



## Rambert Dance Company 1966 – 2002

Study pack for teachers of AQA AS/A Level Dance

Study pack to support the teaching of

**AQA AS/A level Dance**

Component 2: Critical Engagement

Compulsory area of study:

**Rambert Dance Company  
(formerly Ballet Rambert)  
from 1966 - 2002**

This guide has been produced by Rambert, in consultation with AQA, to support the teaching of AS/A level Dance and the compulsory area of study Rambert Dance Company from 1966 - 2002. It includes historical context, and details of 16 key works by the named practitioners from this period in Rambert's history: Glen Tetley, Ashley Page, Christopher Bruce, Robert North, Richard Alston and Siobhan Davies. There are also suggestions for further discussion, essay questions and lesson activities.

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## Works selected from 1966-2002

This guide concentrates on a selection of 16 works created by the six practitioners named in the AQA specification - a small selection of the hundreds of works produced by Rambert between 1966 and 2002.

Full, up-to-date lists of all Rambert's works, organised chronologically or alphabetically by title, are available on our website. See [www.rambert.org.uk/about-us/our-history](http://www.rambert.org.uk/about-us/our-history).

Rambert's archive is open by appointment for teachers, students, researchers and the public. To arrange a visit email [info@rambert.org.uk](mailto:info@rambert.org.uk) or call 020 8630 0600.

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<b>Practitioner</b>	<b>Work</b> (original Rambert creations except where stated)
<b>Glen Tetley</b>	<i>Pierrot Lunaire</i> 1962, Rambert premiere 1967 <i>Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain</i> 1968 <i>The Tempest</i> 1979
<b>Ashley Page</b>	<i>Currulao</i> 1990 <i>Soldat</i> 1988
<b>Christopher Bruce</b>	<i>Sergeant Early's Dream</i> 1984 <i>Hurricane</i> 2001 (Note: the 2018 A-level Dance specification also requires the study of <i>Rooster</i> by Christopher Bruce in addition to the compulsory area of study: Rambert Dance Company 1966-2002, please see the <a href="#">'Rooster' Education pack</a> for further support)
<b>Robert North</b>	<i>Pribaoutki</i> 1982 <i>Death and the Maiden</i> 1980, Rambert premiere 1984 <i>Lonely Town, Lonely Street</i> 1981
<b>Richard Alston</b>	<i>Wildlife</i> 1984 (originally with Nigel Osborne music) <i>Pulcinella</i> 1987 <i>Soda Lake</i> 1986, Rambert premiered 1986
<b>Siobhan Davies</b>	<i>Winnsboro' Cotton Mill Blues</i> 1992 <i>Embarque</i> 1988 <i>Plainsong</i> 1991, Rambert premiere 1991

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# SECTION 1

## Pre 1966 – the historical context

Rambert is Britain's oldest dance company. It was formally established in 1926 by Marie Rambert, who was born in Warsaw, Poland in 1888.

Rambert was inspired to dance when she saw a performance by Isadora Duncan in 1904 in Poland. Although her parents wished her to take up medicine, she began to study dance in Paris (initially with Isadora Duncan's brother, Raymond), while waiting to take up her Medical Studies. She spent three years studying eurhythmics with Emile Jacques-Dalcroze. In 1912, she was invited by Sergei Diaghilev to assist Vaslav Nijinsky and his dancers with the complex rhythms of Stravinsky's music for 'Le Sacre du Printemps' (The Rite of Spring). It was during this time that she acquired her love of classical ballet. She worked with the Ballets Russes for a season (1912-14) and left when Nijinsky was dismissed.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Rambert moved to London. When she arrived in London she supported herself by giving tuition in dance and eurhythmics. At the same time she continued with her own ballet studies, as well as performing as a soloist. She married the English playwright Ashley Dukes in 1918. Two years later, she opened a school of dancing in Bedford Gardens, Kensington. Marie Rambert invited Fredrick Ashton to train with her in 1923 and she was ready to perform with her dancers in Ashton's first work 'A Tragedy of Fashion' in 1926. This ballet was received well by the public, but less of with the press. In an interview for the BBC in 1976, Marie Rambert said the press had commented: "what a pity dramatic authors have wives who meddle in ballet." Rambert continued "The dramatic author was my husband Ashley Dukes, well, I meddled in ballet not because of him but because of my passion for dancing and choreography, neither of which I really could do myself, but I got it out of people."

From the 1920s to the 1940s, the company emerged from Marie Rambert's 'Ballet Club' performing regularly on Sundays at the Mercury Theatre in London's Notting Hill, to become a full time touring company. The first performances as Ballet Rambert were in 1935. Its popularity meant it outgrew the tiny Mercury Theatre and from 1946 London performances were often at Sadler's Wells Theatre.

During World War II, the company appeared in a range of venues including factory canteens as well as theatres, and in this way made its own contribution to the war effort. The change in its performance activities during and immediately after the War resulted in a new audience. The small but knowledgeable audience of the Ballet Club was replaced by a more general audience whose tastes were less adventurous than those of the company's earlier supporters. Post-war audiences began to expect longer ballets in addition to the traditional mixed bills of new works. Ballet Rambert performed several classics, including variations of the well-known 'Giselle' (1945- 1965), 'Coppelia' (1956-7) and the first major British productions of 'La Sylphide' (1960) and 'Don Quixote' (1962).

Extensive touring for up to 35 weeks a year meant there was less time to create new works and there was no notable choreographer working with the company at this time.

This would change in 1958, when Norman Morrice became Resident Choreographer and created his first work 'Two Brothers'. The work heralded a cautious return to the innovative policies which had previously been the hallmark of Ballet Rambert. 'Two Brothers' was performed in modern dress and dealt with a contemporary theme while using a traditional ballet vocabulary.

Morrice worked with Ralph Koltai, who was Head of Theatre Design at Central School of Art and Design (now, Central Saint Martin's School of Art). It was Morrice's artistic directorship that was to bring together design and dance to the forefront for the company, a principle that is developed by the company during the years 1966-2002.



'Two Brothers' (1958)  
Dancers: Shirley Dixon, Caroline Fey, John O'Brien, June Sandbrook, Kenneth Bannerman,  
Norman Morrice and Gillian Martlew Photography: BBC Television Production

Norman Morrice, encouraged by Marie Rambert, travelled to America in 1962 on a Ford Foundation Grant in order to see the new developments in dance and to study with some of the major choreographers of the time, including Martha Graham. At this time it had become apparent that Ballet Rambert could no longer afford the expense of touring large-scale classical productions and that, if it was to survive, a change of direction was needed.

Following his visit to America, Morrice encouraged Marie Rambert to return to the company's original ethos of creating new work. The Company transformed from a classical touring company to a smaller ensemble of sixteen to twenty dancers, a

production manager and a wardrobe mistress, and an aim to create new works, as well as preserving the best of their previous works.

In 1966, Morrice was appointed Associate Artistic Director of the new company which comprised eighteen dancers. The dancers in the new company were trained in both classical and contemporary (Graham-based) dance techniques. Each dancer was considered equal in status. No individual held the position of Principal Dancer and they became soloists in their own right. This was a significant change from the traditional structure of a ballet company.

In May 1966, Marie Rambert, Norman Morrice and administrator Frederick Bromwich created three proposed aims for the company:

1. To encourage the production of new works by both new and established choreographers
2. To preserve as far as possible the master-works which constitute the Ballet Rambert's artistic heritage
3. To give regular seasons in London and to tour selected dates in the provinces and abroad.

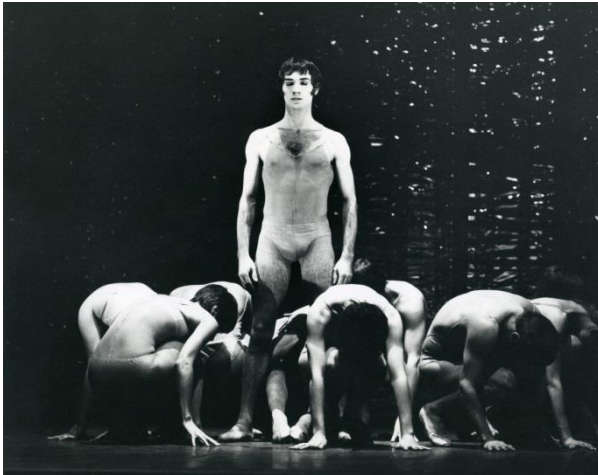
From the minutes of the Board meeting on 4 May 1966, Dame Marie Rambert (she had been given the title in 1962) was asked by the Chairman of the Mercury Theatre Trust, Mr Orde, what her views were for the future. She said: "We should create a smaller Company producing new choreographies and ballets and tour festivals in the country and abroad, and also longer seasons in London at a small theatre."

