

# Communicating through movement

## Style

MacMillan uses the traditional ballet shapes and actions to form the basis of the movement vocabulary of the dance. This is used throughout the ballet in conjunction with everyday movements that he uses to add a natural, not stylised atmosphere to the performance.

## Era

In Act I, scene 4 the opening dance at the Capulets' house, performed to the Capulets' theme, indicates a historical aspect through the stance, formal patterns of the partner work, spacing and emphasis on footwork.

**MEDIEVAL DANCE:** Very little is known about the exact steps that the Capulets would have performed at their ball. Sources seem to suggest that late Medieval dance was quite athletic and some complex court dances were performed for an audience. Although not based directly on a Medieval or Renaissance dance, MacMillan's choreography is reminiscent of later (early Renaissance) group dances performed in couples, with little body contact, such as the Pavane, Galliard or Sarabande.

## Mood

As Romeo prepares to enter the Capulets' ball with his friends in Act I, scene 3, the trio perform expansive turns to depict their confidence and excitement. The size of the actions suggests they are self-assured; as does the use of space (the trio is mostly performed in a linear formation), and the unison nature of the movement suggests their camaraderie.

## Theme

There are many themes present within Romeo and Juliet, the theme of love is clearly demonstrated by the two main characters as they embrace in the balcony scene. Their feelings for each other are communicated through contact work, eye contact and use of personal space. The bitter feud between the two families is shown in the frequent fight scenes; male dancers attack and defend using swords. The two families are often shown in groups on opposite sides of the stage to emphasise the division.

## Age

Speed is used to illustrate the difference in age between the characters. In Act I, scene 2 in Juliet's ante-room, it is clear that Juliet is considerably younger than the Nurse as she moves swiftly around the space, whereas the Nurse moves more slowly and less easily.

## Context

Friar Laurence's gestures in Act II, scene 2 immediately communicate the setting and his role within it. He performs simple, everyday gestures steadily and with care.

## Gender

In Act I, scene 4 the Ball opens with the men of the Capulet family dancing. Their actions are strong and purposeful, highly rhythmic with a clear pattern. They are later joined by the women, who perform their own motif based on travelling smoothly with sudden changes of direction. Whilst the two motifs complement each other they are distinctly different.

## Status

Lady Capulet's stance is very upright; she appears to lean back slightly, making her appear aloof; perhaps that she is looking down her nose at people. When she travels she appears to glide, this also gives her a sense of being very confident and self-assured.

## Emphasis of Performers

The groups of people who surround the fight scenes direct the audience's focus to the sword-fight duets. By focusing their attention towards the pairs, and reacting to their battle, they add emphasis. This is clearly demonstrated in the final fight scene between Tybalt, Mercutio and Romeo, the crowd circle around them drawing the audience in.

## Drama

In Act II, scene 3 Tybalt is stabbed by Romeo. There have been many deaths in the ballet prior to this, but drama is added by Lady Capulet's reaction. She falls to her knees and is distraught. Lady Capulet uses her clothing and hair to demonstrate her feelings.

## Realism

The use of everyday action and gesture add a natural feel to the ballet. This is a trait of the choreographer and common to many of his works. It is clearly demonstrated by the Friar in his cell as he performs a ritual cross gesture typical of his religious role.



*Act II, scene 3: Lady Capulet is so distraught about Tybalt's death that she tries to kill Romeo*