

# **Component 2:**

## **Rambert Area of Study: Set work Rooster**

**Refer also to Alston booklet/ North resources and Rooster booklet (s) for  
detail to support this guide.**



## Revision Booklet

### What AQA need you to know:

	Understood	Revised 2017	Revised 2018
the <b>stylistic features</b> of Rambert Dance Company and how these relate to the genre			
the <b>choreographic approach</b> (the particular technique, movement style and choreographic style) of a minimum of two named practitioners			
the <b>influences</b> affecting the development of the named practitioner's technique and style			
at least two works from each of the selected named practitioners, including the following features of each work:			
<b>significance</b> of the character of each dance			
the <b>subject matter</b> (eg theme or topic) and its treatment			
the <b>form</b> of the dance (eg phrases, sections)			
the <b>constituent features</b> of the dance and their relevance in embodying the subject matter			
the <b>importance of the practitioners' works</b> in the development of the genre <b>in relation to Rambert Dance Company</b>			
the relationship between the development of the genre and its <b>context</b> , ie the position of the genre within history, culture and society			
the genre's capacity to <b>reflect and challenge society</b>			
terminology specific to the genre			

## Rambert Background Knowledge

What was Marie Rambert's dance background?	
How would Rambert's background have affected her style?	
What was Ballet Rambert's key focus until 1966?	
Who brought around change in 1966? What was his role?	
What changes did he bring about?	
What roles did Bruce perform as a principal?	
When was his first piece of choreography performed?	
What was it called and what was it about?	
Between 1975 and 1987, what were Bruce's roles within the company?	
When did North take over?	
Where did Alston train?	
Who was Alston's main stylistic influence?	
When did Alston begin his relationship with Rambert?	
What was his title?	
When did he become Artistic Director?	
What did he change the name to in 1987?	
Why did Alston change the name?	
Why did Alston leave the company on 1994?	

### Christopher Bruce Key Information: Ghost Dances

What year was Ghost Dances choreographed?	
Who designed the set?	
Who designed the costume?	
Who had inspired Bruce to choreograph Ghost Dances?	
What research did he do before creating the piece?	
How do we see this research within Ghost Dances?	
What was Bruce's choreographic intention for Ghost Dances?	
What is the structure of Ghost Dances?	
How does this communicate meaning	
Describe the set	
Describe one moment the set is used effectively	
Explain how the use of set communicates the intention	
Describe the costume	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	

**Key information: Swansong**

<b>What year was Swansong choreographed? And revived for Rambert?</b>	
<b>Who designed the set?</b>	
<b>Who designed the costume?</b>	
<b>Who/ what had inspired Bruce to choreograph Swansong?</b>	
<b>What research did he do before creating the piece?</b>	
<b>What was Bruce's choreographic intention for Swansong?</b>	
<b>What is the structure of Swansong</b>	
<b>How does this communicate meaning</b>	
<b>Describe the set</b>	
<b>Describe one moment the set is used effectively</b>	
<b>Explain how the use of set communicates the intention</b>	
<b>Describe the costume</b>	
<b>Describe one moment the costume is used effectively</b>	
<b>Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention</b>	
<b>Describe the aural setting</b>	
<b>Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively</b>	
<b>Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention</b>	

### Key Information: Rooster

What year was Rooster choreographed?	
Who designed the set?	
Who designed the costume?	
What inspired Rooster?	
What was Bruce's choreographic intention for Rooster?	
What is the structure of Rooster?	
How does this relate to choreographic intention?	
Describe the set	
Explain why Bruce may have chosen this set design	
Describe a costume	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	

### Analysis

	Ballet	Graham	Styles linked to the subject matter (folk/jazz)	Use of costume	Use of aural setting	Use of physical setting
Ghost Dances e.g. 1						
Ghost Dances e.g. 2						
Rooster e.g. 1						
Rooster e.g. 2						
Swansong e.g. 1						
Swansong e.g. 2						
Similarities/ differences between the pieces						

## Richard Alston

### Key Information: Soda Lake

What year was Soda Lake choreographed?	
Who designed the set?	
What was the inspiration for Soda Lake?	
Which two elements of the stimulus did Alston focus on in his choreography	
What was Alston's choreographic intention for Soda Lake?	
What is the structure of Soda Lake?	
Name the sections of Soda Lake	
How does this communicate meaning?	
Describe the set	
Describe one moment where the set is used effectively	
Explain how the use of set communicates the intention	
Describe the costume	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	



### Key Information: Pulcinella

What year was Pulcinella choreographed?	
Who designed the costume?	
What inspired Alston to choreograph Pulcinella?	
Who is the music by?	
What are the pieces of music called?	
What does counterpoint mean?	
What was Alston's choreographic intention for Pulcinella?	
What is the structure of Pulcinella?	
How does this communicate meaning	
Describe the set and staging	
Explain why the use of staging fits with Alston's style and intention	
Describe the costume(s)	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	

	Cunningham	Ballet	Use of physical setting	Use of aural setting	Use of costume
Soda Lake e.g. 1					
Soda Lake e.g. 2					
Pulcinella e.g. 1					
Pulcinella e.g. 2					
Similarities/ differences between the two pieces					

### Robert North Key Information: Lonely Town Lonely Street

What year was LTLS choreographed?	
Who designed the costume?	
What inspired North to choreograph LTLS?	
Who is the music by?	
What are the pieces of music called?	
What styles of dance are present?	
What was North's choreographic intention for LTS?	
What is the structure of LTLS?	
How does this communicate meaning	
Describe the set and staging	
Explain why the use of staging fits with North's style and intention	
Describe the costume(s)	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	