At a special meeting of the Mercury Theatre Trust on 29 June 1966, Marie Rambert said "it is young and eager people interested in team work and interested in what we are doing that mattered, not 'stars'." In October of that year, the Board unanimously passed the motion to retain the title of Ballet Rambert for the company.

Once the company's policies and practices were established, the pattern was set for the next twenty years. Ever since 1966 the company has alternated daily classes in contemporary and classical ballet technique. Rambert's first contemporary dance teacher, Anna Price, had been one of the British students sponsored by Robin Howard to study with Martha Graham.

Morrice created works including 'That is the Show' (1971) which featured a white box set designed by Nadine Baylis featuring different colour lines, and '1-2-3' (1968) and 'Blind-Sight' (1969), also with designs by Nadine Baylis. Morrice was keen to push the links of design and dance closer together and in 1977 created 'Smiling Immortal'.





'Blind-Sight' (1969)  
Dancer: Christopher Bruce  
Photography: Anthony Crickmay



'Smiling Immortal' (1977)  
Dancers: Lucy Burge, Zoltan Imre and John Chesworth  
Photography: Alan Cunliffe

During this time, Morrice brought in several American choreographers to make works for the company, including Anna Sokolow and Glen Tetley. Tetley, who came over in 1967, proved very popular with the audiences and therefore the company held 'The Tetley season' in 1967, which was a celebrated season of his works including 'Freefall' and 'Ziggurat', which increased the publicity for the company at the time, as they made their mark in their new direction.

As the company developed in the late 1960s, regular choreographic workshops were also held for the dancers, and Christopher Bruce began to emerge from as a talented choreographer. During the first few years of Ballet Rambert's new incarnation from 1966 onwards, the company also retained several pieces from its earlier repertoire. Among these were four of Antony Tudor's works, including 'Dark Elegies' (Rambert version 1937); and also Nijinsky's 'L'Après-midi d'une Faune', a re-presentation for Ballet Rambert in 1931. This provides further evidence that the company were remaining true to the aims as set out by Rambert, Morrice and Bromwich, as they move the company forward into contemporary dance but yet retaining 'master' works.

In 1974, Morrice resigned as Artistic Director to become a freelance choreographer, and was subsequently appointed Artistic Director at the Royal Ballet in 1977.

From 1974 until 1980, John Chesworth continued Morrice's policies with the promotion of new work from company members and the expansion of the repertoire through guest choreographers such as Jaap Flier, Cliff Keuter and Siobhan Davies. He was also instrumental in developing Rambert's educational activities as he supported outreach work in schools with his Young Friends programme. After his time at Rambert, Chesworth set up the National Youth Dance Company which he led from 1985 to 2003, the year in which he was appointed OBE for Services to Dance.



In the late 1970s and 1980s, the repertoire of Ballet Rambert focused on the work of three choreographers: Robert North, Christopher Bruce and Richard Alston, who each played a huge part in the development of the company. From 1975 to the early 1990s, there were links between Ballet Rambert and London Contemporary Dance Theatre through Robert North and Richard Alston. Guest choreographers such as Siobhan Davies were invited to work with the company.

Christopher Bruce became Associate Director in 1975 and then Associate Choreographer in 1980, as he became the next home grown talent to emerge as a choreographer.

Robert North directed the company from 1981 to 1986 and was keen to develop the physicality, musicality and dramatic quality of the dancers.

Alston became Resident Choreographer in 1980 and Artistic Director in 1986, consolidating the Cunningham influence. The name of the company was changed to Rambert Dance Company in 1987. Alston left Rambert at the end of 1992. His successor was Christopher Bruce, who, because of his long and fruitful association with the company, was uniquely qualified to take on the role of Artistic Director.

Bruce served as Artistic Director until 2002 and continued its development with the inclusion of a range of techniques, new works, guest choreographers and a repertoire of neo-classical and modern works.

## SECTION 2

### Named practitioners in the area of study

#### 2.1 Glen Tetley

Glen Tetley was born on 3 February 1926 in Cleveland, Ohio and died aged 80, on 26 January 2007. He began dancing late and went to New York University to study medicine and to train to be a doctor. He was inspired by seeing American Ballet Theatre perform in 1945. He was offered a scholarship from Hanya Holm and lived in her studio and cleaned it for rent. He stayed with her for five years and became her assistant whilst training to be a dancer.

He was a dancer with New York City Ballet (1951-54) and Robert Joffrey's first Ballet Company (1955-56). He joined Martha Graham's Company from 1957 to 1959 and said of her: "[Graham] taught me to re-examine everything – not intellectually but emotionally. She incredibly enriched the way I feel about movement, about theatre." He also danced with Jose Limon, American Ballet Theatre and Jerome Robbins' company, Ballets: USA and then decided to embark on a choreographic career. In 1962, he made his debut as a choreographer with his own company, presenting 'Pierrot Lunaire' in their first programme of works.

Later in 1962, he joined Nederlands Dans Theater as a guest choreographer and dancer, and from there he was made Co-Artistic Director in 1969. He held the position of Director of Stuttgart Ballet from 1974-1979. Tetley was hugely successful in awakening British audiences to modern dance works, not least in the Rambert's landmark 'The Tetley Season' in 1967.

#### Pierrot Lunaire by Glen Tetley

*"Pierrot in the Commedia was called the poet of acrobatics. In our century with the music of Schoenberg, Pierrot becomes the inner man. As opposed to Stravinsky's Petrushka who is objective, muscular and extrovert, Pierrot Lunaire is a dreamer and a poet, a wistful and human clown, prey to moods that swing swiftly from ecstasy to hysteria, ever the victim of the conflict between the Real and the Ideal." Glen Tetley (1967)*

'Pierrot Lunaire' was first performed by Ballet Rambert at the Richmond Theatre, Richmond, Surrey on 26 January 26 1967. Set to Arnold Schoenberg's *sprechgesang* (pitched speech) score of twenty one surrealist poems by Albert Giraud sung in German, it featured Tetley himself as Pierrot. It opens with Pierrot swinging from scaffolding in a stark set, which comprises of the scaffolding placed upstage centre.

The first solo contains several images of Pierrot catching moonbeams, directly references the first two Giraud poems and introduces us to Pierrot's character. His opening motif consists of a series of opening and closing, contracting and extending, whole body movements; reaching gestures of the arms, distorted rond de jambes en l'air and small gestures of the hand and lower arm, including a zig-zag gesture of the hand. Variations of the sequence and motifs recur throughout the piece.

The Commedia dell arte influence is immediately evident, not solely through the costume and white face but through the movement content. The movements based on the characteristics of Pierrot (traditionally a Zanni character from Commedia, the comic servant) can be seen as he dismantles the scaffolding and

performs a solo close to the ground with many squatting and crouching movements interspersed with travelling towards or away from the tower in his own world. He doesn't notice Columbine travel across the stage. Many of the gestures are childlike and playful, such as tickling and giggling which can be seen in the movement material.

In the poems, Pierrot and his companions, Brighella (a comic servant) and Columbine (the eternal woman – she is depicted in this work as the innocent girl, the soubrette, the mother and the whore) are shown in a series of situations ranging from the comic to the tragic. Some of the themes from the poems materialise in the choreography, such as the washing line and has a direct reference to the poem; others however are not directly followed in this way.

The dance is a series of solos, duets and trios each of which acts as an introduction to the characteristics or depicts one of the situations they find themselves in. Tetley draws upon the influences of ballet, Graham-based contemporary dance and mime, such as that shown by mime artist Marcel Marceau. The narrative depicts the relationship between the trio, how the conflict and resolution in the relationships is shown. Brighella and Columbine perform a duet in which they flaunt Columbine's sexuality to Pierrot the innocent, yet Brighella then insinuates his own relationship with Columbine and excludes Pierrot. The movement in this duet has an exaggerated sexual quality. The piece leads to the de-robing of Pierrot by Brighella and Brighella then dresses as Pierrot, and chases after Columbine. The piece ends with a solo from Pierrot whose qualities in the movement now reflect his experiences; he is less innocent and more resigned. He ends hanging in the same position he did at the beginning but this time, hanging from Brighella and Columbine's shoulders, not the scaffolding.



