

ROSIE KAY DANCE COMPANY

5 SOLDIERS

THE BODY IS THE FRONTLINE



THE OBSERVER



THE SCOTSMAN



THE INDEPENDENT



THE GUARDIAN



THE HERALD

EDUCATION PACK

Resources for Dance Artists

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5 SOLDIERS: The Body is the Frontline CONTENTS

5 SOLDIERS - The Body is the Frontline offers incredible opportunities for dance education work related to current and historic wars.

Rosie Kay spent a long period of research creating the new work, working with The 4th Battalion The Rifles and at the military rehabilitation centre Headley Court and draws on sources from literature, arts, photography and poetry in her work. 5 SOLDIERS: The Body is the Frontline looks at very contemporary issues and explores how the human body is still used and essential to modern warfare. The work is humanist in nature and through Kay's observations, tries to paint a more honest picture of what it is like to train as a soldier today, with all its contradictions. The work makes us feel in our own bodies, that indeed, the body IS the frontline of all wars over all time.

| | |
|-----|---|
| 3 | Overview, Research, Creative Team |
| 4 | Structure of the Work |
| 5-7 | Breakdown of Main Choreographic Ideas and Inspiration Sources |
| 8 | Example Workshop Plan |
| 9 | Reading/Viewing List |

OVERVIEW

5 SOLDIERS: The Body is the Frontline is a full length dance-theatre production that explores the physicality of modern warfare, and explores ideas that despite modern military technological advances we still use human physical violence as a threat, a deterrent and a weapon.

The work explores how this affects the modern soldier, how the soldiers are physically trained and the physiological and psychological impact it has on them. The work also tackles how warfare is represented in the media and historical art works, which explore warfare, both heroic and brutal.

The work is timely, provocative and extremely well researched. Rosie Kay spent over a year securing a period of research with the British Army. In November 2008 Rosie Kay joined The 4th Battalion The Rifles and was allowed to join in full battle exercises on Dartmoor and Salisbury Plain. She then visited the military rehabilitation centre, Headley Court, to see the effects of conflict and training on the soldier's bodies. The idea to make 5 Soldiers: The Body is the Frontline out of this experience comes from the deep knowledge of the body a choreographer brings to this type of activity.

While there are huge political, social and even economic reasons behind fighting each war, the actual result is a physical phenomenon. War is violent, but its rehearsal and training in many ways has unique correlations with dance training. Each attack is a piece of choreography- the battle formations of now and history are masteries of co-ordinated human movement. A soldier must be fit, disciplined, able to withstand pain and willing to push himself to the limits. He must think for himself when necessary, but also be able to quickly fit into a highly hierarchical system where everyone knows his place and his movement. As a dancer and choreographer within this system, Rosie Kay was struck by the similarities of the professions of soldier and dancer - although they have obviously very different outcomes.

The army, although in the press more than before, and with more sympathy coming from the general public, is still a greatly misunderstood institution and the soldiers are highly at risk individuals who need a voice within a society that sends them to war. The soldiers, within layers of class and historic roles that exist as if from another age,

are far more likely to commit suicide than the general public, suffer from mental health problems, homelessness, alcoholism and have marital and family problems once they leave the army or return home from duty. However, overwhelmingly Kay found the experience positive, fascinating, full of humour, sensitivity and incredible humanity - not at all what she expected, but research that created an incredible new work of dance theatre in the UK that gives a complex and nuanced portrayal of the Post 9/11 soldier.

THE RESEARCH

Attachment with the 4th Rifles Battalion, Dartmoor and Salisbury Plain

The first part was a two-week attachment to the 4 Rifles Battalion based at their barracks on Salisbury Plain. This secondment included a 4 day and night battle exercise with A Company on Dartmoor, battle physical training, rifle shooting, battalion running, hockey practise and vehicle maintenance back at barracks, two days of Remembrance activities at Tidworth and Salisbury Cathedral and two days as a fighting combative insurgent enemy in battle exercises against the Coldstream Guards in MOD mock villages on Salisbury Plain.

