

SHADOWS

By Christopher Bruce CBE



SHADOWS: OVERVIEW

Christopher Bruce's works are often 'politically aware' – in reference to past or current political events happening around the world, exploring their effect on human life.

In *Shadows*, Bruce invites the audience into the world of a small family, possibly set in Eastern Europe, who are coming to terms with the deprivation, poverty and the realities of what lies outside their intimate home.

The piece, set to Arvo Part's *Fratres* for piano and violin, examines the relationships between son, daughter, mother and father as they deal with an unseen but ever-present outside force.



SHADOWS: FACTFILE

Company: Phoenix Dance Theatre
Choreographer: Christopher Bruce, CBE
Duration: 12 mins
Date of Premier: November 2014, Royal Opera House, London
Dancers: 4 (2 men, 2 women)
Composer/Music: Arvo Part - Fratres for violin and piano (1980 version)
Costume: Christopher Bruce, CBE
Set Design: Christopher Bruce, CBE
Lighting: John B Read
Stimulus: Arvo Part's Fratres for violin and piano
Structure: Semi-narrative, including use of solo, duet, trio, quartet
Themes: Family relationships, fear, frustration & support

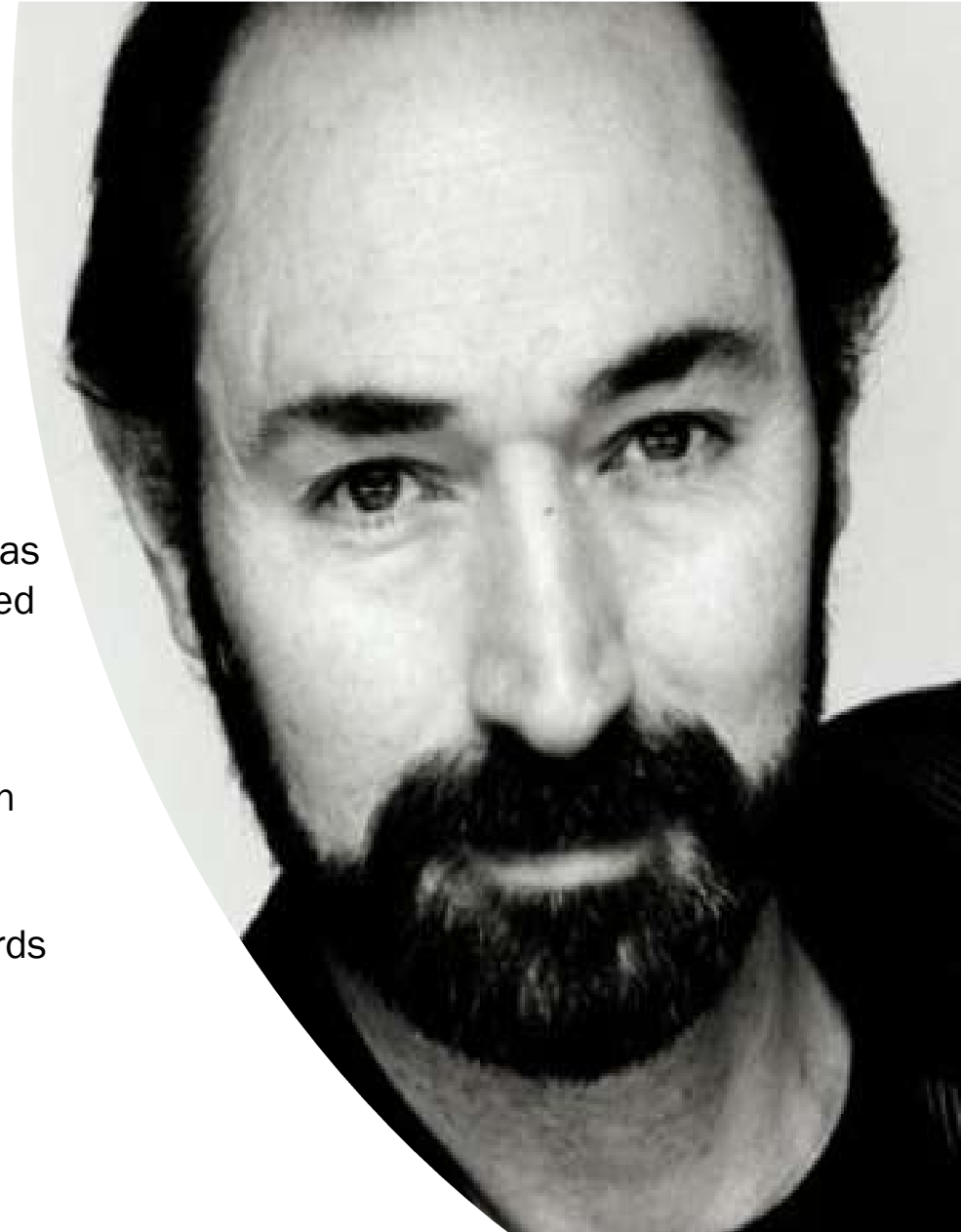


BIOGRAPHY:

CHRISTOPHER BRUCE, CBE (1945)

**CHOREOGRAPHER, SET DESIGNER
& COSTUME DESIGNER**

One of Britain's leading choreographers with an international reputation, Christopher Bruce trained at the Ballet Rambert School before joining company Ballet Rambert in 1963. He was acclaimed as one of the most gifted performers of his generation and is recognised as the last major choreographer to have been nurtured by Marie Rambert. In addition to performing and choreographing, Bruce was Associate Director of Ballet Rambert from 1975-1979, becoming Associate Choreographer in 1980 and then Artistic Director between 1994-2002. Among his best-known works are *Cruel Garden* (1977), *Ghost Dances* (1981), *Swansong* (1987) and *Rooster* (1991). Christopher Bruce was awarded a CBE in 1998; other previous awards include: International Theatre Institute Award for Excellence in International Dance (1993), De Valois Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dance (2003), and an Honorary Life Membership of Amnesty International (2002) in recognition of his achievements in the field of dance and human rights.



