

# A'LEVEL DANCE KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

## ROBERT NORTH

<p><b><u>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>• <b>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.</b></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>• <b>North's involvement with LCDT and Rambert enabled further cross-fertilisation between the companies.</b></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>
<p><b><u>Contribution to Rambert</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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).</li> <li>• Known as populist. North developed a repertoire that proved popular with audiences both at home and abroad, contributing several popular pieces himself</li> <li>• Developed the physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers.</li> <li>• Described his dream of broadening Rambert's base and turning it into a forum "where artists from all disciplines will gather to exchange ideas".</li> <li>• 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."</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Combines a range of dance styles</u></b></p> <p><u>Death &amp; the Maiden</u></p> <p>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'</p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Lonely Town, Lonely street (1981)</u></p> <p>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>

