

A'Level Dance Knowledge Organiser
RAMBERT DANCE COMPANY

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

1966 Norman Morrice

Laying the foundations for a new Ballet Rambert by bridging the gap between classical ballet and modern dance - Glen Tetley key to this success. Regular choreographic workshops were also held for the dancers, and Christopher Bruce began to emerge from the Company as a talented choreographer.

1974 John Chesworth

- company member and former Rambert student. Promoted new work from Ballet Rambert's own company members and guest choreographers including Glen Tetley and Ballet Rambert's own Christopher Bruce. continued Morrice's policies with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers. Instrumental in developing Rambert's educational activities in order to give young people an understanding of choreography and the staging of works.

1981 Robert North

Showcasing work of British Choreographers: Bruce and Alston and his own work. Cross-fertilization of work with London Contemporary Dance Theatre who both North and Alston had danced and choreographed for. The 1980s were a period of considerable changes both for the Company and dance activity in Britain. In 1982 Dame Marie Rambert died and for the first half of the decade, while Robert North was Artistic Director, the Company concentrated on showcasing the work of British choreographers, Bruce and Richard Alston as well as his own work. Alston and North had been at the London School of Contemporary Dance and performed in London Contemporary Dance Theatre, the clear links between the two leading Dance Companies can be seen through the cross-fertilization of choreographers and dancers that moved between the two companies.

He was keen to develop the *physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers*. He encouraged the creation of new choreography and continued to include works by visiting choreographers in the repertoire.

Amongst these were Paul Taylor's *Airs* (1982), Merce Cunningham's *Fielding Sixes* (1983). He programmed works that were very popular with audiences.

1986 Richard Alston

Move away from the thematic, dramatic pieces and Graham based training. Introduction of Cunningham technique alongside ballet. Move towards abstract work and exploration of movement. *Renewed emphasis on collaboration between composers, designers and choreographers*.

The Company became known for its use of Cunningham technique and a repertoire of mainly abstract works, in line with Alston's own belief that dance should be created for its own sake and not to support narrative or spectacle. The Company's image shifted as the range of works was slimmed down and Cunningham-based technique replaced Graham as the training system favoured by the Company.

The following year 1987 the Company adopted the name Rambert Dance Company and its repertoire became noted for the close collaboration between choreographers, composers and designers.

Introduced general dance audiences across Britain to a more rigorously formalist mode of modern dance. Alston's artistic policy gained support of many audience members both young and old.

However, it seems that the step he was asking people to make, was seen as too great at a time when artistic conservatism was becoming dominant in Britain. Artistic success is frequently judged on the grounds of the number of people who are in the audience (a measure of its accessibility) rather than on the long-term artistic value of what had been produced. In the early 1990's, audiences for contemporary dance in general were diminishing, those for Rambert Dance Company amongst them. In 1992, Alston's period as artistic director of one of Britain's major modern dance companies came to an end and the company began to produce more easily accessible works.

1994 Christopher Bruce

Expansion or range of techniques and types of works by international choreographers and Bruces' work. Return to Graham based technique. Expansion of company size to 25. Accessible works with political themes. From April that year Bruce built up a company of 25 dancers - some former members of Rambert, some dancers he was interested to continue working with, and some new to his style of working. All were able to bridge the gap between classical ballet and contemporary dance. Under Bruce's leadership the Company encompassed a wide range of techniques and performed works by international choreographers alongside Bruce's own works. Clear evidence of Graham technique more lyrical, politically charged style, exemplified in *Cruel Garden*, a Lindsay Kemp collaboration saturated in death, sex and surrealism.

Changes in 1966

- Company which comprised eighteen dancers.
- The dancers in the new Company were trained in both classical and contemporary (Graham-based) dance techniques.
- Each dancer was considered equal in status.
- No individual held the position of principal dancer and they became soloists in their own right.

Aims of the company

- encourage production of new works by both new & established choreographers,
- preserve master works which constitute Ballet Rambert's artistic heritage
- to give regular sessions in London and to tour selected dates in provinces and abroad.

Why were changes made?

Company had been touring large scale classical ballets which were very expensive and the company had become financially unstable. Company had lost it's creativity because of this and had moved away from MR's original ethos and vision.

Characteristic Features of the Company

- Versatile Dancers with a high level of technique: Enables them to be able to perform choreography by a wide range of choreographers
- An outward looking company that works with international choreographers: This enabled the company to make the transition in 1966, particularly with the input of Glen Tetley whose work bridged the gap between modern dance and ballet. The input of work from international choreographers enables the company to have a rich and varied programme of works that are toured.
- A company that reaches out to young people and places importance on dance in education. This enables the company to introduce young people to modern dance and understand / appreciate their repertory.
- A company that nurtures the choreographic potential of it's own dancers. Christopher Bruce was one of the important choreographers to emerge.
- A company that has remained true to it's early ethos of collaboration with designers and composers. Richard Alston placed particular importance on this.
- A Company that has bridged the gap between ballet and modern (contemporary dance): Glen Tetley's input in the early years and Christopher Bruce.
- A Company that has allowed it's artistic focus to shift in line with their artistic director and in response to the need to build audiences / be financially viable

