

'A Simple Man' Critical Analysis

Style

- A simple man contains a lot of dance drama and although this can clearly be seen by the interaction of the characters it does not provide a clear narrative
- The classically trained ballet dancers coped surprisingly well with the style of the dance even though they are not used to it. They used exaggerated and swift movements to help them cope.
- To motivate the dancers Christopher Gable told them to move like glove puppets that were too big for the hand operating them and to walk as they were being blown down a street.
- The dance uses quite a wide variety of movements, most of them are not very human-like for example the strange walk the dancers do. Most of the movements are generally quite quick and sharp.

Form

- The idea for the dance originally came when the BBC asked Gillian Lynne to create a performance about Lowry's life and paintings for his centenary
- Gillian Lynne tried to make the rest of the team (working on the dance) keep to her idea of what the dance and music should be like so the music and lighting was exactly what she wanted
- The pictures are used in the dance by looking at the movement that seems to be going on and adapting it to show the story of Lowry's life

Construction

- Gillian Lynne choreographed 'A simple man'
- It was premiered in 1987
- The lighting and music play a large part in setting the mood of the dance, when Lowry is sad or unhappy then cold colours and slow music is used, when there is a lot of excitement e.g. the fight the music turns fast and the lighting becomes bright.

Place

- 'A Simple Man' mainly takes place in the streets of an industrial town probably the town Lowry lived in for most of his life, Salford. Some scenes are inside but it is hard to tell where due to the lack of scenery
- 'A Simple Man' uses very little scenery, in fact it only uses a backdrop when there is a scene in a street and just uses lighting when the scene is inside.

Message/Audience/Expectations

- The life of Lowry or at least a dramatized version is used in the dance like it was actually what his pictures were supposed to be about. Many of his pictures reflect things and people in his life this is what the dance focuses on, I know this because Lowry and the characters from his paintings are in the same world and actually meet. The dance also makes some characters that Lowry had painted that could have been completely fictional seem like they knew him and were really people he had painted.

Time/Historical

- The time that the dance and Lowry's paintings are set is just after the Second World War when the country was just getting back on its feet.
- 'A Simple Man' was quite a successful ballet this greatly helped the Northern Ballet Theatre (the company and dancers involved in the dance). Christopher Gable increased the number of dancers to 29 and began a program to reduce the dependency on dancers hired from abroad.

Political/Social Factor

- The people of Salford in the time of Lowry were very poor and had to work long hours in factories 6 days a week. We can see they are poor people because of their filthy clothes with worn colours that had probably never properly dyed. In some of Lowry's pictures the entire town is covered in thick smoke and the people seem depressed in their worn grey and brown patched up clothes. The dance makes the people seem very depressed using slow movements and slow sounds when they walk to work and when they are actually working they seem completely expressionless.