

Ghost dances christopher bruce essay sample

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Bruce was asked why a choreographer might include human rights themes in his work, particularly as there is a view that the arts should only be concerned with creating beauty. He replied that, for himself, social and political themes emerge 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, just as in the First World War poems of Wilfred Owen. Turning to propaganda pieces, such as the work of filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl for the Nazis, he explained that a touchstone is whether there is some underlying truth behind the piece, inspired by a desire to promote civilised behaviour, rather than just an attempt to shape opinion. In the 1970s, the focus for Bruce and many others was South America and Pinochet's bloody coup against the elected Allende government in Chile. He recalls the powerful impact of meeting Joan Jara, the widow of the musician and composer Victor, who was tortured and murdered by Pinochet's forces. This meeting led him to choreograph, Ghost Dances. He described how 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 American 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 South 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.