BIOGRAPHY:

JOHN B READ

LIGHTING DESIGNER

John B Read was consultant lighting designer to the Royal Opera, the Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet from 1992 to 2005. He is largely responsible for establishing lighting as an integral part of dance presentation. He has worked with major choreographers worldwide, notably Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, Anthony Tudor, Glen Tetley, Jerome Robbins, Rudolf Nureyev and Christopher Bruce. Works for the Royal Ballet include Swan Lake, Nutcracker, The Snow Queen, Anastasia and Frankenstein.

He has also lit contemporary dance for Rambert Dance Company, London Contemporary Dance Theatre, and Scottish Ballet and the West End.



BIOGRAPHY
AVRO PART
COMPOSER



Arvo Pärt was born in 1935 in Estonia. He worked from 1958 to 1967 as a sound engineer for Estonian Radio. In 1980 he emigrated with his family to Vienna and then, one year later, travelled on a DAAD scholarship to Berlin.

Pärt's work has passed through an evolutionary process. His first creative period began in 1958 with neo-classical piano music. Then followed ten years in which he made his own individual use of the most important compositional techniques of the avant-garde: dodecaphony, composition with sound masses, collage technique. After an eight year break from composition in which he studied Gregorian Chant and classical vocal polyphony, Pärt released *Für Alina* in 1976. The new compositional principle used here for the first time, which he called tintinnabuli (Latin for 'little bells'), has defined his work right up to today and can be heard in his piece *Fratres*, the stimulus for *Shadows* choreographed by Christopher Bruce.



Stimulus

- Avro Part's Fratres for violin and piano
- The relationship between family members as they deal with the fear of an outside force (the door)

Choreographic Intention

- A small family, possibly European, facing deprivation and the fear of what lies outside of their home
- In an interview with Bruce, he stated that the Holocaust could be linked to the work, with the family waiting to be taken to a concentration camp. However, this is left up to the interpretation of the audience.



