

RAMBERT



***Swansong* by Christopher Bruce**
Teachers' Notes

This pack was compiled by Rambert and has not been rewritten for the new specifications for exams in AS and A level Dance from 2017 onwards, although it is hoped that these notes will be a starting point for further work. Some of the material was adapted or reproduced from earlier resource packs.

We would also like to thank the following individuals for their invaluable help in compiling these notes:

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Introduction

These Teachers' Notes are intended as a companion to the *Swansong* Study Notes, which contain detailed background information on *Swansong* and are also available from Rambert.

Swansong was a set work on the 2000 syllabus for both GCSE and A Level Dance have not been rewritten for the new specifications for exams in AS and A level Dance from 2017 onwards, although it is hoped that these notes will be a starting point for further work. Some of the material will be more appropriate for teachers of GCSE Dance, some may be useful for teachers of A and A/S Level Dance, but it is hoped that these notes will be a starting point for further work. Also included are suggestions for using *Swansong* across the curriculum, with ideas which could be pursued in English and Drama, as well as in Dance lessons.

Section 1. General information

Swansong was choreographed by Christopher Bruce in 1987 for London Festival Ballet (now called English National Ballet).

The recorded music score was composed by Philip Chambon, commissioned by London Festival Ballet.

The design was by Christopher Bruce and the lighting was designed by David Mohr.

Swansong lasts 32 minutes and has a cast of three dancers.

Structure of *Swansong*

For a detailed analysis of the dance and background information please refer to the *Swansong* Study Notes.

Swansong is divided into seven sections, described throughout these notes as follows:

Section 1 (Questions and answers)

Section 2 (Tea for Two)

Section 3 (First solo)

Section 4 (Slow trio)

Section 5 (Second solo)

Section 6 (Cane dance)

Section 7 (Third solo)

Dance styles used

Christopher Bruce's choreography for *Swansong* incorporates a variety of dance styles, including contemporary, ballet, jazz, tap and ballroom. The inclusion of 'folk' styles is a typical feature of Bruce's choreography and can be seen particularly in *Ghost Dances* (1981) and *Sergeant Early's Dream* (1984).

In *Swansong* balletic movements, such as arabesques, attitudes and jetés combine with the low centre of gravity, spiralling torso and use of off-balance from contemporary dance to create a lyrical feel for the victim's solos. The images of flight, or birds, could be seen to relate historically to ballets like *Swan Lake* or *The Dying Swan* (the solo choreographed by Fokine). In *Swansong* the victim's movements use an extended body line, typical in ballet, but the contemporary element, with strong use of the back is also very evident. Some movements from jazz technique, such as the slide to the floor, can also be seen in the victim's movement material and jazz is combined with tap dance and movements inspired by vaudeville, in the interrogators' dance sequences. Acrobatic movements, like cartwheels and handstands are also used, together with a variety of lifts in the trio sections.

Jazz Dance

Jazz dance has its roots in African rhythms brought to the USA with the slave trade at the beginning of the 19th century. African dance reacts strongly to the beat of the drums and features a low stance with gyrating hips and a rippling spine. As black slaves developed jazz music, jazz dance, with its twisting and hip-wiggling, began to emerge. This style of movement fed into many social dances, such as tango and rumba. Jazz dance gradually became a recognized technique as dancers like Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus researched traditional African and Caribbean dances and adapted them for the stage. The technique is physically demanding, like ballet and contemporary and features isolation of different body parts, reflecting the multiple rhythms of the music.

Tap Dance

American tap dance developed alongside jazz dance and blended African dance styles with European clog dancing and Irish step dancing, developing from the immigrant population of the era. Some of the movements in *Swansong* are familiar from the films of famous dancers like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, who danced in the European style with an upright, smooth line, and Gene Kelly, whose dancing was more closely related to jazz, from the numerous black influences. However, Christopher Bruce's inspiration for the tap sequences went back further than these old films to music hall or vaudeville.

Music hall / Vaudeville

Music hall was a popular form of entertainment during the nineteenth century. Until the 1880s the principal element was song, but in the last two decades of the century variety

shows featuring comedy routines became popular and took place in larger halls, usually specifically constructed theatres, to reach a wider audience. In the 1890s, under the influence of America, syncopated song and dance began to be included in the variety shows, followed in the early part of the twentieth century by ragtime. The comedy acts of the variety shows often used loosely constructed satire, which in turn may have derived from eighteenth century French theatre, which satirised contemporary events.

Music hall continued to be popular until the Second World War and provided a training ground for many well known stage, screen and radio performers who perfected short acts to suit their individual style. The term 'vaudeville' is the American equivalent of music hall and is generally understood to suggest dramatic sketches interspersed with song and dance acts, a reflection of late music hall. Vaudeville and music hall died out in the 1930s with the advent of radio and films with sound.

Suggested further reading:

Jazz Dance, the Story of American and Vernacular Dance
(Marshall and Jean Stearns, Da Capo Press)

Tap Dancing, Techniques, Routines and Terminology
(Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo)

Hoofing on Broadway, a History of Show Dancing
(New York, Prentice Hall Press)

Characterisation and interpretation

Although *Swansong* is open to personal interpretation, Christopher Bruce's choreography implies characterisation of the three roles of the victim and his or her interrogators. All the dance movement is set and notated but at the same time the choreographer allows individual dancers to express their roles uniquely. Thus, one cast can interpret the movement differently from another and *Swansong* requires strong actors as well as dancers.

