?) Pina Bausch is seen as one of the most influential figures in dance of the 20th century, as well as influencing film directors, theatre practitioners, designers, actors and many Choreographers her career has been full of controversy as her work depicts anger, violence love and shame which can leave audience members feeling disturbed and exhausted by the end of her performances.

One critic Arlene Croce described Bausch’s work as ‘ pornography of pain’ another critic Alan Kriegsman said ‘ the unsettling thing about Bausch’s work, despite its originality and mastery, is that it leaves one unsure of where she stands in the moral spectrum’ both critics were commenting on the same tour in New York in 1984. Bausch receives harsh criticism for her work as she does not follow the conventions of classical dance, Bausch trained in classical ballet but her vision reached much further and her theatrical ideas led to the start of Tanzthatre were techniques were drawn from Brecht and Stanivslasky.

Bausch’s early work was based on operas and ballets such as Stravinsky’s 1913 ‘ Rite of Spring’. Bausch created her own version of this in 1973 but she did not follow the conventions of the original narrative, instead she used the narrative as a guide to which she adapted and based it on personal experiences ‘ to create presentational movement patterns formed from emotive gestures and derived from a response to, rather than in service of, formal story structures. (David Best 1974) The piece she created involved

the dancers dragging themselves through mud on stage, impurifying their innocence, 'visibly muddying their white slips until everything is a murky brown'. (Royd Climenhaga 2009).

This piece is full of metaphors; the young girl is chosen as a sacrifice and is forced to dance by herself until she dies, she is made to give into the control of men; highlighting the plight of women as is most of her work 'she drew on her own and her dances personal experiences'. Royd Climenhaga 2009).

Bausch took things to the extreme with her earlier work, she hadn't yet found her feet fully in the company and was experimenting pushing all boundaries at her disposal, her work relied heavily on the desperation and depression of her dances emotions whom she worked extremely closely with, delving deep into their unconscious and looking at their everyday movements, which is something which is key in Bausch's work; she looked at how the dances move and not what moves them.

She used everyday movements to express emotion and concentrated on relationships and the pain in human life. Bausch's work is very personal to her, and her style moves with her emotions and her surroundings; when Bausch started working with her partner Rolf Borzik who was a designer, her performances became increasingly more focused on image, text and the setting which influenced the movement on stage her pieces included huge backdrops and her work was performed in larger spaces.

Bausch exposes her dancers on stage and acts out dream like sequences were the audiences have to find their own meaning to whats going on, questions are very important in her pieces, the dances are asked questions

in which they are to answer through movement and the audience are left to ask questions about what they are watching.

In ' Cafe Muller' 1978 the dancers are repeating the same rigorous movement which highlights the frustration found in relationships when things do not work ' the pieces develop through collaborative process and in response to the questions at hand' (Royd Climenhaga 2009) also in this piece Bausch acts as a women in a trance bumping into tables and chairs giving the piece a very surreal feel she is seen as a ' blind dreamer trying to hold onto the fleeting images that are played out before her' Royd Climenhaga 2009).

Arlene Croce's statement suggests that the dances are stripped bare; dehumanised and humiliated on stage, they are living out their nightmares and their fears thus putting themselves through pain, the dancers are definitely put through pain in Cafe Muller as the woman throws her self on the ground continuously and they push themselves mentally in all her pieces, the dancers are dehumanised as they become objects this is very difficult for the audience to watch, Bausch's work is real, and real emotions are used to carry the pieces, For Cafe Muller the idea was stimulated from Bausch's memory of her parents Cafe in which she grew up in and her memory of the cliental that she encountered their.

She has always been fascinated by people and what moves people and ven at a young age she observed peoples movements and behaviour, the fact that the pieces are real makes it even harder to watch as we are watching human behaviour at its worst, we are watching a man abuse physically and

sexually women and watch innocence being taken away. In order to do this Bausch uses several techniques such as emotional memory to trigger feelings of pain and upset which have been locked in the subconscious. In her rendition of 'Rite of Spring' she uses raw onions on stage to make the performer cry and pushes her performers until they literally collapse on stage. Our own fears are lived out in these pieces and this makes us question society's behaviour and humanities dark side.

The fact that the audience have paid to watch these dancers go through pain and live out their nightmares make 'pornography of pain' a realisation, this statement can also have several meanings in her work, in 'Rite of Spring' the women are wearing translucent dresses exposing their bodies the main dancer is wearing a red translucent dress symbolising pain and death thus we are being subjected to 'Pornography of Pain'. It is therefore easy to see why some people agree with the statement as her performances rest on a thin line between pain and pleasure and they dramatise our own personal fears and pain. Later on in her career Bausch's work became more grounded, structured and joyous such as *Nelken* (1982) which contained more humour; men hopping around a stage of pink carnations in women's dresses, and was a lot lighter. This could be due to a series of factors, such as the birth of her son in the early 1980s and the death of Rolf Borzik, which led to Bausch working with new designer Peter Pabst.

However it is hard to pin the changes in her work down to certain factors as her work constantly changes as her own and her performers' emotions and experiences change. Bausch's early work including 'rite of spring' had received harsh criticism and had Audiences were walking out mid

performance as they were so outraged by what they were seeing on stage, they even threw things and shouted out. This was something so different that they hadn't seen before and were not expecting when they went in to see 'Rite of Spring'. As well as tough criticism Bausch's work was starting to influence people all over the world. '

The goal of these early pieces remains, however to uncover movement patterns that evoke and express the feeling of a piece, and in this way she does not move past more conventional, movement-based notions of dance' (Royd Climenhaga 2009). The early pieces opened up a new dimension for both theatre and dance; by merging these genres she pushed all the boundaries possible. Her work has been and always will be very controversial, especially her earlier work compared to her more grounded later work, I don't think that her work is 'Pornography of Pain' but peoples feelings, desires and emotions exposed for everybody to see her work may be difficult to watch but it was and still is real and it is exciting.