

The green table kurt jooss



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Paulina Milewska Kurt Jooss' The Green Table Expressionism can be described as a movement in the fine arts that emphasized the expression of inner experience rather than realistic portrayal, looking to obtain not objective reality, but the subjective emotions and responses that objects and events arouse in the artist. Several characteristics of expressionism are distortion, exaggeration, primitivism, and fantasy. "The Green Table," a ballet by Kurt Jooss, 1932, is an ideal example of expressionism because it depicts the choreographer's personal interpretation of war through the use of movement, music by Fritz Cohen and lighting by Hermann Mankard. The Green Table is a piece of performance created mostly by Kurt Jooss, the piece lasts thirty minutes in which different episodes of war. The first scene shows the diplomats called The Gentlemen in Black, the second scene The Farewells which show the divide between the loved ones and the soldiers that go off to the war.

The third scene is The Battle in which the battle begins and the character Death is taking each of the soldiers one by one, Death is a big part in this scene as it creates a mental image for the audience showing the dreadful times where innocent males were dying due to a diplomatic argument that was created because of the gentlemen in black. The next scenes follow which are: The partisan, the refugees, the brothel and men in black once again to show the never-ending hypocritical nonsense of the government.

The choreography for "The Green Table" cannot exactly be categorized as one thing or another. Jooss seems to employ two different types of dance: one being the traditional ballet, and the other being the modern technique. The use of traditional ballet can be seen in the dance of the soldiers with

their light and graceful movements, particularly the one carrying the white flag. However, the heavier movements of dancers such as Death and the Partisan Woman illustrate modern dance technique similar to movements choreographed by Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey.

The fact that Jooss utilizes both of these dance forms demonstrates his unique theories and adds a personal touch to this show. However, movement is not his only means of self-expression. The music accompaniment to this piece comes from one or two pianos which works well with the dance so that neither one overshadows the other. There are no other instruments used, the melody of the piano changes from scene to scene in order to project Jooss' emotional responses. During the scenes with the politicians, the air of the piano is light-hearted and almost comedic.

The story begins with the politicians in masks that are arguing in a non-naturalistic way using their postures and gestures for example: standing up with masks facing the audience wearing white gloves reaching their hands out with open palms portraying careless emotion. The show ends the same way which gives an impression of Jooss trying to say that there will always be arguments between higher statuses that don't help the general public but they use their powers for their own entertainment. The purpose of this was to show the detachment of these men from the war.

They are in a safe situation, unexposed to war and death. When the scene changes and we see what's happening in the lives of citizens, this tune is transformed into a thunderous and eerie song that haunts the audience. The reason for this change is to reveal Jooss' feelings about the unnecessary brutality and death that always comes with a war, and how politicians don't

understand the horror of it. In “ The Green Table” Jooss has made almost full use of the dramatic, emotional and pictorial values of light. The most obvious of all contrasts was that between Death and all the other characters.

While the entire dance seemed to be set in a dark light, it was particularly dark when shown on the character representing death. In fact, it had almost a bluish tint to it. During the scenes when death is not part of the immediate picture there is a large spotlight in the center of the stage where all the dancing takes place, however, the stage is never fully lit. This is in order to portray death, although not always immediately present, as being all around us in a time of war. The dancer of Death is always in the background as a constant reminder and, even when he becomes the main focus, is never illuminated.

This represented Jooss’ unique view because he refuses to acknowledge any positive results that war brings and only sees it ending in death and destruction. The scene with the women of war using the proxemics in a clever way is portraying the other, vulnerable side of the war. The ladies are dancing lightly and swaying from side to side portraying sorrow and negative emotions. The most important character in that scene is the old lady who is struggling to walk and is leaning forward as well as walking on her tiptoes very lightly showing a link with the Death character who is taking her life away.

Her way of walking on tip of her toes is showing that she is not standing firmly on earth and living but she is already half way in the spiritual world. This scene shows a great contrast of importance in comparison to the first and last scene. Kurt Jooss’ piece, “ The Green Table,” is antiwar ballet. It’s an

example of expressionism because it is a one-sided, emotional performance that uses exaggerated gestures, primitivism, and distortion in order to convey Jooss' view on war.