There is a fine balance between allowing room for expression and remaining true to the choreography. Christopher Bruce matches each new cast carefully and works with the dancers to create their own unique interpretation of *Swansong*. He prefers not to supply them with too much information, so that they can interpret the dance in their own way. The movement content is always more important than the dramatic content. The role of the victim in particular is acknowledged to be one of the most challenging parts in the dance repertoire and each cast needs considerable rehearsal time.

The victim's solos contain difficult balances, which the dancer literally has to struggle to maintain. This puts across choreographically the mental struggle of the victim that the dancer has to portray. Simple movements, such as walking towards the shaft of light stage left, or towards the imagined closed door stage right, can alter according to the dancer's intention. He or she has to decide whether to express determination, anger, frustration or despair and spacing on stage can vary, as can the dynamic of the movement. The first solo was not choreographed to the music, which intentionally has no obvious pulse, aiming to reflect the victim's emotional state with atmospheric sounds (including the cry of a bird), rather than exact counts. (See 'Music for *Swansong*' pg 11) The music consequently allows the dancer a certain amount of freedom, as in the silent solo, Section 5. During the solos the victim is constantly moving towards, or referring to, the bright shaft of light, which could represent the future, as much as the chair could be seen to symbolise the present.

By drawing on the essentially light-hearted vaudeville tradition Bruce gives the interrogators movement material which adds an entertaining quality to the work, while creating a shocking impact when the scenario becomes unpleasant. The interrogators, much as in pantomime tradition, are comic 'baddies', sometimes light-heartedly teasing and bullying the victim, at other times resorting to apparent violence. Bruce has expressed interest in the Italian theatrical form Commedia dell'Arte, where comedy was used to explore serious topical issues and throughout *Swansong* the audience is encouraged to find humour in what is actually a tragic situation. In Section 4, the interrogators, relentlessly tormenting and exhausting the victim, are at their most sadistic, a quality reflected in the music, which again, has no specific counts for the dancers to follow, but increases the tension in a gradual acceleration of tempo. Their next entrance, in the amusing Cane Dance relieves the mood at first, before they become even nastier than before, striking their canes against the chair and eventually bringing about the victim's final collapse.

Gender inevitably plays a part in the interpretation of the three roles. Two men gyrating in a ballroom hold often produces a humorous effect and a female interrogator victimising another woman adds a different dimension, where physical size and brute strength are not essential tools for torture. Some of the lifts can be adapted for casts with women, if necessary. Bruce has stated that he would not cast a woman as the victim with two men as the interrogators, as this would suggest issues of gender. Similarly, when Rambert has used a mixed race cast, the victim was not played by a black dancer. (For further information on the different interpretations of *Swansong* please refer to the Study Notes)

Summary of characteristic elements in Christopher Bruce's choreography

- ◆ Bruce prefers an audience to keep an open mind about his works, often avoiding programme notes and specific statements. However, he does recognise that his pieces are concerned with ideas, rather than abstract dance and there is usually strong imagery.
- ◆ Some of his works have an autobiographical element, such as *Swansong* (1987), *Weekend* (1974) and *Rooster* (1991). Others are based on the biographies and works of other people; for example, *Cruel Garden* (1977) on the poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca, *The Dream is Over* (1986) on singer John Lennon and *Journey* (1990) on the dancer Erik Bruhn.
- ◆ Several of Bruce's works express his political, social and ecological awareness. These include *for these who die as cattle* (1972) and *Land* (1985), evoking the horrors of war; *Ghost Dances* (1981), *Silence is the end of our Song* (1983) and *Swansong*, concerned with political oppression; and *Nature Dances* (1992) and *Stream* (1996) concerned with the natural world.
- ◆ His dances generally develop from a stimulus such as music, painting or literature, but he selects themes which can be conveyed through dance, drawing from and abstracting his subject, rather than making direct reference to the original.
- ◆ Bruce chooses a wide range of music, from popular songs (*Rooster*, to songs by the Rolling Stones), world music (*Ghost Dances*, to South American music), classical music (*Symphony in Three Movements*, 1989, to Stravinsky), contemporary music (*Meeting Point*, 1995 to Michael Nyman and *Four Scenes*, 1998 to music by Dave Heath) to specially commissioned scores in close collaboration with the composers (*Stream*; Philip Chambon and *Cruel Garden*; Carlos Miranda). The dance often responds closely to the music.
- ◆ The design is an extremely important contributing factor to the whole, but Bruce is concerned that any stage setting does not intrude in to the dance area and that costumes allow for freedom of movement. He works closely with designers and sometimes creates his own designs, as he did for *Swansong* and *Ghost Dances*. Lighting is always a significant element in the design for his works.
- ◆ Bruce uses a blend of dance techniques, notably ballet and contemporary. His own contemporary training was in Martha Graham technique and strong use of the back and a low centre of gravity are important elements in his choreography. In addition, dependent on the work he is researching, he uses another technique, for example, incorporating a folk element in *Sergeant Early's Dream* and *Ghost Dances*, tap sequences in *Swansong*, or the flamenco used in *Cruel Garden*. He aims to give an essence of these styles, rather than reproducing them authentically.

- ◆ He sometimes uses recognisable 'everyday' movements, such as gesture incorporated into the choreography, notably in *Rooster*.
- ◆ His works have a clear thematic base, even if they are non-narrative. He frequently demonstrates a strong sense of character; for example in *Rooster*, *Swansong* and *Cruel Garden*.

