

Summary

A ballet performance of „Chopin's Suite” in a contemporary interpretation as an example of romanticism in F. Chopin's music.

This choreographical proposition of my Doctor of Philosophy dissertation consists of my conception of the ballet performance as well as my work as a choreographer. By combining them together my aim was to commemorate the musical genius of Frederick Chopin as well as the significance of his life.

The genesis of my work

I was always inspired by the music of F. Chopin from my early years as a choreographer. After years of dancing as a professional I wanted to make an attempt and exemplify my work based on Chopin's music by means of gesture, movement, sound and light and present my best ideas in a two act ballet performance titled: „Chopin's Suite”.

In certain ways it is associated with the life of the composer, his achievements and inspirations throughout the stages of his career. The purpose of the performance was to refer to his adolescent love, intense passion of his later relationships, significant historical events that took place at that time and finally the tragic situation which he found himself in, i.e. his incurable illness, loneliness, determination to compose, with the awareness that partitioned Poland no longer exists in Europe. Presenting fourteen of his musical pieces, I wanted to expose the composer's complex background of his step by step transformation into a soldier and poet in one person. Mainly full-length pieces of his music were used and only on some rare occasions were they shortened with the help of acoustician. The two act ballet performance lasts approximately three quarters of an hour.

Preliminary assumptions, idea and conception of the choreography

By combining dance with the timeless quality, as well as patriotic values in F. Chopin's masterpieces chosen by me (as the author of the conception and the choreography), I made an attempt to underline his genius.

The main idea of my ballet ensemble named „Fryderykiana” established by me, was to make Chopin's music more popular and to create and enlarge the list of choreographies of our national

ballet repertoire. I always keep these objectives in mind in everyday work. The universal language of dance and its unlimited possibilities of being interpreted and understood by all viewers can also be observed as a transparent and inseparable interaction between music and movement. This together with components such as the timeless quality and patriotic character of F. Chopin's music were the determinant value in my efforts to create this new choreography.

Especially the classical dance experience that I gained as a dance student and my professional dance career combined together with the increasing in number, various and still evolving dance styles which I learnt later after school convinced me that my language of choreography may be an acceptable form of presenting and popularising the values of Chopin's music.

My idea was to create a ballet with universal values joined together with our national culture and identity. I tried to search the roots of Chopin's musical inspirations to create a ballet presenting my view on the age of romanticism and its ideals, qualities, aesthetics and attempt to expose the simplicity of movement and beauty which are the characteristics of classical ballet.

The ballet itself is related to the „Fryderykiana” ensemble's numerous works so called „Chopinadas” (created annually from 1999) consisting of presentations of ballet performances named „Chopinianas”. Based upon the fact confirmed in literature, that Chopin visited Gdańsk, I decided to dedicate the 200th anniversary by creating The Chopin's Exhibition (Fine Arts) which preceded the new Gdańsk Chopiniana ballet on this occasion – the „Chopin's Suite”. The information about Chopin's travels was personally acknowledged by a well known historian – prof. Andrew Januszajtis, a specialist in Gdańsk's history. This form of ballet whose choreography is based on Chopin's music, reminding us of Chopin's visit to Gdańsk in 1827 has a deeper meaning: not only does it commemorate Chopin's visit to Gdańsk but it also is a metaphor of how his music was present throughout all the years of Poland's partition. The ballet performance underlines the important role that music played to help Poles regain independence years later.

The purpose of creating my choreography based on chosen masterpieces amongst the wide range of Chopin's musical compositions was to expose the strong connection between his Polish origin with which he undoubtedly identified himself with during his short life both during his youth in partitioned non-existing Poland, as well as during his life as an emigrant. The never weakening traces of his patriotic attitude were visible throughout his life in many of his works. Chopin always showed remarkable commitment and was deeply involved in matters concerning his generation and his nation. His statements, opinions and activities as a pianist and composer were all of patriotic character. This was particularly noticeable in the field of music in which he emphasised his Polish

identity. His involvement in matters concerning Polish nationals with whom he suffered the same fate of exile, who was forced to live far away from his homeland, was the main inspiration to create my own ballet performance based on Chopin's music. My main objectives were to unite the idea of romanticism, independence and Polish identity which are visible in his music and which prove of his patriotism and who as a Pole experienced the strong feeling of a nationality to an invaded and partitioned Poland at the time.