Secondment with Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre

The second part of this secondment was a three-day visit to Headley Court, the MOD rehabilitation centre near Epsom where all injured service people are sent for treatment. This includes those who have been seriously injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. I spent one day shadowing the Rehabilitation Instructors as they looked after groups of differing injuries including lower leg, spine and complex trauma patients. On day two I shadowed the physiotherapy department, on the third day I shadowed the consultants in the clinic.

CREATIVE TEAM

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Choreographer: | Rosie Kay |
| Designer: | Louis Price |
| Lighting Designer: | Mike Gunning |
| Dramaturg: | Ben Payne |
| Composer: | Annie Mahtani |
| Visual Artist: | David Cotterrel |

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

Because of its detailed reenactment of specific military details, 5 SOLDIERS is deceptively realistic to a military audience. However, the work is set in an imagined, claustrophobic compound (an aircraft hanger, a base drill hall, an ante-room), the kind of place where soldiers, in reality, are grouped and told to wait, their boredom and lack of control a real aspect of the soldier's life, but dramaturgically providing a space where anything can happen. It is both a real and fantasy space, where the soldiers' fears or their memories are replayed or imagined. Despite the impossibility of staging a realistic portrayal of war, what is going on in the soldiers' bodies and in their heads can be portrayed through the mix of identifiable signifiers of military action, and through the beauty and freedom of the dancing self, allowing an ambiguity of place and meaning to be given over to the audience to interpret. While the story of soldiers is often a male story, a very deliberate choice of one female upsets the balance of male identity narrative, and allows for a scope of tension and drama, as well as a realistic reflection of women now on the frontline.

The work has a three-part structure, the soldiers confined in a pen-like set, where they wait between periods of action. The waiting structure allows the boredom and tension to build, each scene being an imagined evocation of a true-to-life scenario.

Part 1

The first part builds on ideas of training and drill, with the soldiers forming a machine-like identity through long, complex drill maneuvers and double-time marches. They aim an aggressive, honed attention at the audience. This training section is intended to dehumanize the participants, but also to allow the audience to become lulled by the almost meditative quality of the repetition and rhythm.

Part 2

The second part lets the audience see the soldiers as humans, attacking each other playfully, dancing and fighting together in a nightclub, preying on women, and the intense stress of long waits and close friendships and hatreds. The audience is shown relationships forming, tensions building, bonds formed together.

Part 3

Part three is in effect "on the ground" and starts with a helicopter scene, which develops into a sky diving dance. We build the long wait for an attack or explosion with a section called "Patrol," the rising tension evident on the faces of the soldiers as they carefully tread on unsafe ground. When the explosion comes, the moment is stretched out, the youngest soldier spinning and spinning before hitting the ground, injured.

The final part is an intense solo, a dancer's legs strapped so that he appears to be a double amputee. His colleagues sit along the side, waiting again, as he fights to find his new identity.

BREAKDOWN OF MAIN CHOREOGRAPHIC IDEAS AND INSPIRATION SOURCES



DRILL

This section takes a limited vocabulary and makes it work choreographically- the set moves being all from the drill vocabulary, such as 'At Ease', 'Attention', 'March', 'Quick March', 'Halt' etc. The idea was to play on this vocabulary and make it dance- in almost a post-modern minimal way. The intended effect is to dehumanise the cast- appearing like robots, still, working as one unit, but also to lull the audience into an almost trance like state- these are not individuals- they have their own logic, rhythm and meaning that is separate to a civilians individual, messy life. At moments dancers

break from their confines and assert their personality.

Sources

Look at- Google 'UK military drill' and 'Rifles light drill' for videos

Also see more elaborate exhibition drills for public ceremonies (changing of the guard, Edinburgh tattoo etc)



TRAINING, PLAY AND "LETTING OF STEAM"

This forms several key sections of the work- first the Battle PT (Physical Training) scene which is built from sports-style games- relay races, simple fireman lifts, duck walking, crawling etc. We then added 'impossible games'- stupid feats of strength or silly impossible tasks to improvise ideas. Serious side of this is the training for lifting injured or fatally wounded bodies- so dragging bodies ("You're Dead!"- Comes from a direct battle exercise experience and soldiers train too lift each other in conflict situations)



The other side of this is the drinking/ dancing// fighting element- having a lot of energy, aggression and being allowed to let of steam, drink, play, hug and fight each other- a way of connecting and getting out anger, fear or emotions.