Music for *Swansong*

Philip Chambon, composer of the music for *Swansong*, was born in London and studied Music and Recording at the University of Surrey. He became especially interested in working with dance when he took part in the International Dance Course for Professional Choreographers and Composers, in 1981 as a musician and in 1984 as a composer. The 1984 course was led by Christopher Bruce and Carlos Miranda (who had collaborated with Bruce and Lindsay Kemp on *Cruel Garden* in 1977). Bruce chose Chambon to collaborate with him on *Swansong* in 1987 and while the piece was being created Chambon attended many of the rehearsals at London Festival Ballet (now known as English National Ballet).

Philip Chambon has worked with many other choreographers, including Lloyd Newson (of DV8) and Lea Anderson (The Cholmondeleys), who choreographed for La Bouche, the music and dance group of which Chambon was a co-founder. He collaborated again with Christopher Bruce in 1992 on *Nature Dances* for Houston Ballet and *Stream* in 1996 for Rambert Dance Company. (The music for *Swansong* and *Stream* is available on CD from Rambert Learning and Participation.)

How the music was created

The starting point for the collaboration on *Swansong* was Bruce's explanation of the subject matter he wanted to explore in his choreography and the number of dancers involved. Chambon commented,

The collaboration mainly relied upon an intuitive understanding between Christopher and myself and my initial reaction to the work being created in the studio.

Bruce created the seven sections of the piece in chronological order and began by making steps in silence, except for Section 2, which was set to the piano accompanist's rendition of 'Tea for Two'. To start with Chambon composed music to each finished section of dance, but by the time Bruce had got as far as Section 4 the music had caught up with the dance, with the exception of Tea for Two, which continued to be rehearsed to the accompanist's version.

At this point we discussed ideas for the rest of the ballet so that I could work on the music ahead of Christopher. I also played my idea for the final section to him on the piano because I wanted to incorporate references to its melody into previous sections. I also had a draft idea for section 5, which was never used.

Sections 6 and 7 were choreographed to the music and once he had completed the Cane Dance, Chambon felt he had finally found the solution to Tea for Two.

The relationship between dance and music

Throughout *Swansong* there are sections where the choreography relates strongly to the rhythm and pulse of the music, contrasted with sections where the dancers move away from any sense of counts, either interpreting a phrase freely, or performing in silence. Sections 2, 6 and 7, and part of Section 1, were choreographed to specific counts, while the other sections allow more freedom for interpretation.

Swansong starts in silence, with the interrogators' tapped questions the only sound. Each tapped phrase has its own clear rhythm and intention, much like spoken sentences. When the victim later responds, the initial two slow stamps imply a deliberate refusal to provide information. In subsequent sections the victim taps frenetically on the spot, or even right across the stage. In the first tapped interrogation the interrogators work closely together to set up a rhythm in unison - one will tap the other on the back to give the pulse before they begin to tap out their first phrase together.

The two opening crashes in the music make clear reference points for the choreography - it is on the first crash that the dynamic trio work recurrent in *Swansong* begins and, on the second crash, the first phrase of movement is repeated. In between the crashes there is a long 'die away', around 50 seconds, which has no pulse or cue points and provides a background for the movement. The rest of Section 1 was choreographed to specific counts, in phrases of 8, which form the basis for the rhythm. In structuring the music Chambon did not rely entirely on the dance, following only the broad sections of the choreography. The sound colour comments only in a general sense on the action and throughout the piece there is no intentional 'mickey mousing' (where either dance or music copies the other exactly).

The only exception is *Tea for Two*, where the music follows the movement much more closely than in Section 1 in order to achieve a tragi-comic irony. As Chambon left this section till last he was able to work with a near complete dance piece and recorded the accompanist playing *Tea for Two* during a rehearsal so that he could reproduce the gradual increase in tempo. The music for this section is in syncopated 4/4 time, rather like a tango, although Chambon did not consciously choose the rhythm of a tango, but instead opted for a more general 'Latin style' pastiche.

Bruce began choreographing Section 3 with no sound and there are no counts in the movement, nor any obvious rhythmic pulse. Chambon said,

I wanted the music to reflect the atmosphere, but also to comment on the victim's emotional state - what might be going on in his head and heart. I chose some sounds as a purely technical (but not literal) reflection of the choreographic imagery as I interpreted it.

Chambon brought these sounds in at random over the set timescale of the first solo, so that the music did not intentionally synchronise with the movement. However there are moments when the music could be interpreted more literally, for instance, at the end of

Section 2 when a crash reverberates as the victim is left alone, implying that the door has been firmly shut.

Section 4 was again choreographed in silence, until the very end, but even here the dance was not set to the music. Again there are no rhythmic counts, but after the opening the music does have a languid pulse, which was not intended to be followed exactly by the dancers, though as they got to know the piece they were able to pick up the phrasing of the music. In the unrelenting, yet understated music for this slow interrogation sequence Chambon wanted to create a distance between the music and dance, with the cinematic effect of stretching out time. This would give the audience the impression that what they were seeing was happening over an extended period of time.

In section 5 there is no music, but there is plenty of sound from the stage, such as the sound of the chair banging on to the floor. Organic sounds occur throughout the dance, with the soft-shoe tap steps of the interrogators deliberately amplified.

Section 6, the Cane Dance, was choreographed to a draft version of the music. Bruce and Chambon had discussed the idea of canes and the strong use of pulse. The vaudeville style was already established in the choreography, in the tap dance steps and Tea for Two, but the composer had not yet found a musical expression of this. The Cane Dance brought a solution Chambon felt comfortable with and he was able to return to Tea for Two.