'Pierrot Lunaire' (1967)  
Dancer: Christopher Bruce  
Photography: Anthony Crickmay

Costumes comprise of traditional Commedia dress, Pierrot in calf length white trousers, white tights and white jacket and white hat and face. Brighella is costumed in green knitted woollen overalls and Columbine in a white see through hooped dress, a scarlet dress and a silver grey cloak. Props used are a washing line, a sword and puppet strings. Collaboration with designers became more significant for the company with design by Rouben Ter-Arutunian, music by Arnold Schoenberg and lighting by John B Read.

Tetley presented 'Pierrot Lunaire' (created for his own Company in 1962) and 'Ricerca' (originally created for American Ballet Theatre in 1966, Ballet Rambert performed 'Ricerca' in 1967) on the 'new' Ballet Rambert and went on to choreograph other new works for the company, including 'Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain' (1968) and 'Ziggurat' (1967).

He introduced the change in movement style to the company, and challenged the expectations of the audience, and this was extremely well received. His vocabulary was expressive and drew on a number of styles to create his narrative. This expressive style launched Christopher Bruce as a standout performer in the role of Pierrot. The impact of this work on Bruce can be seen in his works such as 'Cruel Garden' (1977) and 'Night with Waning Moon' (1979).

## **Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain by Glen Tetley**

'Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain' was created for Rambert and premiered on 21 November 1968 and has since been reworked by the Company in 1978 and 1989. It gained great acclaim in 1990 during a season at Sadler's Wells. The composer was Morton Subotnick, with designs by Nadine Baylis, and lighting by John B Read.

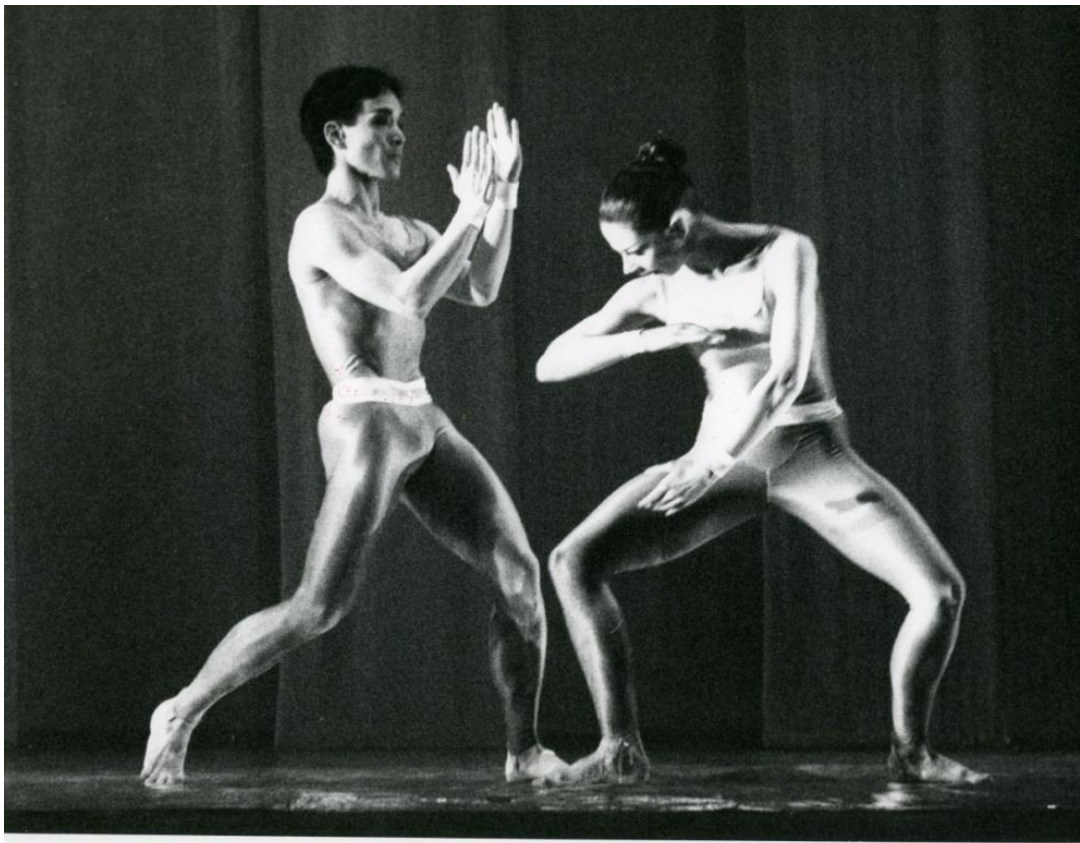
The music begins with electronic sounds which whistle and vary in tone to create an unfamiliar environment for the audience. The electronic score by Subotnik has been described as crystalline, much of it is slow and this is reflected in the mysterious, adagio quality of the choreography.

The work is performed on an almost empty stage with a silver floor which, of course, reflects the light and gives atmosphere to the space. The back of the stage is hung with stripes of silk fabric through which the dancers make their initial and some subsequent entrances and exits. The costumes, body tights originally in day-glo colours (a pink, orange and yellow mix) but later more predominantly orange, all give a flame-like impression and reflect the fashion at the time. This was one of the first times these colours were seen on stage.

It is a work for ten dancers: five male and five female. It was the second work created by Tetley for Rambert and the fifth work by him to enter the Company's repertoire. It was subsequently performed by other companies, including NDT and the Swedish Royal Ballet.

Starting in silence, a single dancer enters from centre upstage and walks slowly downstage, out of the backdrop emerge a further two dancers, until the stage is filled with ten dancers. Each dancer, wearing plain leotards and minimal costume tied around their waists and wrist and ankles, degages to the stage right and stand in second parallel, raising their arms above their head. This powerful image builds the atmosphere for the piece, which takes as its starting point from T'ai Chi.

The original programme states: "In the sixth century the Chinese developed a system of shadow boxing known as T'ai Chi. Its thirty-seven movements, of which 'Embrace Tiger and Return To Mountain' is the seventeenth, are non-aggressive and are attempted by a concentration of stillness and centred balance to offset the opponent" .



'Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain' (1978)  
Dancers: Michael Ho and Sally Owen  
Photography: Malcom Hoare

The movement and staging is reflective of T'ai Chi, with slow arm and leg gestures within the Dancers' personal space, and many dancers then filling the stage, equally spaced as seen in the traditional practice. The dancers perform in canon, lunges, developed from those typically seen within T'ai Chi and arm reaches until the dancers, through accumulation, all in their own time, return to come together to all hold a deep second plie. At the end of this section, the dancers start to move upstage then run around and off leaving the smallest dancer on a darkened stage for a solo. This is a combination of runs, turns and plies and then she is joined by a man for a duet incorporating supported turns and lifts. Although this is a 'pas de deux,' and has a classical feel, this duet contains

angular gestures and ends with the dancers grounded to the floor as the male dancer leaves. Throughout the work there is an emphasis on positions which are precise and clear but not static. The movements all relate to the T'ai Chi vocabulary but at times, there are classical references broken by angularity and a sense of weight. It is undoubtedly an impressive ballet, which marries western classical, contemporary and oriental movements.

## **The Tempest by Glen Tetley**

The Tempest (1979) was premiered at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London on 3 May 1979 and featured Christopher Bruce as Prospero. 'The Tempest' was Tetley's only full length work created for Rambert, who said: "I chose The Tempest because of its compelling mythic structure. The Tempest breathes music and movement".

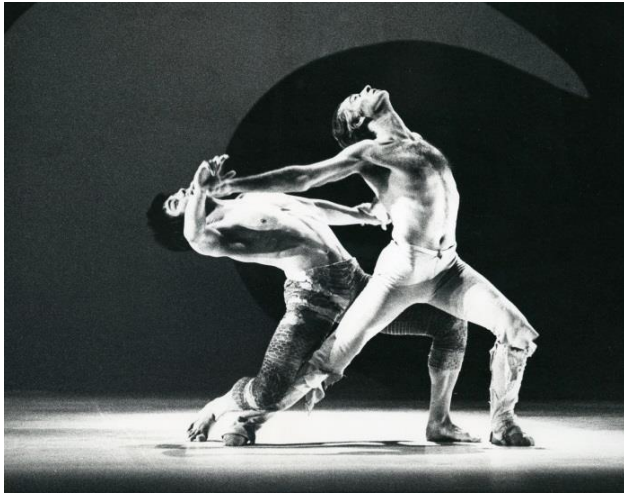
Tetley felt a personal connection with the themes within 'The Tempest' as he embarked on a voyage for his work to Europe, but returned to Rambert in 1979 to work on this masterpiece, which was to be one of the most important and prestigious developments in modern dance and for Ballet Rambert.