### Robert North Key Information: Death and the Maiden

What year was Death and the Maiden choreographed?	
Who designed the costume?	
What inspired North to choreograph this piece?	
Who is the music by?	
What are the pieces of music called?	
What styles of dance are present?	
What was North's choreographic intention?	
What is the structure?	
How does this communicate meaning	
Describe the set and staging	
Explain why the use of staging fits with North's style and intention	
Describe the costume(s)	
Describe one moment the costume is used effectively	
Explain how the use of costume communicates the intention	
Describe the aural setting	
Describe one moment the aural setting is used effectively	
Explain how the use of aural setting communicates the intention	

	<b>Jazz</b>	<b>Ballet</b>	<b>Use of costume</b>	<b>Use of aural setting</b>	<b>Use of physical setting</b>
<b>LTLS e.g. 1</b>					
<b>LTLS e.g. 2</b>					
<b>Death and the Maiden e.g. 1</b>					
<b>Death and the Maiden e.g. 2</b>					
<b>Similarities/ differences between the two pieces</b>					

## **GLOSSARY**

Knowledge organisers for the names practitioners/ Rooster and Rambert. Refer also to Alston booklet/ North resources and Rooster booklet (s) for detail to support this guide.

<p><b><u>Robert North: Early training and background</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US dancer and choreographer. Born in 1945</li> <li>• 1965-67 studied ballet at the Royal Ballet School</li> <li>• 1966 studied contemporary, jazz and composition part time at London School of Contemporary Dance (LSCD)</li> <li>• 1968-69 studied and danced for Martha Graham Company and studied Cunningham in the US</li> <li>• Founding member of LCDT in 1967</li> <li>• In 1975, Robert North was appointed associate choreographer of LCDT</li> <li>• He also worked as a guest choreographer for Ballet Rambert</li> <li>• He taught contemporary dance at the Royal Ballet School from 1979-1981</li> <li>• In 1975, he was appointed associate choreographer of Ballet Rambert.</li> <li>• His diverse training in Ballet, Graham technique and Jazz made him an ideal choice to work as associate choreographer for Ballet Rambert as they made their transition post 1966. His skills enabled him to bridge the gap between the worlds of ballet and modern dance.</li> <li>• In 1981, he was announced co-artistic director of LCDT</li> <li>• 1981-1986, North was artistic director of Ballet Rambert</li> <li>• North's involvement with LCDT and Rambert enabled further cross-fertilisation between the companies.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Influences</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballet</li> <li>• Matt Mattox Jazz technique- isolation and rhythm</li> <li>• Graham Technique</li> <li>• Has worked with pre-existing scores in a wide range of styles; classical, folk, popular and also commissioned scores</li> <li>• Music usually sets the context, theme or narrative and structure for the work</li> <li>• Follows musical structures but allows dance to add its own texture by going against the music at times.</li> <li>• Art- Studied architecture at Central School of Art, London in 1963. Often collaborated with Andrew Storer (Lonely Town, Lonely Street).</li> </ul>	
	<p><b><u>Thematic, emotive and often entertaining subject matter</u></b></p> <p>North didn't follow the trend in the 1980's for abstract dance. Instead he kept musicality, technical dancing and dramatic meaning.</p> <p><u>Death &amp; The Maiden (1980/84)</u></p> <p>The death of a young girl and the range of emotions facing her as she faces death. Death is personified by a male dancer</p> <p>Example of theme: Death performs a chopping action of his hands into the girl's side which makes her fall to the floor. She circles her arm over her head, gestures 'stop' with her hand before running away stage right. Death places his hands over her eyes to symbolise taking away her sight.</p> <p><u>Lonely Town, Lonely Street</u></p> <p>Theme is a 'lonely guy in a big city'. In section 2 "Another Day to Run", the lone male character is pushed and pulled around and finally pushed to the floor by the other three dancers after having danced with an 'off-balance' uncontrolled quality as if affected by alcohol / drugs.</p>	<p><b><u>Strong connection with the aural setting</u></b></p> <p><u>Death &amp; The Maiden (1980 / 1984)</u></p> <p>Starting point for the piece was the first two movements of Schubert's quartet 'Death and the Maiden' music in D Minor. A song including a conversation between Death and a Maiden</p> <p>Death cradles the girl – she lies backwards onto his legs and he rocks her gently from side to side in direct correlation with the rhythm of the violins. Movement is smooth and sombre which is also clearly reflected in the music.</p> <p><u>Lonely Town Lonely Street</u></p> <p>An expression of Bill Withers' music.</p> <p>In "Ain't no sunshine" – North allows the dancer to move across and against the music on the repeated lyric "I know, I know" as the dancer repeats a scrambling action on the floor in a rhythm which is in counterpoint to the rhythm of the lyrics.</p> <p>Dance has an episodic form with separate Bill Withers songs for each section. Follows the lyrical narrative of each piece of music.</p>