Section 7, the victim's final solo was also choreographed to a sketch of the music, which Chambon again saw in cinematic terms. He had discussed with Bruce the approximate length of the section and developed a simple structure for the music which eventually brought in a pulse. Once again, the sound palette and the slow tempo provided a context for the action.

Instrumentation

All the sounds were originally acoustic and then digitally sampled and manipulated. No electronically generated sounds or synthesizers were used, as the composer felt they would sound too 'anonymous'. He deliberately restricted the number of different sounds and chose original sound sources - like heavy metal pans in his kitchen! - that would convey character and give the music its intensity. The metallic sounds represented the harsh reality of the victim's situation, while the wind and flute sounds (including sampled Pan pipes, giving a slightly South American feel) represented the spirit and the victim's personal struggle.

Manipulated voice sounds emerge throughout the piece and were described by Chambon as his comment on the scenario. The crashes incorporate descending voices, which recur again at the end of the piece, and in the victim's first solo Chambon interpreted the choreographic imagery of flight in his manipulation of voice to sound like the cry of a bird.

The rhythmic voice sounds (Ch-p-cha) were intended to be slightly comic and to sound as though the whisperer was very close by - making them menacing. Because of the choreography's vaudeville elements, the composer decided to draw on contemporary pop music as a musical equivalent, using the sound 'Ch-p-cha' and pop style backing vocals in Tea for Two.

Design for *Swansong*

The design for *Swansong* is minimal and simply suggests a location and a time, leaving the audience free to fill in additional details in their imaginations.

Lighting

The lighting suggests a dark, claustrophobic room with a small window, high up - reminiscent of the description of the prisoner's cell in *A Man* (Oriana Fallaci - see *Swansong* Study Notes, page 5) which was tomb-like with tiny windows.

Lighting differentiates between the moments when the victim is alone and when he is joined by the interrogators. In the victim's solos a shaft of light from upstage left appears and the dancer directs many of his movements towards this light source. At the end of the work the victim leaves the stage for the first time, following the shaft of light.

Costume, Setting and Props

Without being specific, the costume design suggests the present day, or at least any time after around 1940. The victim is dressed in blue jeans and a red T-shirt, while the interrogators wear khaki coloured trousers and shirts. The fact that the interrogators are dressed alike, in 'uniform', implies they may be guards or soldiers, but they do not have any military badges. In Section 2 (Tea for Two) the interrogators put on caps and the victim is made to wear a red clown's nose. At the end of this section one of the interrogators lights a cigarette on stage with a lighter. Individual dancers interpret even this movement differently, for instance teasing the victim by offering the cigarette in an apparently friendly manner and then withdrawing it, or blowing smoke in the victim's face and so on. In Section 6 the interrogators bring on canes and dance with them, using them eventually as weapons to attack the victim's chair, which he or she holds as a shield.

The costumes have altered slightly since *Swansong* was first performed, but the design concept remains the same - simple changes have been made to the neckline and shade of red of the victim's T-shirt and the trouser legs of the interrogators, giving the piece a more contemporary feel. Whether it is performed by three men, three women, or a mixed cast, the costumes are the same.

The only element of setting is a chair, which is also used as a prop. To begin with it is used simply as a seat, but as the dance progresses it becomes a psychological prop for the victim, who relates to it in various ways, from safe haven to trap. The chair is of great significance to the victim and his ever changing relationship to it reflects his state of mind. This gives resonance to the choreographer's additional perspective on the dance, as a metaphor for the life of the dancer who is torn between dancing and retiring from the stage.

Some of the ways the chair is used in *Swansong* are as:

- ◆ Prison bars
- ◆ Shackles
- ◆ A shield
- ◆ A weapon
- ◆ A burden
- ◆ A safe haven

Section 2: Appreciating *Swansong*

Worksheet 1: Music and Design

(Questions appropriate for GCSE Dance):

Once you have seen *Swansong* on video or in performance, use the General Information section and the Study Notes to answer the questions below:

Describe the set and lighting design for *Swansong*.

Refer to levels, directions of focus, entrances and exits, position on the stage, etc.

How does the lighting contribute to the mood of the dance?

Think about how the lighting is used in the different sections of the piece.

Describe the design for another dance which contrasts with that for *Swansong*.

Look at *Petrushka*, *Swan Lake*, *Sergeant Early's Dream*, for example.

Give four examples of the way the chair is used in *Swansong*.

How have chairs been used in other dances?

Look at choreographers and companies such as Lloyd Newson (DV8), Mark Murphy (V-TOL), Yolande Snaithe, CandoCo.

Apart from the chair, what other props are used in *Swansong* and how?

In what other dances are similar props used and how?

For example, *Petrushka*.

What effect does the introduction of these props in *Swansong* have?

How does the audience react? How does the atmosphere change according to the way the props are used?

Describe the costumes for *Swansong*. How do they help to convey a sense of character?

For instance, what colours and types of clothes are worn? Is anyone dressed alike? What do the costumes tell the audience about the characters?

Contrast the costumes for *Swansong* with those for another work choreographed by Christopher Bruce.

Look at *Rooster* or *Ghost Dances*, for example.

Who composed the music for *Swansong*?

Throughout *Swansong* how is the music used to create an atmosphere for the dance?

Refer to moments of silence, or where sounds other than the music are important, rhythm, different dynamics, speed, style, etc.

What types of sound (or instrumentation) has the composer used?