The design and sound score were forefront in the creation of 'The Tempest'. Tetley collaborated with Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim, designer Nadine Baylis and lighting was by John B Read. The latter two designers had already established reputations with Rambert and their design work contributed to the image of Rambert. Nordheim had also previously worked with Tetley on numerous occasions.

This team created the critically acclaimed production which included a striking white set designed by Baylis which highlights and provides contrasts with the colourful costumes. The set of a complex mesh of snail shaped gauzes are transformed by projections; her colourful costumes are made from a thousand yards of silk. Arne Nordheim's especially commissioned score for thirty musicians, voice and electronic tape created a fascinating, eclectic and atmospheric sound environment. The music was distinctly contemporary, full of noises, the most exotic rhythmic character alternating with passages of voice but matching the magic of Shakespeare's island.

Tetley's choreography was equally inspired by the tale and was received by the press as "intelligent, ingenious and beautiful" (The Observer). He explored elements of Oriental theatre, Kabuki demons and Chinese acrobats. Examples of the movement content include Ariel with material, in travelling phrases with contraction and release, in a formation of a line followed by dancers. There are animalistic floor sequences set as the dancers crawl across the floor, into the big arch wave symbolic of the island.

*"The choreography is not a literal translation of the play but a series of dance poems on episodes from it the choreographic style having a blend of both classical and modern dance elements which made Tetley so distinctive".* Noel Goodwin



'The Tempest' (1979)  
Dancers: Christopher Bruce and Thomas Yang  
Photography: Anthony Crickmay



'Embrace Tiger and Return to Mountain' (1978)  
Dancers: Lucy Burge and Zoltan Imre  
Photography: Alan Cunliffe



'Pierrot Lunaire' (1985 Revival)  
Dancer: Mark Baldwin and Albert van Nierop  
Photography: Catherine Ashmore



## 2.2 Ashley Page

Ashley Page was born in Rochester, Kent in 1956 and trained at the Royal Ballet School. He became a professional dancer with the Royal Ballet in 1976. During his early years in the company, he worked closely with Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan as well as working with visiting choreographers such as Glen Tetley. Importantly, Richard Alston became a mentor for him during his development as a choreographer, in the late 1970s and 1980s. His breakthrough as a choreographer came in 1982, when he won the Frederick Ashton Choreographic Award for young choreographers.

In 1984, he was promoted to Principal Dancer and in the same year, he choreographed 'A Set of Broken Rules' for the Royal Ballet. The title of this work could be argued to reflect Page's approach to his choreography. He went on to create a number of works in collaboration with Gaby Agis for Dance Umbrella in 1984 and 1985. Page continued to develop his choreographic style alongside his dancing career, creating 17 Ballets for the Royal Ballet as well as being commissioned by Rambert Dance Company and Dutch National Ballet among others.

Page became known for his often daring collaborations with visual artists and contemporary composers, and for his interest and approach to choreography in finding new contexts for dance.

### **Currulao by Ashley Page**

'Currulao' was premiered on 9 February 1990. It was one of the first works to be funded by the Frederick Ashton Memorial Commission in association with The Daily Telegraph and was Page's third work for Rambert. 'Currulao' is a Colombian courtship dance of mixed Spanish and African origin. Page collaborated with composer Orlando Gough, fashion designer John Galiano, who designed the costumes, and lighting designer by Peter Mumford

Page was set out a brief by Richard Alston, the Artistic Director of Rambert at the time. Alston wanted a dance for a mixed programme that would be energetic, fun to perform and exhilarating, which would send the audience away happy. What Page created was a thirty-five minute work which he likened to Rio "on a hot and steamy night, with extreme poverty and extreme wealth – one foot in the gutter the other in a Rolls Royce." The nine dancers move through various couplings and groupings, which can be described as erotic, promiscuous, sullen, strutting and always suggestive of immense energy under control.

The Latin rhythms created by Orlando Gough (Page had previously collaborated with Gough on a dance piece for television) reflected as Page wished the recognisable urban, sharp, shocking, dissonant relentlessly driving rhythms of Brazil.

The collaboration with Galliano came about as Page had seen a fashion show by the emerging designer. Page connected with Galliano's Latin infused designs and approached him to design for 'Currulao'. The costumes consisted of zebra-striped tunics, black body tights with scarlet trim and included shoes. Page was aware that the shoes were an important part of Galliano's design, and made as much use of them as possible (Galliano making changes to the soles and heels). There was intense interest in the collaboration with Ashley Page and John Galliano during the months leading up to the premiere.



'Currulao' (1990)

Dancers: Jeremy James, Steven Brett, Lucy Bethune, Elizabeth Old,  
Glenn Wilkinson, Mark Baldwin and Cathy Quinn  
Photography: Catherine Ashmore

Page started with the Latin American forms of dance in rehearsals and fragmented them, adding his own classical ballet and contemporary dance phrases. There are fingerprints of capoeira as the three male dancers perform leg sweeps. The movement content consists of rapid succession of exits and entrances with dancers in ever changing combinations. The two leading duos in the piece were originally premiered with Catherine Quinn and Mark Baldwin, who performed the staccato tango-based sequences, and Gary Lambert and Amanda Britton in gymnastic sequences. The couplings change as the piece progresses and Baldwin as the 'Matador' wins over Britton's aloof character which culminates in a long, languid duet where they drag each other across the stage.

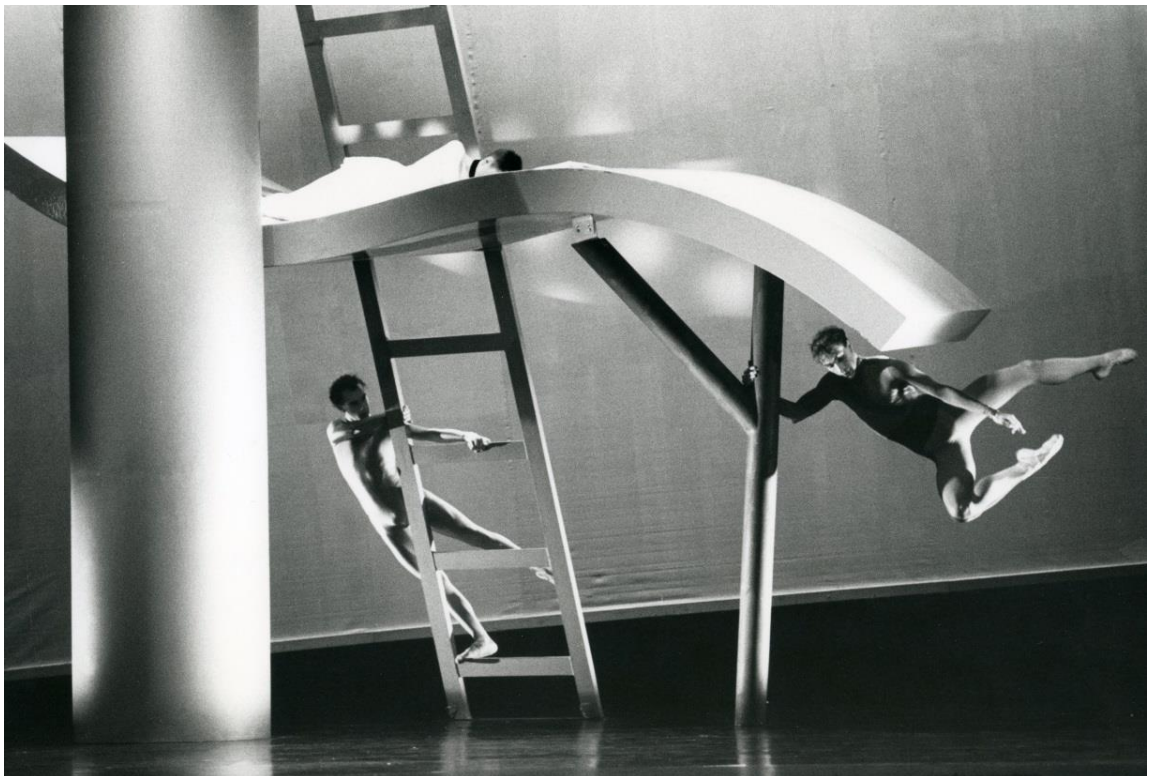
## Soldat by Ashley Page

'Soldat' was first performed by Rambert Dance Company on 21 October 1988 at the Marlow Theatre in Canterbury.