### **Robert North: Contribution to Rambert**

- During North's directorship, the choreographic focus centred on North himself, Bruce and Richard Alston. Each created new works every year. Including: Ghost Dances, Lonely Town, Wildlife, Sergeant Early's Dream, Death and the Maiden
- Occasional invitations were made to overseas choreographers to mount works for the company. Amongst these were Paul Taylor's *Airs* (1978, Ballet Rambert in 1982), Merce Cunningham's *Fielding Sixes* (1983) and Dan Wagoner's *An Occasion for Some Revolutionary Gestures* (1985).
- Known as populist. North developed a repertoire that proved popular with audiences both at home and abroad, contributing several popular pieces himself
- Developed the physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers.
- Described his dream of broadening Rambert's base and turning it into a forum "where artists from all disciplines will gather to exchange ideas".
- North continued Chesworth focus on dance education. He used episodes from *Lonely Town*, *Lonely Street* at school matinees to show 'extended gesture' in creating movement which communicates the range of human emotion. It was described as an: 'excellent, entertaining introduction to dance, and the young audience's warm reaction indicates that the proper purpose of dance in theatre – the stirring of the imagination and the excitement of the eye - has been achieved.'

### **Combines a range of dance styles**

#### **Death & the Maiden**

Assisted jump in attitude followed by supported jeté battu. Faster balletic footwork echoes the fast pace and change of energy as the girl tries to escape 'death'

In the first duet, Graham technique evident in the use of sudden changes in the spine from high release to forward contract in response to corresponding sharp rhythmic changes in the music.

#### **Lonely Town, Lonely street (1981)**

Succession of Jazz style step ball changes with opposition arms used as a travelling step by the dancers across the stage in "Another Day to Run". In section 3 "Let me in your life" a lyrical duet is performed with balletic lifts in arabesque and chaînés turns punctuated by fluid use of torso in contraction and high release linked to Graham technique.



<p><b><u>Richard Alston: Early training and background</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Born in 1948: Is a British choreographer</li> <li>• Trained at the LCDT and then choreographed there before forming the UK's first independent dance company, 'Strider' in 1972 (this shows how modern dance was growing)</li> <li>• 1975: Alston went over to New York to study at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio for 2 years.</li> <li>• He rejected the Graham technique and moved more towards Cunningham's style</li> <li>• This can be seen through his use of torso (very upright)</li> <li>• In 1973, Alston worked with Mary Fulkerson an American Dance Artist. She became the second major influence on Alston's style.</li> <li>• She introduced him to '<b>Release</b>' technique and 'Contact Improvisation'.</li> <li>• These techniques use skeletal alignment rather than muscle power to activate movement. <b>The result is a softer, more flowing way of moving.</b></li> <li>• However, his choreography flows with a sense of fall and suspension not seen in pieces by Cunningham partly due to the dynamics that come from tying the movement closely to the music/the intimate relationship between the movement and the music</li> <li>• 1980- he was appointed resident choreographer with Ballet Rambert</li> <li>• 1981-his company 'Strider' merged with Siobhan Davies company to form 'Second Stride'</li> <li>• In 1994, he formed Richard Alston Dance company, which is one of the UK's most celebrated contemporary dance companies.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Influences</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly Merce Cunningham as he trained with him</li> <li>• Sir Frederick Ashton and Fred Astaire</li> <li>• The thing his influences all have in common is "a passion for fast steps"</li> </ul> <p>When asked about his work, Richard Alston regularly answers that his initial motivation comes from the music and the dancers, and indeed that he finds movement itself inspirational enough.</p> <p>He has also cited other general influences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Architecture &amp; Space (Use of tracing shapes in the desert in Soda Lake)</li> <li>▪ Art &amp; Sculpture (Soda Lake)</li> <li>▪ Individuality</li> <li>▪ Movement (Soda Lake and Pulcinella)</li> <li>▪ Music (Pulcinella)</li> </ul>	
	<p><b><u>Choreographic process:</u></b></p> <p>When starting to create a piece, Alston does not arrive with a preconceived structure as he likes to experiment in the studio and see where 'mistakes' will lead. He has said that he also enjoys seeing small 'imperfections' - in a sense the human aspect of art. Alston also appreciates individuality from his dancers and selects company members from varying backgrounds, choosing them for their own movement quality and physical characteristics.</p>	<p><b><u>Strong connection with the aural setting/ sounds</u></b></p> <p>Alston is an intensely musical choreographer and the drive to create movement in response to music arguably underlies all his work.</p> <p>The wide range of music he has used for his choreography includes folk (for example Gypsy Mixture), vintage popular music (Shuffle it Right), minimalist (Roughcut and Overdrive) classical (Pulcinella), modernist (Okho) and experimental (Tiger Balm).</p> <p>He has also used silence (Soda Lake), text and soundscapes, but always seeks the intrinsic rhythm in the movement.</p> <p>Soda Lake: We hear the dancers breathing as a rhythm, there is a lot of fast footwork that includes syncopation and quick changes in speed. This clearly shows Alston's interest in working with different rhythms and is a reactive use of the aural setting.</p> <p>Pulcinella: He uses the rhythms and tempo of the classical piece of music to support the story and support the humour aspects of the commedia dell'arte characters e.g. in various entrance dances for Pulcinella. There is direct correlation with the music. At times, Alston chooses to use music visualisation in jumps and rhythms that support the story.</p>