What imagery from the victim's solos is reflected in the music

Critical responses to performances of *Swansong*

I do not want to give the impression that it is a gloomy work. True, the attitude of the two captors to their prisoner is decidedly unfriendly. They interrogate him (the patter of feet suggesting question and answer); they bully him, make fun of him, torment him; in the end, beat him up and are left looking at the corpse. Or rather, and this is part of the reason for the ballet's positive impression, they are left looking at the empty chair where the dead body must be imagined, while their victim's spirit escapes at last, in one of several gravely beautiful solos...which punctuate the ballet.

(John Percival, 'Prisoner on the wing', *The Times*, 4 June 1988)

The prisoner is expected to play games, and the gaolers' obsession with tap rhythms forces him into temporary membership of the old boy network. The niceness though is ominous, and the authoritarians turn their trifling into protracted killer play, from which they emerge as the losers.

(Ann Nugent, 'Sadler's Wells: *Swansong*', *The Stage*, 9 June 1988)

Christopher Bruce's *Swansong*, a prisoner interrogated by two brutal guards, was given a tremendously powerful performance by its three original protagonists... The sheer virtuosity of their dancing, their timing, their projection of the three characters was deserving of the cheers and applause, and Bruce's clever choreography is simply moving because... he shows us the triumph of the human spirit over oppression.

(Edward Thorpe, *London Evening Standard*, 5 July 1991)

For sheer quality, it's hard to beat Christopher Bruce's little masterpiece, *Swansong*. Bruce is heavily into oppression, but treats a prisoner's fatal interrogation with a brilliantly light touch - two warders tapdance their way to murder in a grotesque burlesque of brutality. Koen Onzia is the victim, beaten to oblivion without a blow being struck and finding freedom in death with no hint of bathos. Onzia's performance is hauntingly sincere, breathtakingly beautiful and not to be missed.

(Jeffery Taylor, 'At last, a break from the pap for grown-ups', *Mail on Sunday*, 7 July 1991)

Christopher Bruce has added a programme note suggesting a more personal subtext beneath the obvious context of a political prisoner. Read it how you will, the work packs a tremendous punch in its representation of a man struggling at the end of his tether and finally overcoming - not least because it mixes much lively humour with the grimness. More and more this work shows itself as the finest ballet made by any British choreographer during the last decade.

(John Percival, *The Times*, 8 July 1991)

Few ballets could immediately grip and hold an audience as this masterpiece does. A poignant account of an interrogation of a prisoner by two guards, it succeeds at many levels of dance and theatre, and is wonderfully rich and complex as it builds to a coup de theatre in its climax.

(Nicholas Dromgoole, 'The trail's gone cold for the golden oldies', *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 May 1995)

Echoes of Argentine politics can be felt in Swansong, but the power of the performers radiates a more universal resonance. Didy Veldman is riveting as the woman who does not break, no matter how much she is yanked around in the acrobatic choreography. And there was a purity about her deliverance as she walked out in a beam of light, courtesy of David Mohr.

As the secret police, Christopher Powney and Sarah Warsop managed successfully to channel their tangos, soft-shoe or Astaire routines (cane but no top hat) into metaphors for intimidation, not entertainment. Only Philip Chambon's percussion score on tape was literal, serving as a soundtrack. The choreography here is the equivalent of plain talk, but the torture-by-dance joke is never a joke in itself. Mr Bruce took a gamble with a risky image and won.

(Anna Kisselgoff, 'Troupe emerges in eclectic identity', *New York Times*, 19 September 1996)

Christopher Bruce explored a much darker place in the human psyche with his Swansong, which depicted the interrogation of a political prisoner... Yet Bruce's approach had a vanilla flavour, and his use of tap-dancing and the cha-cha as ironic metaphors for torture drained the work of its potential drama, undercutting the dance's creative partnering. Swansong was at its best in a series of spirit-opening solos for the victim, which alternated with the scenes of interrogation. Poised in lyrical attitudes and reaching toward a light that symbolized freedom, Didy Veldman offered a portrait of human hope and dignity that we would all do well to remember when the horrors of the nightly news begin to seem like entertainment.

(Robert Johnston, 'A brilliant and provocative dance of desire', *Newsday*, 19 September 1996)

Worksheet 2: Writing an appreciation of dance

The following pages offer a guide for students developing appreciation skills for GCSE and aim to encourage a progression from simple observation of movement, to analysis of form and ultimately to interpretation and evaluation. The questions below could be used as a reference for writing an appreciation of any dance.

1. Components of dance

Describe very simply what you saw on stage:

- ◆ How did the dancers move?
- ◆ Which movements, actions, steps were repeated most often?
- ◆ What gestures did the dancers make? (e.g. sigh, cry, yawn.)
- ◆ Did the dancers stop moving? When?
- ◆ What shapes and patterns did the dancers make?
- ◆ How did the dancers use physical contact? (e.g. to support, push, pull, lift.)
- ◆ What was the music like? Was it live or recorded?
- ◆ What were the costumes and lighting like?

2. Form of the dance

Describe how your observations in the first section relate to one another:

- ◆ Do movement sequences or motifs change; are they shortened or developed?
- ◆ How are the music and lighting used to support particular repetitions of movement?
- ◆ What are the main directions of travel used in each section?
- ◆ What qualities do the movements have? (eg. soft, flowing, aggressive, strong.)
- ◆ When do these movement qualities change?
- ◆ How does the dance start? Are there any particularly important moments?
- ◆ How does the dance end?

3. Interpretation

Now you have described the dance, go on to your own personal interpretation by looking at the questions again and asking 'why'?

- ◆ Why did different dancers use different movements, actions, gestures?
- ◆ What did these movements suggest?
- ◆ How did the music, lighting and movement convey the mood, ideas and story?
- ◆ Why did the pace and direction change at certain points?

