Anna Pavlova And The Evolution Of Ballet

Introduction

Ballet has travelled an exceptional journey in most of its fundamental aspects. And it all started a long time ago, during the Italian Renaissance in 1459 under the rule of King Louis the XIV. It was during a wedding, that noblemen and women were watching dancers demonstrate a new style, which was something between ballroom and fencing. From Italy, Catherine de Medici, married the King of France and as Queen, Catherine introduced ballet to the French court. From there she instituted a ballet de cour, a group of dancers for the entertainment of the court, which included the dance, décor, costume and music. However, it wasn't until 1661 in Paris that ballet moved from court to stage, as King Louis XIV established the first ballet company called Académie Royale de Danse. And not long after that ballet steadily travelled across Europe.

How has the choreographic aspect changed?

In the early 19th century the heart of ballet moved into St. Petersburg, Russia where it was financially supported by the tsars' boundless resources. Russia cultivated ballet with love and pain, however, it may be argued that few people developed ballet as much as Anna Pavlova and her inner circle. Although, Anna Pavlova pronounced herself as a traditional ballerina often her work was described as contemporary. Moreover, the influence of Fokin who often staged performances with the sole objective of insulting the classics impacted Anna Pavlova style heavily. Together they composed some of history's greatest dance breakthroughs.

A choreography development that occurred due to the cooperation of Pavlova and Fokine was in their 1907 performance "Evnika." It grew to popularity due to one complexity, - the turns. Before the early 20th century fouettes were not compulsory for graduating dancers. However, in Evnika, Pavlova completed thirty-two fouettes on pointe. These endless turns shocked the audience. And it was after this that fouettes were incorporated into ballet school and performances.

Whilst in "La Sylphide" Pavlova and Fokine had two breakthrough ideas. They re-designed the dance to be rapid at all times except for when performing jumps and other take-offs. This created the illusion of slowness and floating through the air as it contrasted with the other movements . This is a common ballet practise now. Another element was the increased time that Pavlova stood on pointe. Before the female dancers would stand on pointe only to hold a peculiar pose for some extra time. Nonetheless, Pavlova completed "La Sylphide" almost entirely on pointe.

One of their notable works was "Egyptian Nights" in 1908. Together, Pavlova and Fokine combined the finger technique of the classical ballet school with the movements stylized as the Egyptian fresco painting with planar profile images of human figures . This choreographical change led to a shift of attention where the audience was more interested in the fine and detailed movement rather than the big jumps. Many argue that Pavlova's choices then influenced the creation of finger tutting almost half a century later.

Moreover, when creating these pieces, Pavlova would often infuse her classical ballets with cultural elements from the countries she visited. This was clearly depicted after her visit to Mexico, where she learned about the style Mexican folklore style . In the beginning, Pavlova adjusted the body movements to be more fluid rather than stiff as is appropriate for ballet. Pavlova enjoyed this freedom so much that a critic wrote that her “hips swing provocatively. ” Afterwards, her repertoires were noted to have an added component where her jumps and foot movements would be intentionally loud to create an echo in rhythm with the music. And to further emphasise these sounds she would incorporate a tambourine into the performance.

With all these examples, and many more, it is basically doubtless that Anna Pavlova developed the choreography of ballet and her practises her being used today.