### **Richard Alston: Contribution to Rambert**

- Mainly Cunningham technique and abstract works this had both a positive and negative impact on the company. Refer to lessons in notes for further detail on this.
- Invited choreographers from abroad to make works for the Company, including a number of influential American 'postmodern' choreographers such as Tricia Brown, Lucinda Childs and Cunningham himself, whose *Touchbase* (1992) was created specifically for Rambert. He also invited his regular collaborator Siobhan Davies.
- Pulcinella was created the year after he was appointed Artistic director
- Pulcinella was created just before the company went on tour to the US and Canada
- This tour provoked the name change of the company to Rambert dance company. In 1987, the company was renamed "Rambert Dance Company" to more accurately reflect the style and nature of its current form. This was shortened to simply "Rambert" in 2013.
- In the second part of the 1980's the company consolidated their artistic vision: Refer to class notes for detail.
- The range of work that they performed was probably narrower than at other times in the company's history.
- As stated in 'Rambert a celebration' The basis of the company's work became orientated around Cunningham's ideas that dance is about movement in time and space
- Alston's influence: the company classes from 1966 onwards were in both ballet and contemporary, however from the 1980's the contemporary movement classes were most frequently in Cunningham technique
- Alston appreciated the ideas of collaboration in creativity by Serge Diaghilev. This links to Marie Rambert's experience with working with Ballet Russes.

### **Tastes and influences. Art and sculpture:**

Alston's choreography has a sculptural quality and he has described his way of moving as 'like drawing in the air'. His work has been described as 'three-dimensional' in the sense that the movement can be enjoyed from any viewpoint. Dancers in his pieces often perform the same material at the same time or in quick succession but with different facings or travelling on a different pathway. This is a choreographic device Alston regularly uses, but because of the complexity of facings and directions of movement, it often goes unnoticed. Marie Rambert also had an interest in design and it has become a key characteristic of Rambert.

**Soda Lake:** Sculpture by Nigel Hall used to mimic movements, floor patterns and even the dancers costume

**Pulcinella:** Backdrop. Design Howard Hodgkin. Consists of 4 scene cloths. Front cloth for the overture and three different cloths for each scene of the piece. 1: Depicts Mediterranean buildings- Italian Flag, layers of paint- collages/ 2: Night sky and a dramatic moon (represents change in mood here) 3: Colourful flags suggesting a carnival- as No 1 - layers of paint- collages



**Pierrott Lunaire (1967) Bruce picked as the main male soloist. This catapulted him to the forefront of Rambert at the time.**

**Christopher Bruce: Early training and background refer also to Bruce booklet and PGs 6-10**

- 1945 – Born, Leicester
- 1956 - Aged 11years Bruce underwent training in ballet and tap.
- 1958 – He joined the Rambert School, age 13
- 1963 – He joined Ballet Rambert as a dancer in the corps de ballet.
- 1966 – Ballet Rambert has a major change. Dancers’ training changes from ballet to contemporary.
- American choreographer Glen Tetley was brought to England to make new work for the company.
- 1967 - Tetley creates new dance called *Pierrot Lunaire*. He identified Bruce as a young talent and cast him in the title role which became the beginning of Bruce’s highly successful performance career.
- 1969 – Bruce makes his first dance for the company called *George Frideric*. Beginning of a long list of dances.
- 1974 – Bruce appointed Resident Choreographer of Rambert
- 1974 – Received Evening Standard Award for his contribution to British Dance both as a choreographer and a performer.
- 1975 – Appointed Associate Director of Rambert
- 1980 – Appointed Associate Choreographer of Rambert
- 1981 – Bruce choreographs *Ghost Dances*
- 1984 – Bruce choreographs *Sergeant Early’s Dream*
- 1986 – Bruce becomes Resident Choreographer of London Festival Ballet
- 1987 – Bruce leaves Rambert Dance Company to follow a freelance career
- 1987 – Makes *Swansong* for London Festival Ballet
- 1992- Bruce Choreograph’s Rooster for Ballet du Theatre de Genève
- 1994 – Returns to Rambert Dance Company as Artistic Director, in his first season his stages Rooster for Rambert
- 1995- Bruce stages Swansong for Rambert
- 1996 – Evening Standard Award for his directorship of Rambert Dance Company.
- 1998 - Awarded the CBE for lifetime’s service to dance
- 2002 - Retired as Artistic Director of Rambert
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**Influences**

**Bruce has been influenced by many choreographers: Refer to PGs 10-14 in booklet**

- ❖ Marie Rambert : Founder and Artistic Director 1919-1966
- ❖ Norman Morrice: Associate Artistic Director 1966-1974
- ❖ John Chesworth: Associate Artistic Director 1974-1981
- ❖ Martha Graham: American Influence
- ❖ Glen Tetley: Associate of Rambert & American Influence
- ❖ Robert North & Richard Alston: Worked closely with the two.
- ❖ London Contemporary Dance Theatre: Influence, Other leading British modern dance company.
- ❖ Antony Tudor : Theatrical, British Influence

**Choreographic process:**  
Bruce’s choreography is not about movements but ideas. His work often has a narrative or strong humanistic themes. He also works from social, political and historical starting points. These points arrive throughout his process, he likes to work with the dancers rather than pre prepare any choreography before the studio.

**Strong connection with the different stimuli**  
Since the 1980’s Bruce has responded to pop songs (mainly from the 1960’s) by Billy Holiday, Bob Dylan, John Lennon and The Rolling Stones.  
Bruce’s work was also stimulated by literature, fact or fiction, poetry, prose and journalism. He never puts an epic work on stage, he instead prefers to select themes that can be successfully conveyed through dance. The subject matter of Bruce’s work has attracted attention because it reflects his sensitive awareness of the larger social, political and ecological issues of our time. However Bruce himself says that he doesn’t purposely use ballets to get social messages across; they ‘just come naturally’ to him.  
Nevertheless, on occasions the choice of subject matter is intentional, e.g. In Swansong what themes are seen?

