

Biography of christopher bruce

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Biography of Christopher Bruce Christopher Bruce was born on the 3rd of October 1945 in England, he started studying dancing at 11 years old, and he began with tap and ballet. After studying at the Rambert School Christopher Bruce joined Rambert Ballet in 1963, where he quickly became the leading male dancer. Bruce appeared in works such as Don Quixote in 1964 and Coppelia in 1966. Then the company began to experiment with ballet and modern, combining them to form, specifically the Martha Graham technique. Martha Graham created 181 ballets and a dance technique that has been compared to ballet in its scope and magnitude. Many of the great modern and ballet choreographers have studied the Martha Graham Technique or have been members of her company.) When Bruce danced the role of Pierrot Lunaire, his own interpretive skills were noticed. Bruce was "dominating everything- practically living the part". Bruce then worked with Glen Tetley, he discovered that " the motive for the movement comes from the centre of the body... rom this base we use classical ballet as an extension to give wider range and variety of movement" In 1977 he was appointed associate director of the company and was its associate choreographer from 1979-87, he created over twenty works for the company. Between 1986-91 he acted as associate choreographer also for London Festival Ballet, later ENB, and resident choreographer for Houston Ballet in 1989. In 1994 he became artistic director for RDC. Often political in his work, he integrates classical ballet and modern dance, often set against popular music by artists like Bob Dylan, Rolling Stones.

His productions include 'Cruel Garden', 1977, 'Ghost Dances', 1981, 'Swansong', 1987, and 'Rooster', 1991. Influences Social and political themes

emerge as naturally as a reflection of his own concerns, although his aim is always firstly to create a piece of dance, rather than to make a statement. Nevertheless, he does not see a conflict between creating interesting movement and tackling difficult issues. He believes that there is much beauty in Ghost Dances and similar works. Bruce is typically known for using themes that focus on personal or political issues.

He has created abstract pieces but even these have a strong undercurrent of emotion. Bruce uses a wide range of starting points, particularly poetry, literature, music, newspaper articles and world events. For example '... for those who die in cattle' reflects his views and concerns of war, 'rooster' is his idea of relationships, 'swansong' is probably one of his most moving and emotional pieces and tackles the very serious issue of torture. His views on the general human condition are portrayed in 'waiting'.

Throughout his career, Christopher has been a strong supporter of Amnesty International's ideas and through his choreography he has voiced his concerns for society, the persecuted and victims of a wide range of human rights abuses. Time and again he has returned to these themes and in his most recent work "grinning in your face", these concerns are articulated as powerfully as ever. The Arts have an important role to play in exploring social issues and dance can be seen as the most human of the Arts as it is based on the body.

The image of the tortured prisoner from "swansong" or the unjust imprisonment of Reuben Carter, in "Hurricane" are far more powerful than mere words can ever be. Video extracts of Christopher's work have been used to reinforce talks about human rights abuse. In the 1970's the focus for

Bruce was South America and Pinochet's bloody coup against the elected Allende government in Chile. He was deeply moved on the meeting of Joan Jara, who was tortured and murdered by Pinochet's forces. This meeting led him to choreograph, Ghost Dances.

He took the theme of the day of the dead, simple symbolism and indigenous dance movements as a basis to convey the plight of the innocent people of South America down the ages and their courage in the face of adversity. Certainly, Ghost Dances has a tremendous impact and audiences in many countries have delighted in its distinctive, rhythmic movement performed to haunting American tunes. However, it is the representation of the oppression of ordinary people, symbolised by the sinister ghost figures, which give the work much of its resonance.

On the evidence of ghost dances, swansong, and cruel garden (about the death of Lorca at the hands of the fascists in Spain), human rights themes have provided him with a strong source of inspiration. He remains a passionate advocate for the role of dance and the arts in society and believes that seeing good work and the chance to perform, either as an amateur or a professional, can not only enrich lives, but can also be civilising influence. Ghost dances It was created in 1981, and was influenced by the political oppression in Chile.

The style was contemporary ballet blended with South American folk dance. The setting of Ghost Dances is a rocky Andean location suggesting the mouth of a cave. The colours (blue's, greens and greys) of the backdrop were very effective and complimented the costumes and movement by adding to the eerie atmosphere. The whole stage was lit by a dim white light.

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The 'dead' wear everyday clothes, which are beginning to disintegrate. The Ghost Dancers appear as skeletal figures in striking skull masks. The piece is accompanied by Andiean folk music, with panpipes, guitars, and flutes.

The tune is infectious, rhythmic and tuneful. The style of the choreography is sinuous and graceful, incorporating folk-dance influences. The Ghost dancers style of dance differs to the style of the 'dead'. The Ghost dancers use very off balanced and angular Movements, there heads are the main key I think to making their dancing look as threatening as it does, they move them very quickly and sharply in unison and it creates a very menacing effect. The 'dead', on the other hand are very free flowing and graceful, their posture is very open chested and balletic with very neat but complex footwork.

I loved this piece and the skills used to perform it. The fluid motion alongside traditional Chilean folkdance was original and inspiring to watch, it was a very moving piece and had a big impact on me because of the real life issues behind it. Swansong This piece was created in 1987 and was influenced by the fate of political prisoners, the style was contemporary ballet and the prisoner's movements were based on the idea of a swan. The piece is generally based around the fate of political prisoners and their need to break free.