Choreographic approach

- **Collaboration with dancers**

Bruce did not prepare movement before entering the studio. He preferred to wait and work with the dancers so that he can be influenced by them. For Bruce, as well as being appropriate for the piece, the movement must also sit well on the dancers.

- **Furniture**

He started *Shadows* with the idea of a family unit sitting a dinner table and knew that the furniture (table, bench and stools) would become, and significant part of the choreography opposed to being a static set.

- **Accompaniment**

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.





Dance Style

Stemming from his own training, Christopher Bruce's signature movement style is grounded in **Modern Dance** with a combination of **Classical** and **Contemporary** technique.

Bruce's words...

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 suppose, for the most part, all my work comes from a Modern Dance base but I guess I form a neo-classical language. A language that also has the ability to express the themes that I'm trying to get across.

Costume

Mother: floral 1940's tea dress, pink flowers, short puffed sleeves, calf length flared skirt, fitted waist, hair in bun



Father: collarless cotton white shirt with faint stripes, rolled up sleeves, grey trousers, brown waistcoat



Son: collarless white shirt, untucked, buttons undone at top, rolled up sleeves, grey trousers.

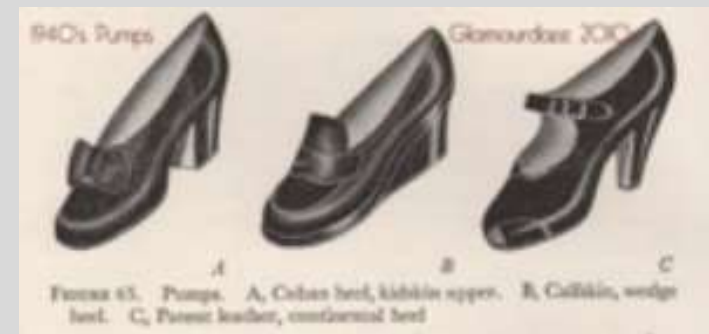


Daughter: delicate pastel cotton blouse, puffed short sleeves, pleated front, grey below the knee A line skirt, hair in ponytail



SHADOWS: COSTUME

- Christopher Bruce had clear vision of what was required in the costume design to truly **reflect the era** in which he had set the work.
- The costumes are **clearly gendered**, depicting the era of Eastern Europe in 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, worn-down, **symbolising deprivation**.
- Similar items to those worn in 1930s-40s were sourced and tailored to fit the dancers e.g. floral dresses and blouses with a centre feature; with additional embroidery or ruffles on the front panel. The mother's dress was selected not only due to the era but it was integral that it appeared softer and maternal in appearance to **assist the role portrayal**. Contrastingly to the daughter's costume having 'school like' garments (grey skirt and blouse) to directly correlate to her age.
- Towards the end of the work the dancers put on shoes and coats, all of which match the era the piece is set in. The coats for the son/daughter were particularly oversized proving the **reminder that the family are living in hardship**.



SHADOWS: LIGHTING



VIDEO
LINKS!



John B Read uses a subtle approach to create an intimate space 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.

Within the piece there are twenty-three different lighting states many of which the audience are unaware of. These subtle lighting changes assist in creating a dark and fearful atmosphere, with the majority of the work being lit through use of side lights. There are, on occasion, distinctive lighting states which enforce the emotional distress displayed by the dancers in particular the son during his solo.

During the opening moments of the piece the dancers all look anxiously towards the stage right, symbolising the uncertainty that awaits them. As their focus returns back towards each other around the table, the lighting state clearly adjusts, almost as though something/one outside has just passed in front of a door / window causing a shadow. This invites the audience to believe that something is waiting for the family outside the safety of the home.

The lighting design assists in shifting the audience's attention. There is either a focus on the family unit at the table, the rest of the stage is dimly lit (with the use of side lights) which adjusts accordingly as solo and duets break away; or there are obvious lighting cues ensuring the audience understand the level of fear that the family are living in. These contrasting lighting states are used to enforce the emotional distress displayed by the dancers particularly during the son's solo, a corridor like affect is created as he moves back and forth shifting the furniture across the stage.