## **Important Features of Bruce's Career**

### **Training**

- Benson Stage Academy
- Ballet Rambert
- 1963: Dancing debut with Walter Gore's London Ballet
- 1963: Joined Ballet Rambert
- 1966: Became leading dancer in modern roles with Ballet Rambert
- 1969: Choreographer for Ballet Rambert
- 1975: Became associate choreographer and director
- 1975-1979: Associate choreographer for London Festival Ballet

### **Christopher Bruce: Contribution to Rambert**

Important point to male: Marie Rambert: Her dance company, she saw potential in Bruce's technical ability and creativity. She issued him with the roles within the company. Led him through the transition of classical ballet to contemporary.

- As Artistic Director, Bruce built up a company of 25 dancers.
- Bruce moved away from Alston's Cunningham influenced approach and drew Rambert dance company back to its roots, creating new dances and remounting his popular works for Rambert – Swansong in 1995.
- He gained increased arts council funding and was able to re launch and revitalise the company engaging new dancers and dancers he had worked with when freelance.
- Some of the dancers continued from the Alston era, e.g. Mark Baldwin who eventually became Artistic director after Bruce's retirement in 2002.
- Bruce continued to offer a wide range of approaches in his 8 year reign, he remounted older dances and brought in European choreographers for new work. He worked with Lindsay Kemp again inviting her back to re stage 'The parades gone by' which was originally made for Rambert 1975. He also brought in modern dance choreographers such as Wayne McGregor and Jiri Kylian.
- He wanted to intertwine the expressive qualities of contemporary dance with the rich postural qualities of ballet. Ballet: lyrical, fluid, opening of the chest, extended body lines, complex footwork, intricate travelling patterns. Contemporary: low Centre of gravity, strong use of the back.
- Clear evidence of Graham technique: Where do we see the following in his pieces?
  - Contraction
  - Flexed feet
  - A sense of weight
  - Floor work
  - Angular movements

### **Tastes and influences:**

- Uses a variety of starting points and themes for his choreography- poetry, literature, music, art
- Social, autobiographical, psychological
- He shows emotions through his pieces and allows the audience to interpret his movements
- Structure is often episodic and has clear sections
  - Uses a lot of rondo form where he develops motifs that have been seen previously
    - His dancers don't improvise
- Bruce demonstrates material and gets dancers to respond, thus moving the piece on
- Bruce works closely with designers.
- Usually has simple sets, often with a backdrop to enhance the mood
- The set allows space for movement
- Costumes allow freedom of movement
- Early years- some pieces didn't use music
- Music was really important in his pieces from the mid 70's
  - Variety of style of music e.g. classical, jazz, popular
    - Influences the mood/intention of choreography

### *Rambert's leadership and Bruce's involvement*

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- - *1974 – Christopher Bruce is resident choreographer*
  - *1979 – Bruce is Associate Director*
  - *1980 – There is no director but Richard Alston is appointed Resident choreographer.*
  - *1980 – 86 Bruce is Associate Choreographer*
  - *1981 – Robert North appointed Director.*
  - *1982 – Marie Rambert (now Dame Marie Rambert) dies*
  - *1986 – Richard Alston appointed Director.*
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*– Christopher Bruce moves to Festival Ballet. Pursues a freelance career*

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- *1987 – Ballet Rambert becomes Rambert Dance Company*
  - *1994 – Christopher Bruce 'returns home' to Rambert as Artistic Director*
  - *2002 – Mark Baldwin (another ex-Rambert Dancer) takes over as Artistic Director.*
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# Pre 1966: Ballet Rambert

1888  
Marie  
Rambert  
Born

Rambert  
inspired to  
dance after  
watch a  
performance  
of Isadora  
Duncan in  
1904

1912-1914  
touring with  
Ballet Russe.  
Left when  
Nijinsky did

1914- (outbreak of ww1). Moved  
to London  
Married English playwright Ashley  
Dukes.  
1920: Opened a dance school.  
1923: Invited Sir Frederick Ashton  
to work with her dancers.

1926 – First Ballet 'A Tragedy of  
Fashion' in Hammermith with  
Frederick Ashton. Author was her  
husband. Mixed reviews.

1920's -1940's: 'Ballet Club'  
performing every  
Sunday

★ 1935 – Ballet Rambert formed. Ballet was  
'the style' of the time.

During WW2 Ballet  
Rambert was  
performing every week  
at Sadlers Wells.

Extensive touring for up to 35 weeks a year  
meant there was less time to create new works  
and there was no notable choreographer  
working with the company at this time.

