

Jiri Kylian- Falling Angels Essay

The manipulation of space within a dance is achieved through interplay of variation and contrast of movement. Jiri Kylian's 1989 choreography, 'falling Angels', the last piece to his black and white six-part series ballet, attempts to communicate the concerns surrounding gender roles and to convey the dominant theme of sexuality during the 1980's. The intent of falling angels is to illustrate a woman's attempt to execute perfection but surrender to various phases of the female psyche and aspirations including pregnancy, subduction, birth, motherhood and self-awareness. Elements of space including motifs, levels, size and floor patterns are purposely designed in order of establishing formations that mirror the thematic intent. Jiri Kylian born in Prague during the thriving communist era, is a brilliant, innovative choreographer whom expresses follies of society during a specific era through the powerful adaptation of contrast and disparity of space within a dance.

The elements of space within a dance have a significant impact upon the analysis it provides the audience. Kylian explores gender specific roles and stereotypes within Falling Angels, through the specific selection of shapes, levels and formations in order of educating audience on their impact upon women during the 1980's. The intent is made evident to the viewers through the deliberate use of eight female dancers illustrating an absence of a male figure within the space. The purpose of this selected cast is to exaggerate the composer's specific focus on female occupations and expectations within society. The piece begins in darkness as each performer appears gradually in the light, the positions of the dancers within space allows Kylian to educate the audience of the mass of females in which experienced the severe emotions of exclusion and pressure during the era of change. The performers are varied in separate squares of light, their arms pop up to then break at the elbow to signify the broken wings of a falling angel whom feels distant from society. This movement portrays a woman's emotive response to the pressure applied upon them to be coherent with roles of women during the 1980's. Throughout this era, a woman's major expectation was to be the child bearer, the pain and discomfort of pregnancy is conveyed through the movement of pulling the black leotard into a shape of a woman's pregnant stomach. This motif accompanied with

a curved back and angular movements assist in evocating the female desire to break free of tradition and explore their own identity and freedom, mirroring falling angels in which contrast the stereotypical outlook on a faithful and nurturing angel. Kylian demonstrates the torture in which a woman experiences during child birth through a level position with legs split and head hanging between legs, this shape allows the audience to understand a woman's insecurity of their body image and lack of self-esteem after giving birth. These movements are repeated without to become motifs in which are varied and abstracted to provide a new outlook on their meaning accompanied by Steve Reich's musical item in which increases in tempo to convey the transitions occurring throughout this era. Overall, Jiri Kylian has used the variation and contrast of the elements of space to demonstrate the expectation of gender roles and occupations upon females during 1980's within a western society.

Contrast of space within a performance allows for an audience to understand the varying of relationships demonstrated through movement. Jiri Kylian validates the female relationship with society adjusting through the 1980's era due to rebellion against societal expectations through his work, *Falling Angels*. The 1980's was a major time for change as women from western societies began to see the absence of equality between both genders. This intent is illustrated through bent at the knees, facing front on with arms bent and placed across the torso, this visual represents the broken wings of angel symbolising females breaking the anticipated norms of being a woman, accompanied with a burst of bright lighting this helps to highlight the symmetrical, powerful shape. The formation of a straight line is shortly contrasted with women stepping out into the space alluding to subduction of males and their seek for attention. It was seen inappropriate if a woman would approach a man but through this captivating movement the audience is reassured that females rebelled against this tradition during the era. the composer also used the repeated motif of open legs with twisted hips to provide sexual connotations associated with subduction introducing the varying of female behaviour towards men changing, this is complemented by arms in which are positioned as if intimately dancing shape to exemplify breaking free from the 'male toy' stereotype. Kylian has specifically choreographed movements such as masking their face with their arms and covering their mouth whilst in a straight line linked with one another to exemplify the previous expectation of women to conform to the superiority of societies

vision and their want for women to keep quiet. This movement in soon contrasted by the dancers or dancer in which break free and complete a sequence of them with the line of scared female are placed in the background, this is executed in order of mirroring the idea of falling angels boldly breaking free of conformity and fighting for equality. The forceful dynamic quality of the pushing of flexed hands motif demonstrates women trying break free and discover their own aspirations and beliefs. Furthermore, Kylian uses contrasting movements within space to demonstrate the varying of relationships between women and society during the 1980's.

Overall, Jiri Kylian, a world-renowned choreographer, has used his work the Falling Angels to illustrate the gender roles and stereotypes forced upon females and their battle to break free from tradition and expectations during the 1980's. This intent has been executed through the variation and contrast of space in order of evoking an emotive response from viewer's through shapes and movements with already established connotations.