Swansong is a deliberately disturbing dance showing a victim being tortured by a variety of means, although there is no actual violence on stage. It shows both the aggressive and sadistic element of interrogation, and how brainwashing, humiliation and playing with emotions can all be part of a long, nerve- racking game. In combining vaudevillian humour, balletic virtuosity, and contempory dance expressionism with such a serious theme,

he seeks to create work that can be appreciated at a number of levels by a broad audience.

The three dancers are costumed archetypally and very much resembled the set, it was all very simplistic, with the prisoner in just a plain t-shirt and jeans and the two guards are wearing vaguely militaristic khaki trousers and short-sleeved shirts could be viewed as policemen, soldiers, or guards. Programme notes have tended neither to give names to the characters nor to specify roles - choosing instead to simply list the cast and allow audiences to make their own interpretation.

The prisoner uses a very graceful and flowing style of dance whilst in contrast the two guards dance in a modern, camp manner, highlighting even more the separation and difference between the guards and prisoner. The simplicity of the staging and ambiguity of the characters lends weight to its universality. The action could be taking place anywhere in the world. The stage is dark and bare with the exception of a single wooden chair lit starkly from above, indicating perhaps a single bulb-hanging overhead in an otherwise empty room.

There are seven sections in swansong; each has a different theme and style. ·Section 1, questions and answers. Throughout the first section the dance suggests the interrogators and victim playing a game of cat and mouse, the dance changing from trios to brief duets and solo's. in the duets the interrogators dance in unison, performing the same material one after the other or slightly varying the steps to attack their victim. ·Section 2, tea for two. The section begins with another interrogation session during which the second interrogator walks round his eaten victim, and this time

the victim taps out 'answers' but in a defiant mood. The interrogators change tactics. ·Section 3, first solo. The third section is a solo for the victim alone on the stage and it is more lyrical both in music and movement than the preceding sections. It contrasts with the torture previously shown, appearing to be a cry of frustration and anger at the victim's situation as well as evoking his urge for freedom. ·Section 4, slow trio. The victim immediately tenses and flinches as the first interrogator reaches towards him, and then relaxes when he is not harmed.

No questions are asked. Again the opening sequence is performed twice but at the end of the chair is moved so that the victim cannot return to it. This becomes a recurring theme of this dance; the victims chair is repeatedly pulled away from under him or placed just beyond his reach. He is pushed and thrown around, the effect of the violence is in slow motion. The victim curls defensively on the floor and is uncurled by the second interrogator and the torture continues. ·Section 5, second solo without accompaniment.

Although this section repeats dance motifs from the first solo such as the jumps and arabesques suggestive of flight, it is generally more mimetic. The victim lifts the chair onto his back to make it appear he is carrying a huge weight on his shoulders. He then stands facing the audience staring through the bars of the chair, then he appears to crumble in frustration and the solo ends with his ankles trapped in the bars of the chair as if fetted. ·Section 6, cane dance. The progression of the piece shows a build up of abuse and humility of the prisoner till the final section where the prisoner performs his last solo, his 'swansong'.

Rooster This piece was created in 1992 and in contrast to my other two chosen pieces is influenced by the Rolling stones; the dance is based on the theme and context of the music. It is danced in a contemporary ballet style blended with modern dance to match the music. The set is a clear stage with naturalistic lighting and a white spotlight. The women wear black skirts, tops and tights and the men wear black trousers and a skirt, a red dress is worn only in one number and that is 'ruby Tuesday'.

The whole piece is danced to rolling stones music ranging from upbeat fast and rocky numbers to slower more relaxed music. The theme of each song in 'rooster' reflects the character that is dancing it, none of the dances are linked, and each section occurs simply because of the different songs that are used, this helps to create an episodic structure. The tempo of the music dictates the style of dance; the faster tracks are modern and contemporary whilst the slower ones are more balletic.

This piece does not present a great deal of emotional involvement with the audience; it is simply based on the theme and context of the music. You can see this by the fact that the dancers, the style of dance and the music purely dictate the song. A Time line of dance works which have been choreographed and produced by Christopher Bruce ·1969 George Frederic ·1972 '... for those who die as cattle' ·1974 Weekend ·1975 Ancient voices of children ·1976 Black Angels ·1976 Promenade ·1977 Cruel Garden ·1981 Village Sounds ·1981 Ghost Dances ·1984Sergeant early's dream 1984 Intimate Pages ·1985 Silence is the end of our song ·1985 Land ·1987 The dream is over ·1987 Swansong ·1989 Symphony in three movements ·1990 Journey ·1992 Rooster ·1995 Meeting point Section B Producing our own

piece of choreography in the style of Christopher Bruce in groups. How has the work of the choreographer influenced and inspired my own performance and choreography? I chose Christopher Bruce because of the influences behind his choreography, the real life human rights issues that through symbolism he has transferred this into dance.

He has successfully brought more awareness to serious issues that most people would not be aware of because it is not going on in this country. The fact that this affects Bruce personally is very inspiring, as his pieces have real meaning and thought behind them. The three works by Christopher Bruce that I have chosen to study are 'ghost dancers' and 'swansong' because of the political human rights issues that influenced them and 'rooster' because it was a contrast to the other two as its influence was the celebration of the Rolling Stones music.

I thought these pieces complimented each other well to evaluate as each bears a large variation of accessible motifs, images and sequences of movement that I could re-interpret in my choreography in the style of Christopher Bruce. As it gave me the opportunity to analyse a variety of influences and issues behind the three pieces. Choreographic notes We choreographed a piece for a trio in the style of 'rooster'. The set was clear other than three chairs that were used within the dance. We were dressed all in black and wore red scarfs round our necks. The lighting of the set was dark red