★ 1958 –  
Norman  
Morrice!!  
Two Brothers

Post war: Audiences  
became more  
'generic' so they  
performed the  
classical ballets  
rather than having  
time to work on new  
projects e.g. Giselle  
1945-1965



### **Contextual information: Summary of Rambert 1966-2002**

Rambert is Britain's oldest dance company. It was formally established in 1926 by Marie Rambert, who was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1888. Rambert was inspired to dance when she saw a performance by Isadora Duncan in 1904 in Poland. Although her parents wished her to take up medicine, she began to study dance in Paris (initially with Isadora Duncan's brother, Raymond), while waiting to take up her Medical Studies. She spent three years studying eurhythmics with Emile Jacques Dalcroze. In 1912, she was invited by Sergei Diaghilev to assist Vaslav Nijinsky and his dancers with the complex rhythms of Stravinsky's music for 'Le Sacre du Printemps' (The Rite of Spring). It was during this time that she acquired her love of classical ballet. She worked with the Ballets Russes for a season (1912-14) and left when Nijinsky was dismissed. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Rambert moved to London. When she arrived in London she supported herself by giving tuition in dance and eurhythmics. At the same time she continued with her own ballet studies, as well as performing as a soloist. She married the English playwright Ashley Dukes in 1918. Two years later, she opened a school of dancing in Bedford Gardens, Kensington. Marie Rambert invited Fredrick Ashton to train with her in 1923 and she was ready to perform with her dancers in Ashton's first work 'A Tragedy of Fashion' in 1926. This ballet was received well by the public, but less of with the press. In an interview for the BBC in 1976, Marie Rambert said the press had commented: "what a pity dramatic authors have wives who meddle in ballet." Rambert continued "The dramatic author was my husband Ashley Dukes, well, I meddled in ballet not because of him but because of my passion for dancing and choreography, neither of which I really could do myself, but I got it out of people." From the 1920s to the 1940s, the company emerged from Marie Rambert's 'Ballet Club' performing regularly on Sundays at the Mercury Theatre in London's Notting Hill, to become a full time touring company. The first performances as Ballet Rambert were in 1935. Its popularity meant it outgrew the tiny Mercury Theatre and from 1946 London performances were often at Sadler's Wells Theatre. During World War II, the company appeared in a range of venues including factory canteens as well as theatres, and in this way made its own contribution to the war effort. The change in its performance activities during and immediately after the War resulted in a new audience. The small but knowledgeable audience of the Ballet Club was replaced by a more general audience whose tastes were less adventurous than those of the company's earlier supporters. Post-war audiences began to expect longer ballets in addition to the traditional mixed bills of new works. Ballet Rambert performed several classics, including variations of the well-known 'Giselle' (1945- 1965), 'Coppelia' (1956-7) and the first major British productions of 'La Sylphide' (1960) and 'Don Quixote' (1962). Extensive touring for up to 35 weeks a year meant there was less time to create new works and there was no notable choreographer working with the company at this time. This would change in 1958, when Norman Morrice became Resident Choreographer and created his first work 'Two Brothers'. The work heralded a cautious return to the innovative policies which had previously been the hallmark of Ballet Rambert. 'Two Brothers' was performed in modern

dress and dealt with a contemporary theme while using a traditional ballet vocabulary. Morrice worked with Ralph Koltai, who was Head of Theatre Design at Central School of Art and Design (now, Central Saint Martin's School of Art). It was Morrice's artistic directorship that was to bring together design and dance to the forefront for the company, a principle that is developed by the company during the years 1966-2002. Norman Morrice, encouraged by Marie Rambert, travelled to America in 1962 on a Ford Foundation Grant in order to see the new developments in dance and to study with some of the major choreographers of the time, including Martha Graham. At this time it had become apparent that Ballet Rambert could no longer afford the expense of touring largescale classical productions and that, if it was to survive, a change of direction was needed.

Following his visit to America, Morrice encouraged Marie Rambert to return to the company's original ethos of creating new work. The Company transformed from a classical touring company to a smaller ensemble of sixteen to twenty dancers, a production manager and a wardrobe mistress, and an aim to create new works, as well as preserving the best of their previous works.

In 1966, Morrice was appointed Associate Artistic Director of the new 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. This was a significant change from the traditional structure of a ballet company.

In May 1966, Marie Rambert, Norman Morrice and administrator Frederick Bromwich created three proposed aims for the company:

1. To encourage the production of new works by both new and established choreographers
2. To preserve as far as possible the master-works which constitute the Ballet Rambert's artistic heritage
3. To give regular seasons in London and to tour selected dates in the provinces and abroad.

From the minutes of the Board meeting on 4 May 1966, Dame Marie Rambert (she had been given the title in 1962) was asked by the Chairman of the Mercury Theatre Trust, Mr Orde, what her views were for the future. She said: "We should create a smaller Company producing new choreographies and ballets and tour festivals in the country and abroad, and also longer seasons in London at a small theatre."

At a special meeting of the Mercury Theatre Trust on 29 June 1966, Marie Rambert said “it is young and eager people interested in team work and interested in what we are doing that mattered, not ‘stars’.” In October of that year, the Board unanimously passed the motion to retain the title of Ballet Rambert for the company.

Once the company’s policies and practices were established, the pattern was set for the next twenty years. Ever since 1966 the company has alternated daily classes in contemporary and classical ballet technique. Rambert’s first contemporary dance teacher, Anna Price, had been one of the British students sponsored by Robin Howard to study with Martha Graham.

Morrice created works including ‘That is the Show’ (1971) which featured a white box set designed by Nadine Baylis featuring different colour lines, and ‘1-2-3’ (1968) and ‘BlindSight’ (1969), also with designs by Nadine Baylis. Morrice was keen to push the links of design and dance closer together and in 1977 created ‘Smiling Immortal’.

