

Evaluation of 'Les Noces'

As part of our dance work we were showed a DVD of 'Les Noces'. We learnt that it was devised at the beginning of the twentieth century, around the year 1923, by a Russian choreographer named Bronislava Nijinska. Les noces is famous for being one of the first contemporary ballets performed on the stage. It is known as a neo-classical ballet and is based on narrative allusions. It has a strong rhythmical emphasis and includes the use of point work.

Les noces is a very strong, emotional dance and creates a large impact. It is very compulsive and after watching the first scene you cannot help but to watch on. It has a large narrative content which gives it a desirable back bone. Les noces consists of four scenes which portray a Russian wedding. The scenes are: the consecration of the bride, the consecration of the bride groom, The departure of the bride and The wedding feast.

The choreographic techniques in Les noces are well thought out for the feeling and mood of the dance. The choreographer has used male and female dancers in a neo-classical dance that tells a story effectively. The choreographer has used symmetrical and linear shapes and lines as well as levels, this makes the dance more aesthetically pleasing and adds indefinitely to the depth and feeling contained within it. From the position and height of dancers contained within the dance we can get a feeling of what is happening and who is more important etc. We can also learn a lot from how the dancers travel. Les noces includes a very artistic style of jumps and travelling movements. In all the scenes contained within the dance there are different numbers of male and female dancers. To help create mood in the dance the choreographer has used a very percussive form of point work. He had used the method of dancing in point shoes into something that creates a meaningful sound. To help base the dance into a society and culture the choreographer has included a large amount of Russian folk dancing. The use of ballet in Les Noces is more isolated and stiffer than conventional ballet of the early twentieth century. It is more earthy and grounded and less floaty.

The design in Les noces is relatively simple. The designer Natalia Gontcharova has used basic costumes and there is only one set. In the first scene the dancers just enter onto a plain stage. There is no backdrop etc, the dancers wear simple costumes, such as brown dresses and white shirts with all the women wearing head coverings. This is probably because we are meant to view these dancers as being peasants. The head coverings are also a religious symbol. The dancers aren't wearing masks or any obvious make up. The only main prop used in the dance is a wig consisting of long plaits used in the scene 'Departure of the bride'. This is used to demonstrate the passage from childhood to womanhood as the plaits are consequentially cut off. The one and only set is used in the last scene 'The wedding feast', It basically consists of a wall with a door in it and a few stools. This set is used as it gives a way of showing the togetherness and connection of the bride and bridegroom as they leave through the door together. This also presents a way of ending the dance.

There is no spoken words or phrases in Les noces. All the sound included in it is formed by the orchestra or the afore mentioned use of percussive point work. The musicians are based off stage. The orchestra provides live music and so therefore it

isn't recorded. The volume of the music in Les Noces often indicates mood or feeling. For example, in the last scene 'The wedding feast', the sound becomes significantly louder and seems more joyous. Les Noces is performed on a proscenium arch stage. This is probably because the choreography in the dance wouldn't lend itself to being performed in the round or anywhere site specific.

In this dance there is good communication with the audience. The names of the scenes and their contents all tell a story. This is helped by the mood created by the music and the facial expressions of the dancers. Because Les Noces is based on a realistic event many people may feel that they can relate to it. It may also create some interest and intrigue as it portrays a Russian marriage. In the early part of the twentieth century there wasn't the same cultural understanding between nations that there is now.

Many people would know nothing of Russian culture.

I definitely felt on a personal level that I could understand what the dance was trying to communicate to me. The feelings of change, love and moving into the unknown. The dance was definitely very compelling. I thought that the way that some of the characters swore oaths was very mysterious. I also liked the way that Les Noces included everyday things and movements such as cuddling. I think that Les Noces is a very interesting dance and I can see how it could have been a very radical piece of choreography for its day. It is a good example in how dance has changed throughout the ages. I am sure that Les Noces is an important piece of dance history. I thoroughly enjoyed watching it being performed.