It creates a great challenge for me as a choreographer to: display the Polish roots hidden in his music which he ingeniously transferred to the highest level of classical music at the time. This made me anxious whether I was be able to create a choreography which would equal the complexity of his music and his achievements. Nevertheless I tried to fulfill this task.

Chapter I

The ideas of the Enlightenment age and it's influential role on Chopin's teachers

The positive impact on the development of Polish culture during the reign of King Stanislaw August Poniatowski in the second half of XIXth century

- The affect of European culture at the end of the duration of The First Republic of Poland (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth)
- The founding and development of The Polish National Ballet – The Dancers of His Majesty The King. Ballet in Poland before and during the life of Chopin

Polish romanticism

- The specific character of romanticism in Poland
- The influence of romanticism on Frederick Chopin's music
- The romanticism in Chopin's music and the influence of classicism and sentimentalism on the works of young Frederick Chopin

In this entering chapter I would like to portray the role of the Enlightenment – the age preceding Romanticism, which of course also played an important role in influencing the composer. I plan to characterise the interaction of trends and ideals of the Enlightenment which where applied in practice by intellectual movements including: Chopin's teachers, The National Education Commission, The Warsaw Society of Education existing in Poland at that time. Together with trusted companions from his surroundings King Stanislaw August Poniatowski played a key role in creating a complex

artistic programme for the nation's population. In spite of the repeated actions of slicing off regions until there was nothing left of independent Poland by Prussia, Austria and Russia and the worsening political situation, the Polish King was trying to fulfill his mission by means of active encouragement in the proliferation of arts and sciences by the government. The establishment of expensive music and ballet companies was supposed to serve the cause and benefit the Polish nation in finding their national identity and to summon up their courage in convincing them to believe in their national pride, to uphold dignity of the middle class and peasants and to maintain the desire for freedom. In spite of the violation of Polish sovereignty the propagated and applied qualities of the monarch's court programme created the chance that the common values and ideals were able to be passed on through next generations of Poles years after Poland's partition.

The dimension of artistic activity during romanticism in Poland was determined by tragical historical events bound together with the difficult political situation and annexation of Polish territory. The Classical period in Western music developed the ideals of structural clarity in composing whereas virtuosity and technical rivalry in playing music pieces prevailed. Although Romanticism generally was in opposition to the Enlightenment age, it did take over some of its achievements. It led the recipient of art beyond the strict boundaries that existed before and created a world of poetic mood, folk character as well as fairy-tale lyricity. By means of expressing nobleness, the distinctive feature of Polish romanticism and characteristics of the Polish nation arose and were often displayed. The ideals of the Classical period inspired and spurred composers such as Chopin to continue the path of his musical predecessors in creating music in Polish style and character.

Chapter II

The role of the choreographer in a ballet performance

- The choreographer and his work
- The process of creating „Chopin's Suite” ballet performance
- The construction of the performance

In this chapter I will intend to refer to the scope of competences and abilities required from a choreographer and compare them with my work. I will try to explain how my professional experience helped me carry out this ballet performance.

Chapter III

The description of the ballet performance

- Creative inspirations
- The plan of the ballet performance
- A detailed description of the ballet performance

This chapter describes the various elements the ballet performance consists of and is supposed to present its technical features such as: the field of activity of the choreographer during the organisation of a Chopiniana, the list of dancers and music pieces, the use of multimedias instead of traditional stage decoration, the description of main ballet characters and the sequences of scenes.

Chapter IV

The analysis of element ballet performance is composed of

- The music layer
- The importance of the dancer
- The stage decoration layer

I plan my performance to be a synthesis of: fine arts, music and dance. This chapter is a description of key elements excluding the choreography itself i.e. the significance of the music layer in relation to dance, the importance of the dancer and the influence of his interpretation on the spectator's perception, the value of multimedia which can also function individually as a structural element of the performance and even lead the plot of the ballet independently.