4. Evaluation

After interpretation comes evaluation, where you have the opportunity to give your own opinion of the work, supported by your observations. Do you think it was successful and effective and if so, why? In writing your final evaluation you should try to answer four types of question:

1. What did I observe? (Dance movements, music, costume, lighting, etc.)
2. How did all of these elements relate to one another?
3. What were the qualities, moods and meanings of the dance?
4. In my opinion, how well were these elements combined? Was the choreography / dancing effective?

Worksheet 3: Appreciating *Swansong*

There is no 'correct' interpretation of a dance piece. Christopher Bruce, the choreographer, makes it very clear that he would like to give an audience the freedom to interpret and respond to his work without a fixed idea of what the dance means. When writing an appreciation of a dance work, however, it is important to use specific evidence to justify your opinions.

Look at the extracts of reviews from established dance critics on pages 19 & 20 and then use the questions next to the synopsis of *Swansong* to write your own review. It may help you to refer to the section in the Study Notes about the creation of *Swansong* and the choreographer's sources of inspiration (page 3).

Section 1 (Questions and Answers)

Introduction of interrogation theme.

Reference to vaudeville and tap dance styles and steps.

Movements of pushing, pulling, balancing and lifting between interrogators and victim.

Use of the chair to balance the victim's weight.

Question and answer sequences with foot tapping.

What does the opening scene suggest to you?

Why do you think the choreographer uses tap steps in this scene?

How do the choreographer's techniques help to portray the theme of imprisonment?

What atmosphere is created by the music?

Section 2 (Tea for Two)

Interrogators put on hats, red nose is fastened on victim.

Movements drawn from ballroom dance with a syncopated rhythm echoed in the music.

Victim is forced to imitate interrogators' movements.

Interrogators' attitude to victim shifts to extremes, eg. physical violence followed by indulgence.

What does the introduction of these props suggest to you?

What is the effect of the syncopated rhythm during this section of the dance?

What atmosphere is created by the interrogators' changes of attitude? How is this demonstrated in the choreography and music?

Section 3 (First solo for the victim)

Slow and lyrical movements and music. Extended body line, arabesques, leaps.

Victim moves along diagonal line within the shaft of light from the source, upstage left.

What do you think the choreographer is trying to convey in this section? Why?

Section 4 (Slow trio)

Interaction between all three dancers with use of body weight transference and flow.
Use of body contact to manoeuvre and lift.
Chair used as a prop throughout the sequence.

How is the chair used as part of the dance in this section?
What atmosphere does this create?

Section 5 (Second solo)

Solo for the victim, performed without accompaniment.
Movements are slow, long and sustained.
Chair is used in a variety of ways.

What does the lack of accompaniment contribute to the whole dance?
What relationship is there between the dance and the music throughout Swansong?

Section 6 (Cane dance)

Interrogators re-enter with canes.
Tap dance and vaudeville routines used again. Jazz dance style movements for hips and legs.
Victim uses chair to defend himself from the interrogators' canes.
Victim finally collapses, apparently dead.

Identify a particular phrase or motif in this section. How does the choreographer develop and change a phrase with repetition?

Section 7 (Final solo)

Victim rises from the chair and dances a solo, with controlled movements, arms resembling wings.
Interrogators stay frozen in position, either side of the chair, throughout this section.
Victim's solo is directed towards the shaft of light upstage left, but also refers back to the chair and the frozen position of the interrogators.
Victim exits towards the shaft of light.

What is your interpretation of this section? Support your opinion with reference to the movements and positions of the dancers on the stage.

Section 3. Practical work

This section aims to give ideas for creative work based around the different themes in *Swansong*, which it is hoped will enable students to gain a more in-depth understanding of some of the choreographic devices used.

Four workshop plans have been written out in full, followed by ideas for further development. Each plan uses sections from *Swansong*, sometimes as a theme and sometimes using actual movement phrases, which could be adapted as necessary.

Plans 1 and 2 may be more suitable for GCSE Dance students and plans 3 and 4 for A Level Dance students. However, either could be adapted to suit your group's experience and should be seen as a starting point for your own work.

Workshop 1: The Chair

Exploring the possibilities of movement using a chair as a prop

Workshop 2: Exploring the Trio

Using three people to lift, support and manipulate their body weight

Workshop 3: Questions and Answers

Using the interrogators' movement material to create duets

Workshop 4: Freedom

Using the victim's movement material to explore the theme of 'freedom'

Workshop 1: The Chair

Aim: To explore the possibilities of movement using a chair to support the dance physically and emotionally.

Warm-up: Whole body warm-up, incorporating the following:

- ◆ Swing and rebound
- ◆ Floor work

1. Working alone, use a chair as a prop to create four frozen images. Two of these should use the chair as a form of restriction, or barrier, and the other two should use it as a physical or emotional support.

Link these images together, making the transitions very slow and sustained in pace and dynamics.

2. Create four positions representing hope, anger, exhaustion and fear, placing yourself under, on or around the chair.

Move between the positions with great speed and then hold the shape.

3. Work in groups of about three people, choosing one person to be the victim. Use one chair between you and create the following images:

- ◆ The chair as a form of defence
- ◆ The chair as a safe haven
- ◆ The chair as an instrument of torture, or to tease and torment
- ◆ The chair as a prison

4. Working alone, build a slow travelling sequence which goes in one line of direction, using the movements listed below:

- ◆ balance
- ◆ turn
- ◆ lunge
- ◆ change of level

Choose a point of focus to travel towards, like the victim's shaft of light.

