

Shadows

GCSE Dance (8236)

Anthology fact file

<p>Choreographer</p>	<p>Christopher Bruce trained at the Ballet Rambert School, joining Ballet Rambert in 1963. He is the last major choreographer to have been nurtured by Marie Rambert. Bruce was Associate Director of Ballet Rambert from 1975-1979, Associate Choreographer in 1980, then Artistic Director from 1994-2002. His best-known works include <i>Cruel Garden</i> (1977), <i>Ghost Dances</i> (1981), <i>Berlin Requiem</i> (1982), <i>Swansong</i> (1987) and <i>Rooster</i> (1991).</p> <p>Christopher Bruce was awarded a CBE in 1998; other awards include: the Evening Standard Award, Prix Italia, International Theatre Institute Award for Excellence in International Dance, De Valois Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dance at Critic's Circle National Dance Awards, and an Honorary Life Membership of Amnesty International in recognition of his achievements in the field of dance and human rights.</p>
<p>Company</p>	<p>From Leeds, Phoenix Dance Theatre is one of the UK's leading contemporary dance companies. Founded in 1981 Phoenix Dance Theatre began by performing work created within the company. Under the direction of Sharon Watson, who was appointed Artistic Director in May 2009, Phoenix has re-introduced diverse mixed programmes of work by both established and up and coming choreographers, including classic pieces from the company's repertoire.</p>
<p>Date of first performance</p>	<p>Premiered 26th November 2014.</p>
<p>Dance style</p>	<p>Stemming from his own training, Christopher Bruce's signature movement style is grounded in modern dance techniques with a combination of classical and contemporary dance language termed "neo-classical".</p>
<p>Choreographic approach</p>	<p>Bruce does not prepare movement before entering the studio, preferring to wait and work with the dancers so that he can be influenced by them. For Bruce, as well as being appropriate to the piece, the movement must also sit well on the dancers.</p> <p>He started <i>Shadows</i> with the idea of a family unit sitting around the hearth or around a dinner table and knew that the furniture would become an intrinsic part of the choreography as opposed to being a static set. The "anxiety of the music" greatly influenced the movement content, with the form of the piece allowing each member of the family to have a voice and tell their story.</p>
<p>Stimulus</p>	<p>Arvo Part's <i>Fratres</i> for violin and piano was the starting point for the work. For Bruce, the music "evokes images of a European history and tradition steeped in over a thousand years of suffering and human experience." In <i>Shadows</i>, Bruce translates this vision into an exploration of a family dynamic, examining the relationships between each member (son, daughter, mother and father) as they deal with an unseen but ever-present outside force.</p>

Choreographic intention	Christopher Bruce's works are often 'politically aware', in reference to past or current political events happening across the world, exploring their effect on human life. In this piece, Bruce invites the audience into the world of a small family, possibly set in Eastern Europe (though this is left up to individual interpretation) coming to terms with deprivation, poverty, and the realities of what lies outside their intimate family home. Bruce describes this piece as "a darker work, with a sort-of narrative", allowing the audience to apply their own context to the material danced on stage.
Dancers	4 dancers (2 male / 2 female).
Duration	12 minutes.
Structure	Semi-narrative. Solo, duet, trio, quartet.
Aural setting	The accompaniment is Arvo Part's <i>Fratres</i> (composed in 1977), the version for violin and piano pre-recorded for use in performance. The music has no break in tempo, following Part's signature style of composition – using broken chords and diatonic scales. The music is in a minor key and is integral to the dark, solemn atmosphere of the piece. There is a clear correlation between the movement vocabulary and accompaniment in terms of speed and dynamics, often used to introduce each character and their emotional response to their environment.
Costume	Designed by Christopher Bruce. The costumes are clearly gendered, depicting the era of the 1930s -1940s: simple shirts, skirts, trousers and dresses as well as large overcoats worn at the very end of the piece. Colours are muted and worn down - again symbolising deprivation and poverty. There are no costume changes in the piece. Towards the end of the piece the dancers/family prepare to leave the house by putting on shoes and coats. It is clear that these jackets are oversized for the son/daughter, again referencing to the fact that the family are living in poverty.
Lighting	The lighting was designed by John B Read, who uses the lighting to create an intimate space on stage depicting the feeling of 'a room', as well as to indicate what is waiting for the family outside that they are so reluctant to step into.
Performance environment	End stage.
Staging/set	Designed by Christopher Bruce. <i>Shadows</i> uses a minimal set within a black-box (a simple set with bare walls and floor) theatre space. The piece includes a table, a bench, two stools, a coat stand and suitcases – all worn-looking, and somewhat drab: confirming the notion of hardship within the family. The space created allows the audience to enter the heart of the home, the kitchen. This is where the narrative of the choreography and the relationships between the family members unfolds.