

How have Jiri Kylian's background and training influenced his choreography in Sarabande? In your answer refer to specific examples within the work.

Jiri Kylian's Sarabande is an artwork worthy of critical study, his classical training as well as studies of music have had a significant impact on his choreographic style. He manipulates these aspects of dance in a way that effectively emphasises the concept of his work in Sarabande. His work features a number of scenes linked together through the conceptual exploration of male masculinity, exploring emotions like vulnerability, sexuality, frivolity and respect. Kylian's work is undoubtedly shaped by his personal context as he uses imagination and movement to convey the inherent paradox that conveys the complexity of the human experience.

Kylian's choreographic style can be accredited to his experience of London in the "swinging 60's". He was offered a scholarship to the Royal Ballet School, which in addition to his studies at the Prague Conservatory, has formed the classical base work underlying all his works as he worked with ballet forerunners Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev. However, contemporary culture gone wild exposed Kylian to an abstracted strain of music and film, and so Kylian's work is unquestionably a combination of classical technique and modern abstraction. An example of polished and elegant balletic lines followed by percussive and sharp movements is seen when 6 dancers step into a classical arabesque, the line is broken by the fragmented collapse of the arms and supporting leg as the torso contracts. Later in the work the dancers all stand in a 2nd plie whilst moving their arms freely, with the stance in recognition of balletic roots and the free flowing arms an indication of modern dance influence. Here Kylian incorporates his classical training whilst transforming the language of the dance to express the vulnerability of the body and struggles of masculinity. The two opposing styles produce a highly emotional work that is executed with the finesse and precision of a ballet. Whilst in London Kylian was also exposed to the works of modern pioneer Merce Cunningham. This influence can be seen through Kylian's choice of film as medium for his work as it allows for the subject of the dance to be the dance itself, allowing for maximum opportunity to convey meaningful message through choreography, in this instance Kylian's use of the collage style form made possible in the film format.

Part of Kylian's training at the Prague Conservatory included composition of music studies, which he has carried with him throughout his work as a choreographer. In Sarabande the steps and music are harmonious in the way the steps match the music and the choreography assists in the development of a conversation with the music. This can be seen in section 1a when the dancers hop up from a crouch position, they perform a stamp of the right foot and slap of the hands on the floor before a slow transference of weight from left to right in a small plie. In this sequence, electronic accents have been added to embellish the choreography, as well as slow electronic notes in the weight transition as a relationship between music and choreography becomes evident.

In addition to this, Kylian uses the dancers' input with the track to help communicate his intent through breath and screams. This can first be seen in the opening section. Unexpected change in the aural elements throughout the dance mirror the frequent dynamic shift between smooth and calm moments and abstracted aggressive movements. This can be seen in the opening section as the work begins with Johann Bach's classical Partita for Violin in reference to the idea of birthing as dresses hang from the ceiling. After this the dancers contract the torso and scream in a dramatic shift of dynamics. The aural elements of screams and breath become a pseudo motif in itself that carries throughout the work as later seen when the dancers run forward screaming before isolating the shoulders and arms in a shrugging movement. This further reflects Kylian's personal context as a young man bound by the communist regime in Prague where he grew up, as the screams represent the dual frustration of societal pressure on men and on Kylian's personal lack of freedom. Kylian's use of music and aural elements in Sarabande are intrinsic to his personal context and inextricably linked with the achievement of the communication of his intent.