During this time, Morrice brought in several American choreographers to make works for the company, including Anna Sokolow and Glen Tetley. Tetley, who came over in 1967, proved very popular with the audiences and therefore the company held ‘The Tetley season’ in 1967, which was a celebrated season of his works including ‘Freefall’ and ‘Ziggurat’, which increased the publicity for the company at the time, as they made their mark in their new direction.

As the company developed in the late 1960s, regular choreographic workshops were also held for the dancers, and Christopher Bruce began to emerge from as a talented choreographer. During the first few years of Ballet Rambert’s new incarnation from 1966 onwards, the company also retained several pieces from its earlier repertoire. Among these were four of Antony Tudor’s works, including ‘Dark Elegies’ (Rambert version 1937); and also Nijinsky’s ‘L’Après-midi d’une Faune’, a re-presentation for Ballet Rambert in 1931. This provides further evidence that the company were remaining true to the aims as set out by Rambert, Morrice and Bromwich, as they move the company forward into contemporary dance but yet retaining ‘master’ works.

In 1974, Morrice resigned as Artistic Director to become a freelance choreographer, and was subsequently appointed Artistic Director at the Royal Ballet in 1977.

From 1974 until 1980, John Chesworth continued Morrice’s policies with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers such as Jaap Flier, Cliff Keuter and Siobhan Davies. He was also instrumental in

developing Rambert's educational activities as he supported outreach work in schools with his Young Friends programme. After his time at Rambert, Chesworth set up the National Youth Dance Company which he led from 1985 to 2003, the year in which he was appointed OBE for Services to Dance.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the repertoire of Ballet Rambert focused on the work of three choreographers: Robert North, Christopher Bruce and Richard Alston, who each played a huge part in the development of the company. From 1975 to the early 1990s, there were links between Ballet Rambert and London Contemporary Dance Theatre through Robert North and Richard Alston. Guest choreographers such as Siobhan Davies were invited to work with the company.

Christopher Bruce became Associate Director in 1975 and then Associate Choreographer in 1980, as he became the next home grown talent to emerge as a choreographer.

Robert North directed the company from 1981 to 1986 and was keen to develop the physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers.

Alston became Resident Choreographer in 1980 and Artistic Director in 1986, consolidating the Cunningham influence. The name of the company was changed to Rambert Dance Company in 1987. Alston left Rambert at the end of 1992. His successor was Christopher Bruce, who, because of his long and fruitful association with the company, was uniquely qualified to take on the role of Artistic Director.

Bruce served as Artistic Director until 2002 and continued its development with the inclusion of a range of techniques, new works, guest choreographers and a repertoire of neo-classical and modern works.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Period 1966-1974

- ▶ Mid 1960's Ballet Rambert were facing financial difficulties, in 1966 they decided to pursue a policy of returning to their pioneering roots and they moved away from being totally ballet focussed and underwent a change to modern dance. Glen Tetley evidences this with his work in 1967???. Describe what is this piece based on?
- ▶ Tetley was a key model for the blending together of ballet and Graham. Bruce as the main dancer in this work in 1967 emerged as the first home grown choreographer in this new genre of American influenced modern dance. He choreographed his first work in 1969 George Frederic, he drew on Graham- balletic infusion that he was experiencing at Ballet Rambert at the time. He tended to highlight the drama of human situations e.g. human rights. What other works of his do we see this?
- ▶ Norman Morrice instigated this new era. He was ballet trained but encouraged by Marie Rambert he looked to modern dance to refashion the company. He introduced Graham technique to alternate with ballet and was responsible for inviting Tetley to make work for them. He also reduced the number of dancers to what? Each dancer was equal in status.
- ▶ There was eclecticism during his time as Artistic director: broad range of works from himself, Tetley (American) and Bruce
- ▶ 1969: the company gave a series of matinees for the inner London education authority. This marked the beginning of its education programme, to generate a new, younger audience.
- ▶ The Dance Unit', an outreach project, toured small venues and informal settings to introduce the company's new style from 1972-74.
- ▶ In 1974, Morrice resigned as Artistic Director to become a freelance choreographer, and was subsequently appointed Artistic Director at the Royal Ballet in 1977.



May 1966

- ▶ In May 1966, Marie Rambert, Norman Morrice and administrator Frederick Bromwich created three proposed aims for the company:
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  2. To preserve as far as possible the master-works which constitute the Ballet Rambert's artistic heritage
  3. To give regular seasons in London and to tour selected dates in the provinces and abroad.
- ▶ It was Morrice's artistic directorship that was to bring together design and dance to the forefront for the company, a principle that is developed by the company during the years 1966-2002.

1966- 1974

"At the same time it will encourage the creation and presentation of new works by established and apprentice choreographers, composers and designers."

From 1966, new works by Norman Morrice, associate artistic director of Ballet Rambert, became viewed as the works of the established choreographer. Ballet Rambert performed 15 of his works between 1965-1975, including *Blind Sight* (1969) and the popular work *That is the Show* (1971).



The most significant apprentice choreographer was Christopher Bruce. His first work was *George Frederic* (1969) for Ballet Rambert and he created 8 works between 1969 – 1975 before becoming Associate Director of Ballet Rambert in 1975.