Based on Stravinsky's 'L'Histoire du Soldat,' a classic story of a soldier and the devil that is after the soldier's soul is re-told in Page's ballet 'Soldat'. The main character, a travelling soldier, meets the devil who, in exchange for the soldier's violin (symbolic of his soul), would give him a life time of happiness and wealth. The devil introduces the soldier to a princess and he falls in love. They marry, however the soldier's soul now belongs to the devil. This work has a clear narrative taken from the folk tale, which acts as a counterpoint to Page's reputation for predominantly making abstract ballets.

The work is for nine dancers. The devil was originally danced by Gary Lambert, the soldier by Paul Old and the princess by Amanda Britton, and the work also featured Mark Baldwin dancing with Amanda Britton in the tango.

The set design consists of a large ladder, a curved platform and a pillar upstage centre. After the first section a blue wave appears and descends down on to the set. The cyclorama is lit accordingly or is in darkness throughout the piece, which alters the mood. At the outset it is light with an orange light and as that fades to darkness, the light from above highlights the dancers on stage and the colourful set design.



'Soldat' (1988)

Dancers: Gary Lambert, Amanda Britton and Paul Old

Photography: Catherine Ashmore

The movement content retains classical lines, through arabesques, attitude turns and in a 'pas de deux', a fish dive is evident; however Page insets his own angular lines and stylistic features to the choreography. The dancers run to suddenly stop in a diagonal line performing a variation of angular arm lines and extensions. As the lights fade aspects of the set are highlighted allowing the audience only to see certain elements. Then, three flags descend down the cyclorama indicating a change in the narrative. The dancers' costumes consist of unitards, with a short skirt for female characters, in colours of greens, yellows and greys with a deep red unitard for the devil. The detail on these unitards can be seen as shoulder lapels to indicate the soldier's character. The group move in unison with leaps, turns and flexed feet (evoking imagery of a marching army) in the middle section, while the devil stalks his way around the upstage right waiting for his chance to move in.

Page wished to develop his own style: a fusion of modern dance and Ballet. It can be seen in 'Soldat' which succinctly reflected Rambert Dance Company's principles set out in 1966.

## 2.3 Christopher Bruce

Christopher Bruce was born on 3 October 1945 in Leicester, UK. Bruce trained at the Ballet Rambert School and subsequently joined Ballet Rambert in 1963, where he was acclaimed as one of the most gifted performers of his generation. His interest in varied forms of choreography developed early in his career, as he explored classical, contemporary and popular dance. While he was training, the company was still principally a classical company, however, after 1966, as the company moved in its new direction, Bruce emerged, firstly as a leading dancer, and a few years later as Rambert's foremost choreographer. He is recognised as the last major choreographer to have been nurtured by Marie Rambert.

Christopher Bruce took up the position of Artistic Director in April 1994 and over the first few months built up a company of 25 dancers: some former members of Rambert, some dancers from other companies that he wished to continue working with, and some new to his style of working. Their mixed backgrounds in classical and contemporary dance allowed them to perform a wide range of work. Bruce invited internationally recognised choreographers such as Merce Cunningham, Twyla Tharp and Siobhan Davies to produce works for the company as well as providing opportunities for young choreographers like Jeremy James and Wayne McGregor to create new works for Rambert. He would remain as Artistic Director until 2002.

Bruce also recognised the importance of developing talent from within the company, regularly offering the dancers the opportunity to create their own short works, platformed at Choreographic Workshop performances in London.

Christopher Bruce's distinct choreographic style, embracing both his Ballet and Graham Technique training, led him to create a wide range of new and diverse works for the

company. His productions generally encompass dramatic, emotive and theatrical elements with clear themes. Among his most popular productions are 'Cruel Garden' (1977), 'Ghost Dances' (1981) and 'Rooster' (1991). His creations made for the company after its re-launch in 1994 included 'Stream' (1996), to commemorate the company's 70th Anniversary, and 'Four Scenes' (1998), commissioned by Sadler's Wells to mark Rambert's opening of the newly rebuilt Theatre in October 1998. Bruce's 'God's Plenty', a unique narrative work combining dance with song and spoken text, was premiered in September 1999, and 'Grinning in your Face' was created to celebrate the company's 75th Anniversary in 2001.

While Bruce was Artistic Director, the company performed a repertoire of 50 works (excluding workshop dances) of which 40 have been new to Rambert. 25 were creations for Rambert's dancers.

On the 3 September 1972, Rambert premiered '...For These Who Die as Cattle' by Christopher Bruce, which was a work that was made exploring the Wilfred Owen poem: *Anthem For Doomed Youth* (1917) and the dancers responding the threads of old film. Bruce worked in collaboration with Nadine Baylis, who had a long association with Rambert, having been brought to the company by Ralph Koltai, as his assistant. She would design over 40 ballets for Rambert. The lighting for the work was designed by Richard Caswell, who had worked under John B Read (who collaborated with Norman Morrice in the 1960s and 1970s) and was one of the emerging lighting designers at the time coming through Rambert's staff.

'...For These Who Die as Cattle' was one of Bruce's earlier works for the company, it is notable that he was already making a statement about a social, cultural or historical events, and this as an approach to choreography would be repeated through his career.

## **Sergeant Early's Dream by Christopher Bruce**

'Sergeant Early's Dream' premiered on 5 October 1984. It is a dance for five women and four men and places the musicians on stage with the dancers. The music included British, Irish and American folk songs, while the design was by Walter Nobbe and lighting by John B Read. The set and costume design presents a backdrop depicting a seascape reinforcing the idea of the homeland overseas. The costumes are loosely based on eighteenth century designs. Bruce dislikes disclosing both his own source material and detailing precisely what his dances mean, preferring his audiences to approach his works with an open mind and allowing them to decide.

*"I have chosen British, Irish and American folk music for my ballet. There is a theme woven into the piece connected with the migration from the old world to the new. Throughout there is a feeling of sadness at people leaving the old home and losing touch with old roots. However, people take with them the threads of their own culture which will inevitably develop separately."*

*There is a little of this influence as the ballet progresses but most of the numbers recall the folklore of the old world, re-enacting the life, love and tragedies of the people of the past.” Christopher Bruce*

Bruce loved the music and had always wanted to choreograph to the songs. He worked closely with Nicholas Carr, Music Director of Rambert, and with Mike Taylor, who was an Irish musician in the Mercury Ensemble, and who brought an Irish folk Band into rehearsals.

The ballet’s theme is presented in a series of events from life in the old country being re-enacted by the settlers in the new. There are ten sections to the work, with certain dances running into each other: May Morning Dew, Sergeant Early’s Dream, Eighteen Years Old, The Kylebrack Rambler/Ships are Sailing/Richard Dwyer’s, Geordie, Love will you marry me?/Plains of Boyle, Black is the colour of my true love’s hair, Peggy Gordon and Gospel Ship.

Bruce uses humour in this piece and has choreographed to raise a smile, he was so successful in this that audiences laughed out loud. ‘Love Will You Marry Me?’ consisted of around five basic steps and the repetition of a folk ‘shuffle step’ that adds to the humour. Bruce manipulated these steps in crossings to build the narrative of the boy losing the girl, girl finding another boy, and her going back to the boy. Bruce introduced elements of Irish folk dancing without restricting himself choreographically to the traditional technique. He created his own movement vocabulary, which retained the qualities of the folk style but within the contemporary dance technique.

In this work, the features of character and narrative are evident and inextricably linked with the music and themes. Occasionally in the dance, Bruce takes the lines of the song and directly translates them into movement. In ‘Eighteen Years Old’ there is an example of this in ‘I’ll roll him in my arms,’ as Bruce uses many curved arm and body positions that suggest ‘cradling’ along with translating the gentle, lilting music into swinging caressing movements. Bruce’s use of folk music can be seen in his other well-known works such as ‘Ghost Dances’ (1981) and his use of humour seen in ‘Rooster’ (1991) and ‘Swansong’ (1988).