5. Working with your group again, link together all the movement material you have created. Ask yourselves the following questions to help you create your dance:

- ◆ What is the overall atmosphere?
- ◆ Are any particular moments more important than others?
- ◆ How can these be emphasised (eg. through repetition)?
- ◆ Which image could start or end the piece (or do both)?

Workshop 2: The Trio

Aim: To explore ways of lifting, supporting and manipulating in small groups.

Warm-up: Whole body warm-up, followed by trust exercises, based on the following:

The whole group stands in a very close circle with one person in the middle, eyes closed. That person is gently passed around the group, being encouraged to give their entire body weight to the circle of people. As they get more comfortable, the circle could get a little wider. The sensations felt by the individual and the group should then be discussed, particularly the vulnerability the person in the middle may feel.

Work in threes, with two people taking the weight of the third who stands in the middle and leans slowly from side to side, forward or back.

Creative work:

1. With a partner, explore the following movements:

- ◆ push
- ◆ pull
- ◆ lift
- ◆ drag
- ◆ roll

2. Take it in turns to guide your partner to move through a sequence of movements based on the action words above. Start by using your hand on your partner's shoulder to push gently and guide your partner through a sequence of movements, caused by the impetus of your push, eg. a turn, fall or roll.

3. Experiment with leading with other body parts and try to incorporate some of the movements you explored earlier.

When you are lifting your partner, try to get the feeling of using your body as a lever, rather than putting strain on your muscles. It helps if you take the time to explore the movements and learn to trust your partner.

4. Build a sequence using six of the movements you have developed, working for a contrast in level and dynamics. Make sure the transition between each movement is fluid and controlled.

Development:

1. Working in small groups of about three people, choose one person to represent the victim. Using the action words you explored earlier as a starting point, add the idea of manipulation or domination of the person representing the victim. Explore movements from these additional words:

- ◆ trap
- ◆ fling
- ◆ hold
- ◆ escape
- ◆ restrict
- ◆ flight
- ◆ suspend
- ◆ close

Try to maintain physical contact with one another throughout in order to 'control' the victim.

2. Using the themes of imprisonment and freedom discuss the questions below:

What sort of society is Swansong set in?

What might the reason be for the victim's imprisonment?

Are there any similar events in real life? (Refer to Section 4 for some ideas.)

Work on your sequence again, this time adding a sense of character and thinking about the atmosphere you would like to create. How do the interrogators show their dominance? Experiment with moving in unison to show that there is a 'team' against one person. How can the victim find a way to escape?

Workshop 3: Questions and Answers

Aim: To explore the different dance genres used in Swansong and use features of those styles as a starting point for duets.

Warm-up: Whole body warm-up, incorporating some of the following:

- ◆ foot brushes and footwork
- ◆ loose leg and hip movements
- ◆ sways, rocks on the toes and small changes in weight

Ideas from the repertoire:

Try out the following tap steps, based on movements in *Swansong*:

Strike the ball of the right foot forward (like half a shuffle), put weight on right toe, put left heel down, then the right heel down. Repeat starting on the left. (The interrogators use this step to approach the chair during Section 1.)

- ◆ Walk forward with toe-heel twice, shuffle one foot out and across the other, put it down and repeat the whole step on the other side. You could also add a turn on the spot to this step.
- ◆ Stamp on the right, brush out to the side with left toe, beat with the right heel, touch left toe behind, beat with the right heel. Repeat to the other side.

- ◆ rhythmic steps

1. Alone, or with a partner, invent your own simple tap steps, using the following parts of your foot (and any others - you might already be an experienced tapper!):

- ◆ Heel beat (with weight on same foot)
- ◆ Heel dig (with weight on other foot)
- ◆ Toe (transferring weight on to this foot)
- ◆ Toe brush (striking the toe along the floor)
- ◆ Toe shuffle (bringing it back as well)
- ◆ Toe tip (touching the tip of the toe on the floor, weight on other foot)

2. Working in pairs, try having a non-verbal conversation with your partner, using your feet and hands (and other body parts) to communicate. For example you could use realistic gestures:

- ◆ stand tapping your foot in impatience
- ◆ clap your hands suddenly to draw attention to yourself

You could also use more abstract ideas:

- ◆ tapping out your steps with increasing volume or extra beats to get your message across.

If it helps, decide first how your 'conversation' will go:

- ◆ is it friendly or sinister?
- ◆ how well do you know each other, if at all?
- ◆ which of you has more power in this scene and why?

While building this sequence think about:

- ◆ the speed and dynamics of your movements
- ◆ the spatial relationship between you and your partner.

Use the movements and qualities you have chosen to create an atmosphere between you, such as conflict or harmony.

Development: Duets (Tea for Two)

Ideas from the repertoire:

In pairs, one person stands behind the other, both facing the front left diagonal. Step forward right, forward left, forward right, step back left. Spin out away from each other, holding hands, come back in towards each other. Spin the other way, crossing past each other, then come together in the ballroom hold and travel forward, turning as you go.

Step right, cross left foot over, put weight on right, touch left to side. Repeat starting left. Keep it small and get the rhythm, using your arms too - you've seen this step!

Creative work:

With a partner, decide on an overall style you would like to use and create a short unison sequence.

In role as the interrogators, incorporate a rhythmic pattern of questioning and focus your dance in one direction, perhaps towards a chair.