Sources

We played with traditional relay races, adding more and more complex games and tasks into it to make them more physical and abstract

Drunken scenes include bad dancing, pogoing, play fighting and choreographed fight scenes.



SEXUAL TENSION

This theme is to be used with older students. There is a dynamic between the only female in the group and the 4 males. In a scene in the centre of the work, the men are 'letting of steam'- they could be in a nightclub or bar, the woman appears to be on her own and spending time on her body (based on interviews with serving women who went on battle operations). The woman is stretching and talking herself, her relaxation oozing onto the stage, unaware of the male gaze. They 'see' her- through their drunkenness- is she a dancer in the club, a stripper or the sexy female soldier of their imaginations?

The result is deliberately ambiguous. The men go from observation, objectification, through to predator, stalking and even threat. She turns and confronts them with a stare and they revert to 'little boys' needing love and care- she now is the female of their mothers, their wives and girlfriends, the queen..

BREAKDOWN OF MAIN CHOREOGRAPHIC IDEAS AND INSPIRATION SOURCES



SENSE OF HEROISM

There is a set of vocabulary called 'Bullet Drop' which is a scene based on an imagined bullet hitting each soldier in their chest. Performed in silence, the soldier repeatedly hit their chests, arching backwards into a deep back bend, or collapsing to the floor. This scene has a sense of dream like heroism- WW1 and 'Over the breach' or facing battle and not shrinking from the fear and threat of death.



ON THE GROUND- HELICOPTER, PATROL

The helicopter scene starts with the soldiers sat crouched together, shaking from the vibrations of the Chinook. Inspired by soldiers takes of the beauty and adrenaline of going out to Afghanistan, the soldiers go into an imagined sky-diving inspired dance- taking ideas of skydiving positions, floating and holding hands together in groups.

Patrol is based on the basic movements of patrol work- crouching, fishbone formations, crawling, silent signals and duck walks. This section is the most 'contemporary dance' familiar to dance audiences.

RITEs OF SPRING

The final section of the work, where one of the soldiers is seriously injured, takes the audience and the performers on a long build-up of tension, intensity and meaning. This scene shifts from choreographed movement that is realistic, or recognizable as military, into a world where dance is allowed a freer rein, and movement becomes a symbolic place of multiple meanings and readings. The framing of this section is deliberately confusing at some points—as if the soldiers start to have a war among themselves, and the roles of attacker, predator, victim and executioner are blurred and muddled. With the idea that war is a human action, the soldiers turn on themselves, and the work is no longer a portrayal of military action, but a study of survival, fear, need and aggression. Elements of cannibalism, tribalism and primitivism are introduced, with a deliberate reference to The Rite of Spring with the young male body as the sacrifice of war, which brings the work into the realm of the metaphysical, as in addition to evoking specific military conflicts it also evokes a human quest for meaning and redemption.



This scene was inspired by two works of art- Paul Nash's oil painting of the desolate landscapes of the battlefields of WW1 and by Michelangelo's last judgment of Christ. The first image was used in a scene entitled 'Trees' where the tree stumps of the painting become the legs of soldiers- dead stumps, or human remains?

The second picture inspired the existential struggle to survive- the last Judgment having a pure choreographic quality of the human fight for redemption.



BREAKDOWN OF MAIN CHOREOGRAPHIC IDEAS AND INSPIRATION SOURCES



HEADLEY COURT

In this final scene it was decided that the injured soldier's ankles would be tied to his thighs using military straps that look a little like tourniquets. This means that when he is on his knees, he looks as if he has lost his lower legs. As the scene changes, he is shown in rehab at Headley Court. For Kay this is the key scene of the work, controversial to civilian and military audiences alike. Both injured soldiers and rehabilitation staff talked of how realistic the scene was to them, describing it as hard but truthful. Kay wanted the audience to feel the literal breaking of the body and the pain of injury.



