

# Shadows

GCSE Dance (8236)

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## Video transcript for interview with Choreographer Christopher Bruce CBE

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**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

What was the initial stimulus for this choreography?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

The music basically, I had heard this piece of music a long time ago and I've seen one or two choreographic pieces to the music already so the music had been in my mind hanging around, I loved it, in its various forms and I'd always had an idea that I would like to make a work to it. So that was the initial stimulus.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

So what would you say this dance work is about?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

Well the music basically for me is very eastern European, of course you'd sort of call it minimal, in a way I guess. But it seems to have a weight and a sense of history and culture behind it or at least that's what I hear in the music. Basically I married the ideas of the history Eastern Europe and particularly the 20th century, the 2nd world war, the horrors that Europe has gone through. It was very much influenced by the horrors of the 2nd world war in Europe under the Nazis but it could equally be about what happened under the Russians later. Or you can go back to the pogroms' of the 18th / 19th century and further back of course. It's about really a family, a group of people waiting for the knock on the door because they know they are going to be on the next train, if not the next train, the train after, on a way to a concentration camp. That is basically the idea. But it's.... of course when you begin to make a dance about it you cannot be too figurative. You're.... And this is the power of dance, you're able to say many different things with a dance. The audience can interpret it on so many levels – I always say it's like a collage and you can see and hear in the work whatever you see and hear.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

How did you create and develop your movement material?

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**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

You know I never prepare movement before I get into the studio. I wait until I am working with the dancers. I'd seen the dancers so in a way I was prepared to make the work for them. But when I make a piece, a new piece, I'm influenced by the dancers, I will take things from them. All I knew is that I wanted to start with a family unit or it can be read as a family unit and I thought either around the hearth or at the table, the dinner table. So I just set a sort of father figure, mother, son and a daughter, if you like....if that's how you see it. I suppose the form of the piece allows each member of the family to speak.... They all have their moment and they all have their different characters. I had my table, I had my bench, my stools there and that became part of the dance. I knew that I would use these items of furniture at one point or another, not just for sitting at, but in other ways, they became part of the choreography.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

How would you describe the dance style of this work?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

You know, all my work, I think, comes out of my training in various dance styles and I will use everything, my modern dance training, my classical ballet training, theatre, tap dance training, my character dance, folk dance training everything.... I'll use elements there. I suppose, for the most part, all my work comes from a modern dance base but I guess I form a kind of neo-classical language. A language that also has the ability to express the themes that I'm trying to get across.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

What decisions did you make, and why, about the number and the gender of the dancers?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

Well I just saw the family unit. So it was a question of mother, father, son, daughter, possibly! So that was how. And it's a small company - Maybe if I was making the work on a larger company, I might have tackled the work very differently but I was coming into a chamber group, so I made it as chamber work, and I thought 4 dancers was what I needed and we could have two casts, everything will be covered, one has to think of those practical details when you set a work on a company.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

What about the staging?

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**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

Again I saw the table and chairs, the bench upstage and I saw just a simple old fashioned hat stand at the back with clothing on it and of course I added the luggage for the end.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

How about the lighting?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

Well all I, you know it's called "Shadows", so therefore it was about a metaphorical Shadow or literally a shadow passing in front of the window or the door. And that was.....That symbolised the danger, the fear, what everyone was afraid of and so what I had at one point is, at several points, is the lights being obscured for a moment that someone has passed in front of a light.

**<Sharon Watson, Artistic Director>**

How do you want the audience to feel when watching this dance?

**<Christopher Bruce CBE, Choreographer>**

I just want the audience to feel engaged, taken into my world. You know I grew up in my dancing years from when I was training at Rambert and my early years in the Rambert Company watching the Rep of Tudor, Ashton, Wally Gore. Particularly Wally Gore and Tudor they really created a world with characters you became engaged with, engrossed with, you really cared about what was happening on the stage. So for a moment, for however long the ballet lasted, you were in their world. I think I am very influenced by that era of work that it's in a sense pictorial, it tells tales, it tells stories, I just I'm not, the stories I tell, as I've said earlier can be interpreted, and more..... There's more space there for the audience. But I try to create a world for the audience to become engaged in and I just want their attention. The way they interpret it is entirely up to them but I want them to be engaged. It's very important to me if I choose a piece of music and I work to that music that my work is musical. And that you could have choreographed entirely different movement to that music and still made it work but whatever, I do I want it to be musical..... not just in the rhythms but the spirit of what the music seems to be telling us. So musicality on the part of the dancers is very important. I have to be musical in the way I phrase the choreography but the dancers must be sensitive to it. And for me, I think, making a piece is always a magical mystery tour, I never know quite where I'm going.....I might have a rough idea of the structure, sometimes more than others, but sometimes I am just following a path and seeing where it leads me. But whatever, I do to a piece of music it must be faithful to the music.