## **Hurricane by Christopher Bruce**

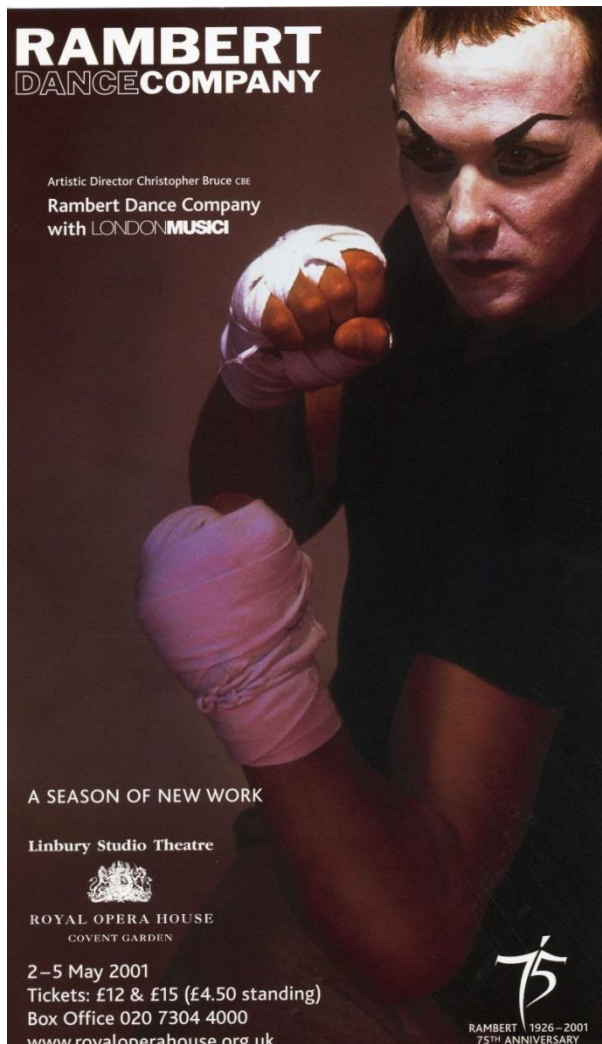
Hurricane (2000) was first performed by MAP at the Crucible, Sheffield on 6 October 2000. It was first performed by Rambert on 2 May 2001 and danced by David Hughes, who received advice on shadow boxing footwork from his father, who was a boxer.

Of Hurricane, Christopher Bruce said: “My dance is choreographed to Bob Dylan’s song *Hurricane* which tells the story of Rubin ‘Hurricane’ Carter, a black American boxer who was framed and falsely imprisoned on a triple murder charge. Long after the song was written, after twenty years of imprisonment, he was finally cleared of the charges and released.”



Christopher Bruce had long been known to create works that make the audience think, his works making an impact seen in 'Ghost Dances' (1981) and 'Swansong' (1988). In 'Hurricane', he tells the story of the boxer through the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, something Bruce is familiar with through his working on 'Pierrot Lunaire' with Tetley. Bruce said in 2001: "One idea has struck me in particular, that through the device of pantomime it is possible to make a serious comment on society and politics, hence my approach when I came to make Swansong".

The role of Carter in 'Hurricane' suited the expressive dancer David Hughes, who was critically acclaimed for his performance. The work was a solo for a dramatic dancer who would portray everyone in the story.



*"Face painted white, Hughes takes on all the roles in Bob Dylan's drawling narration...Hands bandaged, eyes innocently wide, he skips in a boxing ring of barred gold light, then switches from staggering brutish cops, to an all-white jury, then timing is all as Hughes flings his rope for the next bout of action...Bruce loves to expose wrongs with his own brand of irony. The vulnerable clown he has created for Hughes is another triumph and Hurricane had the audience calling for more."* Stephanie Jordan, The Guardian 13 November 2000

Bruce stated: "I have attempted, through the sometimes putt-like imagery and 'cartoon' form, to express his situation and the fact that he's both trapped and manipulated within a situation he is helpless to control. David also plays the part of the police, Patti Valentine (a witness) and the gangsters and keeps switching from one to another

'Hurricane' 2001  
Promotional Material for performance  
at The Royal Opera House

throughout the piece. I believe the theatrical convention I employ of the Pierrot/Clown enables me to

comment, at times ironically, on the corrupt circumstances which led to such a terrible miscarriage of justice."

Rubin Carter passed away on 20 April 2014, aged 76 in Toronto, Canada.



## 2.4 Robert North

Robert North was born on 1 June 1945 in Charleston, South Carolina and was educated in England. He studied at the Central School of Art, taking Dance classes in his free time. He then joined the Royal Ballet School in 1965 until 1967. He also took classes at the newly opened London School of Contemporary Dance becoming a member of the London Contemporary Dance group in their first tour in 1967. In early 1968, North became a member of the Martha Graham Company, with whom he danced in America with, but in 1969 he settled in England and became permanently a member of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, then becoming Associate Director in 1975. In 1981, he became Artistic Director for Ballet Rambert, where he remained until 1986. He has always through his career mixed performing and choreographing. He took roles in his own works 'Death and the Maiden' (1980) and 'Lonely Town, Lonely Street' (1981).

As Artistic Director for Ballet Rambert, he was seen as a populist. He focused on music and dance and the link between the two, wanting to develop closely the choreography and musicality, to communicate through the dancers to the audiences. His concern with musicality allowed him to explore music from a range of genres, from Stravinsky and Schubert to Bill Withers and Howard Blake. His focus on developing the dancers' musicality, alongside heightening the dancers' physicality and dramatic sensibilities are seen in his works. In an interview in *The Stage*, he described his dream of broadening Rambert's base and turning it into a forum "where artists from all disciplines will gather to exchange ideas".

### Pribaoutki by Robert North

The Brighton Festival on 6 May 1982 saw the premiere of North's first original work for Rambert as Artistic Director. It is based on designs from Pablo Picasso and set to music by Igor Stravinsky with design by Andrew Storer and lighting by John B Read. 'Pribaoutki' literally means 'a telling' in Russian, which refers to a game where verse is created through one person saying a word, and then the next person, and so on as fast as they can.

The theme of the Brighton Festival in 1982 was Picasso's work in the theatre and therefore Ballet Rambert's contribution of 'Pribaoutki' to the Festival brought together the set design based on Picasso alongside the music of Stravinsky. Stravinsky and Picasso had only collaborated once in 1920 for the Ballet Russes's 'Pulcinella.' North paid homage to both Picasso and Stravinsky in this work. 'Pribaoutki' took a succession of well-known images, such as 'Minotauromachy' and brought them to life. North explained: "I have taken some pictures and some characters from Picasso, and sometimes I've just danced out of the pictures—like I've done with 'The Three Musicians' and 'The Acrobat' and with the Minotaur and the Young Girl. The face of the woman screaming from the painting 'Guernica' I have used on a long piece of material which Lucy Burge wears... In my dances Picasso characters like centaurs and fawns cavort about as they do in the pictures."

The structure is a series of dances juxtaposing tales including 'Folk Tale' which is the encounter of Beauty and the Beast and culminates in a fairy-tale wedding where the characters walk into a large illustrated picture book is that transformed into a picture frame, from which emerge 'Three Musicians'.

This work is a clear example from Robert North's Artistic Directorship, of how Ballet Rambert was developing dance with a strong design identity at the time. Furthermore, North also uses the score as a stimulus and creates his own stories to inspire his choreography as well as the visual designs.

## Death and the Maiden by Robert North

'Death and the Maiden' was premiered 12 February 1980 for London Contemporary Dance Theatre and first performed by Ballet Rambert on 16 November 1984 at the Theatre Royal in Bath. The main stimulus for this work was Schubert's string quartet in D Minor, 'Death and the Maiden'. The poem 'Death and the Girl' by Matthias Claudius formed the text of the song by Schubert. North drew on the poem in his interpretation of Schubert's music. There is no set. The costumes (by North) are simple shades of grey and black, loose fitting tops and tights for the men and toning full length skirts for the women. It is a Dance for 5 women and 4 men.

North said the music for 'Death and the Maiden' dictated the structure and the steps entirely: "I have taken the theme that Schubert wrote and I have done particular gestures and movements to it, and then the variations, I've tried to make variations on the movements, exactly the way Schubert did to the music."



