

Analyse and discuss the structure of one ballet created for Diaghilev Ballet Russe

Ballet in the last quarter of the nineteenth century across Western Europe, the forum of Romantic ballet had reached an all time low point. The great choreographers of the romantic era were dead, and no other choreographers had risen to take their place. Ballet seemed to have lost all of its creative momentum and the public had ceased to regard it as a serious art form. It was no longer considered to be the mainstream art form that it had been in the 1830's and 1840's; it appeared to have lost touch with the modern times. Indeed, Ballet appeared to be an art form about to die of exhaustion. The legacy of the work of "Pulcinella", first performed in 1920 was that it revived the interest in the techniques and interests of the past at a time when it would seem that many artists were more concerned with progress and technical ability than a perspective of history. More, importantly it demonstrated that music can comment itself and come to terms with its own history, through neo-classicism. This was one of the most important artistic movements of the twentieth century, and one that continues today.

"Pulcinella" like "Petrouska", was one of those rare theatrical works which, came with all of the ingredients to make it a success. Picasso's neo-commedia dell'arte designs, Massine's choreography, scenario and demi-character style of dancing and the wonderful dancing of Massine, as the eponymous rogue Pulcinella and the delicate femininity, romantic beauty and cordial spontaneity of Karsavina, Pulcinella's mistress; Pimpinella. Every part of the structure declared the restoration of Russian ballet to its full form. With no hint of the classical ballet period, which had dominated the last centuries of ballet and the recent work of the Ballet Russe, there was a lack of nostalgia for the traditional, archaic forms of ballet of leaning polovicians or sinuous sherezades (even if some of these works were still in the companies repertoire). "Pulcinella" set the stage for the shift in focus of the Ballet Russe retrospective ballets; Diaghilev had accidentally found the new dimension to the company, which he had been searching for. The company had always specialised in "space travel" the structure of the dances had brought the audience closer to the exotic worlds of Persia, India and Russia, and although the audience still applauded these works, Diaghilev, wanted to stay one step ahead of the audience. Since, there were no new places to travel to incorporate into his productions, Diaghilev introduced a new concept into his dance repertoire, what Lambert calls "time travel." In previous, ballets, Diaghilev had been re-creating old ballets, with new talents; while the choreography was new, it was still no where near 'modernist' and the music and design, were essentially faithful to the original modes. However, through the work of "Pulcinella" Diaghilev finished with music by Stravinsky, which was essentially 18th century music in essence, but was rendered away so that the audience could see it through twentieth century eyes. The same, is true for Massine's choreography and Picasso's set designs. In this ballet, Diaghilev sent artists with the 'tools' of the present to the past to work. The result of 'Pulcinella' was that everything harmonised the artistic elements- dance, subject, music and artistic setting to form a coherent and homogenous whole. Which is a true representation of Diaghilev's guiding principle of 'Gesamtkunstwerk' or 'total artwork' meaning that all of the art forms and their representatives were seen as equals in his productions. Stravinsky found appropriate music for dancing and to underpin the ballet's scenario. Even some of the sections are named after dances, for example the tarantella (section fifteen), the gavotte (section 18) and the minuet (section 22). The overture, which Stravinsky used to introduce the ballet is also a common feature of ballet. The pieces of music were chosen to move along the action and reflect the mood of the scene set by Picasso's designs and Massine's choreography, both through music visualisation and direct correlation. In certain sections the music also helped to move, the ballets narrative along, for example the plaintive Seranta that follows the overture fitted Cavellios and Florindo's heartsick declarations of love beneath the balconies of Rossetta and Prundenza. In Pulcinella's first appearance on stage, Pulcinella appears on stage with a violin, so Stravinsky added a

Through the work of "Pulcinella" Diaghilev Ballet Russe entered a new period in the history of ballet, the 'modernist' approach was unlike anything that had gone before, and the company became an innovation to test out new and experimental ideas. Diaghilev helped to rejuvenate ballet. From the outset, the legendary company enraptured the scandalised dance world with new ballets in every aspect –modern choreography, music, design and the structure of the ballet, helped

to alter the course of dance history, making the Ballet Russe the vanguard of distinctive twentieth century art.