Glen Tetley's work most clearly reflects the new artistic policy of Ballet Rambert as a modern dance company. He provides a clear link with the American Graham influence. Ballet Rambert repertoire included existing Tetley works, such as *Pierrot Lunaire* (1962, performed by Rambert in 1967), and works created for Rambert, such as *Ziggurat* (1967).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Period 1974-1985

- ▶ From 1974 until 1980, John Chesworth continued Morrice's policies with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers such as Siobhan Davies. He was also instrumental in developing Rambert's educational activities as he supported outreach work in schools with his Young Friends programme.
- ▶ Diversity was developing due to the broad range of choreographers used.
- ▶ Links between Rambert and LCDT with North's pieces and the work of Richard Alston and Siobhan Davies becoming more prominent.
- ▶ 1975- Bruce became associate artistic director working with Chesworth. Although different in style they shared an interest in psychological and socio/political themes. E.g. Cruel Garden Year? Who was this in collaboration with? What was this piece about? This showed a diversity of styles, spanish dance, graham , ballet and mime. Very theatrical.
- ▶ 1979: Bruce left Rambert to become a freelance choreographer. Was still associate choreographer at Rambert in 1980.
- ▶ This theatricality was reversed when North took over from Chesworth in 1981. Alston became resident choreographer 1980 along with North himself and Bruce. They all regularly made new work e.g. Ghost Dances 1981/ Lonely Town Lonely street 1981. It was as if these three were leading the company during this time – almost like an informal leadership.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Period 1974-1985

- ▶ 1982: Marie Rambert Died
- ▶ Alston brought with him his Cunningham style that was fused with ballet. This sometimes confused critics as it was uniform to modern dance (heavy, use of breath) or classical ballet.
- ▶ North wanted the balance of the work shown to be widely accessible: what work could we use to support his example? Jazz influenced, dramatic pieces? Political issues?
- ▶ Company classes alternated between Graham, ballet and Cunningham depending on who was teaching them and what works were being performed at the time.
- ▶ Eventually the policy of diversity was criticised by critics of the company as they saw it being pulled in to too many divergent areas.

## Rambert Dance Company Artistic Policy changes...



<b>Marie Rambert (AD)</b>	<b>Influenced by Isadora Duncan. Wanted to create new and original ballets. This changed during the war due to audiences and touring schedules.</b>
Norman Morrice (associate AD) 1966-1974	Returning to their pioneering roots and they moved away from being totally ballet focussed and underwent a change to modern dance. Bringing together design and dance- art background.
John Chesworth (AD) 1974-1980	John Chesworth continued Morrice's policies of diversity with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers. He was also instrumental in developing Rambert's educational activities as he supported outreach work in schools
Robert North 1981-1986 (AD)	Diversity of style, 3 prominent choreographers North, Bruce and Alston. Wanted the work showcased to be widely accessible.
Richard Alston 1986-1994 (AD)	Alston had studied Cunningham technique. Mainly abstract works, more innovative – dance became less narrative. Invited post modern American Choreographers over. The company were renamed 'Rambert Dance company' – accurately reflects the style and nature of the company in present form.
Christopher Bruce 1994- 2002 (AD)	Company of 25 ballet and contemporary trained dancers – some new and some old. Some used to working with Bruce and some not. Clear evidence of Graham technique. Invited internationally renowned choreographers and allowed British choreographers to develop.

### 3rd Period 1986-1994

- ▶ Radical shift in the company towards Cunningham influenced characteristics. Bruce was still AC so there was still some diversity.
- ▶ He initiated a new era of Cunningham influenced repertoire and cool abstract qualities.
- ▶ Company classes were now Cunningham based.
- ▶ Alston eventually changed the name to Rambert Dance company in 1987 to reflect the depth of this change.
- ▶ Alston engaged like minded choreographers e.g. Ashley Page (Royal ballet dancer)
- ▶ Alston was interested in further collaboration in terms of design and there was a growing trend at Rambert Dance company for commissioning notable artists e.g. Howard Hodgkin – What work and what year? Soda Lake: name of artist who did the sculpture?
- ▶ He also invited Siobhan Davies (who he created Strider with) to create work for Rambert- she was also interested in the use of music and dance. A wide range of music was used e.g. Stravinsky for what work?
- ▶ Bruce's work seemed out of place with this more abstract Cunningham infused repertoire so he left in 1987 to pursue his freelance career

## 4th Period 1994-2002

- ▶ 1994 was a dramatic year; Alston's vision of the company was criticised heavily as being too focussed on abstract work and the Cunningham styles that he preferred.
- ▶ Bruce who had been working with a range of companies both ballet and modern dance in the UK, Europe and USA returned as Artistic director. Appointed in 1993, he arrived in 1994 to relaunch the company.
- ▶ Bruce moved away from Alston's Cunningham influenced approach and drew Rambert dance company back to its roots, creating new dances and remounting his popular works for Rambert – Swansong in 1995.
- ▶ He gained increased arts council funding and was able to re launch and revitalise the company engaging new dancers and dancers he had worked with when freelance.
- ▶ Some of the dancers continued from the Alston era, e.g. Mark Baldwin who eventually became Artistic director after Bruce's retirement in 2002.
- ▶ Bruce continued to offer a wide range of approaches in his 8 year reign, he remounted older dances and brought in European choreographers for new work. He worked with Lindsay Kemp again inviting her back to re stage 'The parades gone by' which was originally made for Rambert 1975. He also brought in modern dance choreographers such as Wayne McGregor and Jiri Kylian.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Period 1994-2002

### Summary of Bruce:

Company of 25 ballet and contemporary trained dancers – some new and some old. Some used to working with Bruce and some not.

Clear evidence of Graham technique.

Invited internationally renowned choreographers and allowed British choreographers to develop.