'Death and the Maiden' (1984)  
Dancers: Mark Baldwin and Cathrine Price  
Photography: Catherine Ashmore

The dance has two sections. Section 1 is titled Premonitions and section two Conversations. North danced the role of Death himself.

The movement content reflects the narrative in the death of the girl, her emotions as she faces death, from fear to acceptance of her fate to the moment of death itself. The stylistic features of the movement show North's strong ballet influence in the duets of section two, in arabesques and appearance of

a series of weightless lifts, symbolising freedom from the fear of death.

However, clear mime and gestural actions are seen that directly link to the theme of death. In the first section, the flailing arms gestures symbolises rejecting death, falling to the floor symbolising death itself and motifs with clear imagery of Medieval woodcuts, chopping sharp actions in the arms. There is also the crescent shape of the scythe, in two dimensions poses in profile as arms are upraised. In the final moments of the dance, death symbolically covers her eyes, ears and mouth, cutting off all her senses. As the narrative is played out, it connected clearly with the audiences and his reputation as a populist grew. The dramatic style of North is clearly evident in his choreography in this work.

## Lonely Town, Lonely Street by Robert North

'Lonely Town, Lonely Street' was first performed by Ballet Rambert on 16 October 1981 at the Grand Theatre, Leeds. It was originally performed by Janet Smith Dance (North's wife's dance company) at Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester on 22 October 1980. The music was by Bill Withers, set design and costumes by Andrew Storer and lighting by John B Read.



'Lonely Town Lonely Street' (1981)  
Dancers: Robert North and Lucy Burge  
Photography: Anthony Crickmay

This work depicts the portrait of a lonely person in the big city. Full of movements that communicate emotion to the audience, it was a hugely popular piece. The set design incorporates a fire escape which is representative of a rundown neighbourhood in a North American city. The dances include: "Song for Guy", "Lonely Town, Lonely Street", "Another day to run", "Let me in your life", "I don't want you on my mind", "Who is he and what is he to you", "Ain't no sunshine when she's gone" and "You".

There are seven dancers, cast as young people in casual and colourful dress, further developing the idea of the urban city life. In opening of the dance, the use of drama is evident in the gestures, eye contact and facial expressions of the dancers. The dancers also use pedestrian movements to highlight the setting, walking in a clear grid like formation as if walking on the blocks streets of the urban North American city.

The female Dancer breaks away from the group running towards the other characters trying to interact with them, but they turn their back on her, emphasising the theme of the work. North used episodes from the work 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.'

## 2.5 Richard Alston

Richard Alston was born in Sussex in 1948 and was educated at Eton. He began studies in Art at the Croydon College of Art but, when he was eighteen, started to take classes in contemporary dance and soon decided to take it up as a career. He became one of the first full time students at the London School of Contemporary Dance, in company with Siobhan Davies.

Alston created his first works in 1968 and his choreography was soon taken into the repertory of London Contemporary Dance Theatre. In 1972 a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation allowed him to investigate new forms of dance with the experimental company Strider, the first independent dance group to emerge from the London School of Contemporary Dance.

In 1975 Alston left England to study with Merce Cunningham in New York. On his return in 1977, he worked as a freelance choreographer and teacher and many young dancers attended his classes, including Siobhan Davies and Ian Spink. In 1978, these dancers became the founding members of Richard Alston and Dancers. In 1980, Richard Alston was appointed Resident Choreographer for Ballet Rambert, a post he held until he became Artistic Director in 1986. Alston created 25 works for the company including: 'Rite of Spring' 1981, 'Apollo Distraught' 1982, 'Wildlife' 1984, 'Pulcinella' 1987, 'Strong Language' 1987, 'Roughcut' 1990 and 'Cat's Eye' 1992.

Richard Alston has had a significant influence on the development of contemporary dance in Britain. He has been instrumental in introducing British dancers and choreographers to Cunningham Technique and to a choreographic style which favoured a formalistic rather than expressionist approach. The integration of the precise Cunningham Technique and the more post-modern, relaxed style of contemporary dance allowed Alston to develop his own signature style. Alston's choreographic approach tends to be formalistic. His dances often have no meaning as such, but are concerned with movement for movement's sake. A clear example of this is 'Soda Lake' (1981). However, he has also created narrative or semi-narrative works such as 'Rite of Spring' (1981), 'Mythologies' (1985) or 'Pulcinella' (1987). Aspects of ballet, Cunningham and popular dance styles are evident in these. Alston's work can be said to combine the principles of classicism with the explosive forces of liberation in contemporary dance.

What Richard Alston explored, as did many of the key practitioners who worked with Rambert between 1966 and 2002, was the important collaboration with music and design in dance. He has worked with visual artists such as Richard Smith for 'Wildlife', Howard Hodgkin in 'Night Music' and sculptor Nigel Hall for 'Soda Lake'. 'Soda Lake' is a clear example of how Alton intertwines his choreography with design.

It was under Ricard Alston's directorship that the company changed its name from Ballet Rambert to Rambert Dance Company.

## Soda Lake by Richard Alston

'Soda Lake' was originally created for a BBC TV programme. However, when this failed to materialise, Alston decided to create the piece for performance and made it for the dancer Michael Clark. The premiere was on the 15 April 1981 at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith London. It was first performed by Ballet Rambert on 30 January 1986 at the Royal Northern College of Music.

The set design sculpture was by Nigel Hall which he created in 1968. The sculpture titled 'Soda Lake' was the Artist's response to physical geometry of the dry Soda Lake in the Mojave Desert in California, USA. The lighting is by Sid Ellen and the costume is the dancer wearing black sleeveless leotard and tights. Soda Lake is performed in silence. Nigel Osbourne, the composer for 'Wildlife' was due to compose for this work, however, once he has seen the choreography he felt that a score would detract from the work.



'Soda Lake' (Rambert Premiere 1986)  
Dancer: Mark Baldwin  
Photography: Catherine Ashmore

The movement content comprises of several key poses and motifs which are repeated and varied as the work progresses. This includes a position with the dancer on his side with his head on his arm, another position, where the dancer is balancing on his knees and on one hand, his body at 45 degrees from the floor. This position has been described as the 'sentinel'. In addition, there are variations of side falling and also a key jumping motif, a

turning sissone, which is a jump which takes off from two feet and lands on one foot. There is also a position named the 'big swan' which is a distorted arabesque, arms raised above the head and with his upper back arched he has a free flexed foot. The dance ends as it began, the dancer lying on his side facing the back of the stage.

On the 19 February 1986, Richard Alston – who had served as acting Artistic Director – was officially appointed. 'Soda Lake' had been added to the repertory in February 1986, five years after its original creation, with Mark Baldwin dancing the solo role. The focus on the combination of the hanging sculpture and the choreography allowed the audience to view the movements in relation to the sculpture. Devoid of any narrative, the work allows the audience to see the tensions created with the abstract sculpture and the movement.

Amanda Smith, writing in *Dance Magazine* in September 1987, describes the movement: “Baldwin does a tour en l’air, drops to the floor, and drags himself forwards on his knees, a marvellous amphibian metaphor”. This work is one example of Alston’s use of visual art which can be seen again in other works, including ‘Wildlife’.

## **Wildlife** by Richard Alston

‘Wildlife’ was commissioned by Rambert for the 1984 Brighton Festival and it was premiered on 17 May 1984, at the Theatre Royal, Brighton. The commission received financial assistance from Lloyds Bank. The music was published by Universal Edition, London and was Alston’s first commissioned score by Nigel Osbourne, which comprised of a small ensemble of wind, percussion and strings with a sound projectionist adding stereophonic effects. The work creates an imaginary landscape with set, lights and costumes designed by kite-constructor and artist Richard Smith.

The work opens with a red kite structure in the foreground, downstage and a white sculpture upstage. One dancer enters from stage left performing arabesques, leaps and positions that are held. A second dancer emerges through the sculptures on stage from upstage into the centre; both dancers perform a unison phrase with turns, arabesques within the sculptures. The audience capture glimpses of movement, viewing through the gaps. As the red sculpture rises, the duet performs in unison. Melvyn Bragg praised the Ballet: “The six dancers - with original, specially commissioned music by Nigel Osborne - execute Wildlife with such commitment and style that the whole idea melds into that rarity: an abstract ballet full of ideas.”