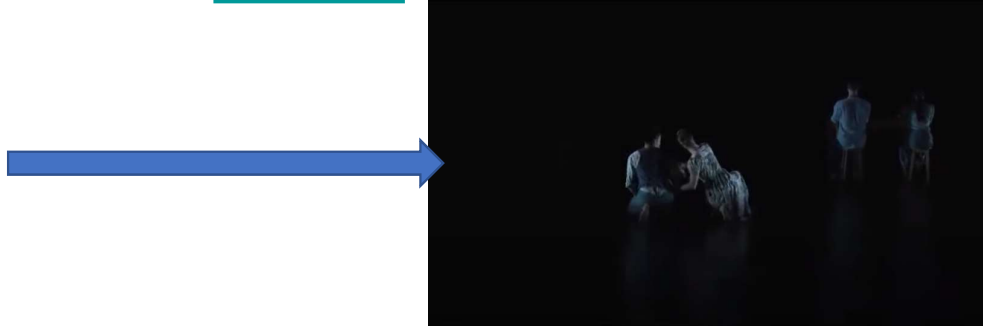
Towards the end of the piece, the dancers move away from the table to dress into the overcoats and shoes when the use of an overhead lamp is paramount as the dancers make their way into the light as the piece is drawn to a close. It then draws to black out.

Types of lighting

- Type of light: square wash When do we see this? on the table at the start



- Type of light: sidelight When do we see this? throughout



- Type of light: shaft of light from DSR When do we see this? Son's Solo

SHADOWS: SET & PROPS

Shadows use a minimal set within a black-box theatre setting. The piece includes a table, a bench, two stools, a coat stand and suitcases all of which are worn looking; indicative of a family living in hardship.

Bruce uses the props throughout the work, the family begin the piece around the table inviting the audience into the heart of the family home; the kitchen.

There are clear moments within the piece when the use of props is prominent for example within the son's solo. He uses the table to become a barrier and a place to hide behind in order to feel safe.

Within the choreography the use of props is paramount to the piece, enhancing the engagement of the audience and assisting in the narrative element. The dancers move the props with fluidity, the handling of them is as intrinsic to the piece as the physicality of the dancers.

To conclude the piece the family move away from the table, bench and stools. Preparing to leave the family home they put on shoes and coats. The outer garments for the son/daughter are clearly oversized, again reflecting that the family are living in poverty. The characters also collect suitcases and bags, informing the audience that they are about to embark on a journey /or are prepared to be away from the family home for quite some time.

[VIDEO LINK!](#)



SHADOWS: MUSIC

The music is in a minor key and is integral to the dark, solemn atmosphere of the piece. Bruce uses key components of the musical structure to correlate with the physical choreography.

There is a clear relationship 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.

Example A – Daughter solo (0:30 – 1:34)

Music and movement are both frantic. The daughter's character is extremely anxious with fast steps to violin.

Example B – Mother, Father, Daughter Trio (1:40 – 3:05)

In complete contrast to the daughter's solo the music for this trio is soft and slow, allowing Bruce to portray the family comforting each other. The softer tones are led by the piano with the violin shimmering in deep tremolo textures or in contrast with high pitched harmonics before returning to chords on the piano whilst the violin gently plucks at the strings.



Example C – Son Solo (6.22 – 7.39)

This is the real climax within the musical score and this is reflected through the movement. The audience can tell the son is clearly distressed through his thumping fists and usage of the props. The music suddenly changes to chord like sounds, adding to the heightened emotion within this section.

Example D – Ending

The ending is much quieter and slower, the whole dance finishing on the low piano notes.

WHY?

SHADOWS:

STRUCTURE:

Semi-narrative



- Intro + 8 sections
- Opening/ Intro
- Daughter's solo
- Mother, father, daughter trio
- Father/ mother duet
- Mother solo
- Son solo
- Father/ son duet
- Quartet
- Final section