EXAMPLE WORKSHOP PLAN

Part 1- Warm Up

- Ice breaker exercises + warm up- learning names, getting people to relax- ALWAYS IMPORTANT even if the group know each other!
- Technique class – depends on the ability of the group- draws on strong technical principles of contemporary dance technique and helps students understand the basic principles behind the intense physicality of the work. Can include floor work and tumbling technique to aid creative tasks
- Fitness warm up- for less dance trained groups- based on Army style PT (Physical training) - using games, competition and gym-style exercises to get people moving and gradually introduce more dance focussed elements

Part 2 – Creative Tasks

Understanding the work and learning motifs inspired by 5 Soldiers. This includes sequences of a very physical nature that can be adapted to the group or double work sections.

- Focussing on drill and the simple instructions of halt, attention, march etc
- Looking at attacks and army based movement- crawling, rolling, running etc
- Finding partner work inspiration within the ideas
- Looking at war and its representation in the media- drawing on current war imagery and stereotypes of soldiers as well as historic imagery of wars.

Youth Dance Groups Focus

- Partner and group work
- Converting army vocabulary of drills and marching into dance language- pushing the language to the limits
- Combat and warfare conveyed through physicality and athleticism

Older Students and Choreography Students

- Looking at art in general and its response to war, including painting, poetry, film and literature
- The references in the work including Michelangelo and Caravaggio and understanding how to use art works to inspire choreography.
- Researching for dance creation and research methods

READING/VIEWING LIST

***The Body in Pain* by Elaine Scarry**, Oxford University Press

ISBN13: 9780195049961

ISBN10: 0195049969

Chapter on The Structure of War: The Juxtaposition of Injured Bodies and Unanchored Issues. This was a key work in helping my understanding of how the body is central to all warfare across all time, and still informs my practice and thinking today.

***On the Nature of War* by Carl von Clausewitz**, Penguin Books

ISBN: 9780141023946

The classic text on strategy and the relationship with politics. Scarry refers to it often, so they make good companion reading.

***The Art of War* by Sun Tzu**

ISBN 0-670-03156-9

More poetic than above, but very direct about winning and losing.

***The Junior Officers' Reading Club- Killing Time and Fighting Wars* by Patrick Hennessey**

ISBN-10: 1846141869; ISBN-13: 978-1846141867

A young officers every entertaining account of training at Sandhurst and his deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan- a very contemporary account of an officers life now.

***Worlding Women- A Feminist International Politics* by Jan Jundy Pettman**

ISBN- 0-415-15202-x

Part 2- The Gendered Politics of Peace and War was crucial to my thinking on how the female is seen within the military and in war situations. Invaluable book for creation of 5 Soldiers

***101 Poems Against War*, edited by Matthew Hollis and Paul Keegan**

ISBN 0-571-22034-7

Some very incredible poetry, which helped in research

***The Vintage Book of War Stories*, edited by Sebastian Faulks and Jerg Hensgen**

ISBN- 0-099-048346-7

Some of the stories are incredible and truly horrific, but really encapture the emotions of fighting. More vivid than most war films in the imagination.

***Trained to Kill- Soldiers at War* by Theodore Nadelson**

ISBN 0-8018-8166-8

Written by a former soldier and military psychiatrist, this invaluable and excellently written and researched book confronts a dark side of human psychology with sensitivity and depth, revealing startling truths about the allure of violence.

War and Medicine- Wellcome Trust

ISBN 978-1-906155-52-0

Include the diary of collaborator David Cotterrell and his photographs of Helmand Province. A real insight into the link between war and medicine.

Possible suggested films to see:

Come and See (Dir Aleksei Kravchenko)

The Hurt Locker

The Thin Red Line

Regeneration

Band of Brothers

Saving Private Ryan

Full Metal Jacket

Apocalypse Now

Black Hawk Down

Platoon