## **Pulcinella** by Richard Alston

Choreographed by Richard Alston in 1987, this dance is based on the Commedia dell arte narrative of the 1920 Massine/Picasso/Stravinsky ‘Pulcinella’ ballet created for the Ballet Russes. It features Igor Stravinsky’s score and the sets and costumes were designed by Howard Hodgkin. The lighting was designed by Peter Mumford. This work was created for Ballet Rambert on 13 January 1987 at the Leeds Grand. It was performed as the second half of a double bill with ‘Oedipus Rex’ by Igor Stravinsky performed by Opera North. A television recording of Rambert Dance Company in ‘Pulcinella’; produced and directed by Bob Lockyer recorded 12-16 September 1988 at Elstree was first transmitted on BBC2 in the Dancemakers series on 22 October 1988.

## 2.6 Siobhan Davies

Susan (Siobhan) Davies was born in London on 18 September 1950 and grew up enjoying going to the ballet at the Royal Opera House, but did not take her first class until 1966 when she was an art student, studying Sculpture, at Hammersmith College of Building and Design. She attended classes at what is now known as London Contemporary Dance School, run by Robin Howard. Robin Howard had brought over members of Martha Graham's company to teach students and encourage contemporary dance in Britain. At the age of seventeen, she was picked to be in the very first performances of the company that was to be known as London Contemporary Dance Theatre. She also had to change her name to Siobhan Davies as she found there was already a Susan Davies in the Equity union.

Davies began choreographing and presented her first two works, 'Relay' (1972) and 'Pilot' (1974) which led to her becoming the Associate Choreographer in 1974. In 1976, she took a sabbatical year to travel to New York where she studied ballet and Cunningham technique and experienced new experimental dance performances.

In 1981, Davies set up her own company, Siobhan Davies and Dancers, presenting her own work 'Plainsong' and 'Standing Waves.' Then in 1982, she joined her company with those of Richard Alston and Ian Spink to form Second Stride. This provided her the opportunity to make work suited to smaller venues alongside the larger works she made for London Contemporary Dance Theatre each year through her commissions. By 1983, she was made Resident Choreographer at London Contemporary Dance Theatre.

Davies was awarded the first Fulbright Arts Fellowship which allowed her to travel to North America, where she took improvisation and release-based classes. She visited the Midwest, experiencing the vast open landscapes that are echoed in her works such as 'Wyoming' (1992). On her return to the UK in 1988, she formed her own company, Siobhan Davies Dance Company, consisting of six dancers.

Since 1988, Davies has developed her own unique style of movement for her company, taking training elements from Feldenkrais techniques as well as influences of Graham and Cunningham and Release techniques. She was made Associate Choreographer for Rambert Dance Company in 1989 under Richard Alston's directorship.

### **Winnsboro' Cotton Mill Blues** by Siobhan Davies

Starting with a solo dancer in silence, the light comes up and the dancer performs a series of reaches and spins to then lays on the floor, return to standing, and the repetitive loom sound of the cotton mill starts. Originally made for Rambert in 1992, this piece draws on the rhythmic qualities of the piano score by Fredric Rzewski. The costumes are simple in design reflecting the industrial qualities of the cotton mills.





Winnboro Cotton Mill Blues (1992)  
Photography: David Buckland

As the piece progresses the lighting has been designed to pulsate, again reflecting the looms mechanical movements. The banks of lights are lowered to the ground half way through the dance, which suggests the power and heat of bodies who are close to the machinery. This in turn, restricts the dancers' space and draws the audience to the gestural movements that are performed close to the dancers' bodies. Davies has reflected and developed actions which directly reference the looms, as threading, pushing, weaving, stitching and pushing of pedals can be seen within the group motifs or individually.

## **Embarque** by Siobhan Davies

Performed by Rambert in 1988 and again in 1993, this work shows the collaboration between lighting, design and choreography. The piece also shows the influences of Davies' visit to America, in the minimalistic composer Steve Reich and the swift changes in the groupings and phrases, reflecting the shifting topography as the light changes across the vast landscapes.

As the piece opens, the music composed by Steve Reich creates a tension with rasping chords repeated as the lights circle the stage. Two dancers stand centre stage; they perform a lean on one leg in unison and then one dancer jumps away from the other performing a turn motif. The other dancers join in the motif and they revert to an open travelling sequence across the stage in unison, made up of jumps, turns, tilts, swings and sweeping curving arm gestures.



Embarque (1988)  
Dancers: Amanda Britton and Sue Hawsley  
Photography: Catherine Ashmore

The other dancers appear from the sides of the stage, whilst the first two dancers are frozen, the second pair performs their own springing phrase covering the corners of the stage. Again, another dancer joins in to create unison while there is a counterpoint phrase being performed. The costumes are simple, trousers, tunics pulled in at the waists in brighter colours of red, blue or yellow for the females with detail on the material and on the tights. The male dancers are dressed in muted grey or beige unitard or black unitard.

## Plainsong by Siobhan Davies



Plainsong (1991)  
Dancer: Sara Matthews  
Photography: David Buckland

Set to music by Erik Satie and with designs by David Buckland, 'Plainsong' is a dance for seven dancers. Three dancers enter from centre stage right, dressed in white tops and trousers. The music is piano chords played with a steady rhythm. One dancer leans into the other two, moving back into the space, they then perform a balance in unison and another dancer enters stage right. As the group begin to travel centre stage another trio of dancers enter, all dressed in the same white costume and repeat the lean balance seen at the outset.

Movement in the form of arm gestures and upper body curves are repeated in canon as the group grows to seven dancers, and they travel across the stage towards stage left.

The movements of gentle contractions, curves and balances can be seen reminiscent of Graham technique, but appear softer and with flow rather than staccato and sharp more frequently seen in Graham's expressionist contraction. This is an example which points towards the development of a gentler 'British' style of contemporary dance developed within the timeframe of 1966 to 2002.

## SECTION 3

### Explore the journey from 1966 – 2002

#### Discuss with your students:

How do the works you have studied meet the aims as set out by Marie Rambert and her colleagues in 1966:

- To encourage the production of new works by both new and established choreographers
- To preserve as far as possible the master-works which constitute The Ballet Rambert's artistic heritage
- To give regular seasons in London and to tour selected dates in the provinces and abroad?

When thinking about the stylistic influences on Rambert during 1966 to 2002, these can include:

- Design and dance
- Moving away from classical traditions
- American influences, classical and contemporary-based techniques
- Commissioning new aural settings – working with new composers
- Methods of collaboration: design, lighting and sound

When investigating Rambert's history in relation to the development of dance in Britain, there are questions that can be asked for discussion in class:

- How has Rambert's artistic heritage developed since 1966? What is impact of the artistic heritage of the last 50 years? What about the future?
- Are there any similarities between the choreographers of this time? For example, discuss the use of dance style in Page and Bruce's work.
- Identify the features in the work you have studied that discuss how represent the strong ties to design in either set, costume, lighting or accompaniment, and to what effect does this have on the development of dance in Britain?

## **Suggested questions for essays:**

- How did the policies of Rambert change the landscape of dance in Britain from 1966 to 2002?
- Discuss one of the key practitioners in Rambert's history (1966-2002) and identify the key stylistic features of their choreography from their background and interests. How are these reflected in the works you have studied?
- How did Rambert develop its audiences within the period from 1966 to 2002?

## **Suggested lesson activities:**

- In class, look at the work you have been studying. Collect images of the work or write description statements of the types of movements seen in the dance. Can you create a motif or phrase that links these image or descriptions together? Do this individually or as a pair, and share your phrases with others. Can you now teach each other and link these together to create a longer extended phrase of movement that reflects the fingerprints of the work?
- Embed the knowledge of the practitioner through practical exploration of the work, through images, photographs, footage and descriptions of the movement style. Identify key features of the practitioner's style, describe their style and further analyse, compare and contrast these to another key practitioner from the area of study. What impact did the practitioners style have on the development of the Rambert, how do the movement examples you have studied bring exemplify these fingerprints?
- Explore the accompaniment of the work. Listen to the score and identify how the choreographer has used accompaniment to create their movement material. Strong examples of this can be seen in 'Lonely Town, Lonely Street' (Robert North) and 'Sergeant Early's Dream' (Christopher Bruce).

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Cover image: Mark Baldwin and Cathrine Price in Robert North's *Death and the Maiden* (1984). Photo by Catherine Ashmore.

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