Discuss the questions below:

- ◆ How do the references to the different dance styles add to the theatricality of the piece?
- ◆ Why do you think Christopher Bruce chooses a tap dance, soft-shoe act and a cane dance?
- ◆ Is the pathos of the victim's situation heightened by the inclusion of these styles? Why?
- ◆ In what different ways are the canes used?

Workshop 4: Freedom

Aim: To explore the theme of 'freedom' using the victim's movement material as a stimulus

Warm-up: Exercises could include the following:

- ◆ Curling down and up the spine
- ◆ Spiralling and twisting through the back
- ◆ Pliés and lunges
- ◆ Leg and arm extensions

Ideas from the repertoire: the victim's first solo

The solo starts with the victim sitting on the chair. However, with a large group (and a shortage of chairs!) you could just as easily start standing up, feet in parallel. The solo is generally slow and sustained, but there are moments where the dynamic changes and you can move more energetically. Allow the music to influence your interpretation of the dance - there are no set counts.

1) Curl down the spine, letting the arms hang by your sides, clench the fists tightly by your knees.

2) Bend the knees and extend the left arm forward and the right arm to the side, unclenching the fists into a 'scream'.

3) Pivot towards the left side, right leg back, and bring arms behind into the first 'swan' position. Leading with the elbows, smoothly raise the arms behind like wings, then repeat in a 'shudder'.

4) Lean back, with chest towards the ceiling and hands by your sides, looking up. Flex the toes of the left foot off the floor.

5) Turn your head towards the upstage left corner, as if seeing the shaft of light and take four steps towards the light, as if drawn, ending by standing with feet flat on the floor in parallel, facing that diagonal. Reach first the left arm, then the right arm towards the imaginary light.

6) Twist to the right side and collapse in a spiral, with the right arm behind. Pivot on the right leg, with the left foot by your right knee in a parallel retiré. Pitch your weight onto the left leg and tilt to that side, either extending the right leg, or bringing it to a retiré turned out.

7) Turn on the spot towards the left, bringing the toes of your right foot over your left and your right elbow in for momentum. Step on to your left foot and face the left side, extending your right arm and leg into a 'skating' arabesque, with your left arm hanging

by your side. Bring your right hand to your right shoulder, then extend the arm forward, palm upwards, in front of you, as you go into the next movement.

8) Moving towards the same direction, pick up the dynamic with three steps (right, left, right), falling on to your right foot, then left and finishing in a low lunge with your weight on your bent right leg, with left leg extended to the side along the floor. In this position your left arm is in front and your right arm to the side, with your head up and eyes focusing forward. (The picture of the victim on page 9 of the Study Notes is almost exactly this position.)

9) Quickly slap the floor with your left hand, then your right and with both arms make a big circle over your head. Sit down into your left hip, turn on your bottom to the left, finishing with your right leg crossed over your left. Lie back with legs still crossed, knees up and arms out to the sides.

10) Come up and sit hunched over with your left knee bent up and reach your left hand slowly through the gap between your legs, as though reaching through a hole in the wall.

Creative work:

Invent your own solo phrase using simple stretches, walks and body bends. Consider the use of head and eye focus - try one version which keeps the head 'away' from the movement and one version which involves the head 'towards' the movement. How does the meaning change?

Try dancing your solo after imposing a restriction, eg. you cannot move from the spot, you cannot use your arms, another person gets in your way.

Other ideas from the victim's movement material you could experiment with:

- ◆ Slow cartwheels, eg. over the chair.
- ◆ Posé back on the right leg, arms directly out to the sides with hands circling forwards - this is often followed by a hitch kick.
- ◆ The victim stands, 'breathes' with his arms and is pulled back.
- ◆ 'Swan' dive - in attitude, with the head and back pitched over and arm leading.
- ◆ The victim stands and balances with arms to the sides, leg forward and gradually pulls through the centre of his body until he falls back.
- ◆ Jazz slide to the floor (taking weight with one hand and foot, other hand extended upwards and other leg extended along the floor), which could go into a turn on both knees or on your bottom.
- ◆ Jeté forward, step into attitude in third position, step back into attitude in third. (Attitude is with bent legs.)

Development: Image of flight

1. Study the arm positions and leg extensions created by Christopher Bruce to imitate or describe the shape of a swan. Try these yourself and explore other possibilities, such as being very flexible in your back, or reducing the whole body movement into just one limb. Explore the smooth flow of movement that is floor bound, as if to represent swimming or flight.

- ◆ Consider the actions and qualities of a swan's movements, eg: serene above water, paddling below
- ◆ twisting the neck to reach food
- ◆ billowing wing feathers as a warning signal

How might you incorporate these qualities and actions into your dance?

2. A swan is said only to sing just before it dies, hence a person's 'swansong' could be their last great act. Look at how the image of the swan is used to represent death in classical ballet, such as in *Swan Lake* (both the classical version and Matthew Bourne's contemporary version for Adventures in Motion Pictures) and *The Dying Swan*. How is the same image used in other art forms?

What would you like your 'swansong' to be? Use that idea (or the poem below, if you are stuck!) to inspire a development of your flight solo.

The Silver Swan

The silver swan, who living had no note,
When death approached unlocked her silent throat,
Leaning her breast against the reedy shore, Thus sung her first and last, and sung no more:

Farewell all joys, O death come close mine eyes,
More geese than swans now live, more fools than wise.

Anon. c. 1600

Section 4. Swansong Across the Curriculum

This section offers suggestions for exploring the themes of freedom and imprisonment from Swansong not only in dance lessons, but in English, Drama, RE or Social Studies.

In summary, the following could be appropriate stimuli:

- ◆ Fiction which addresses the concepts of freedom, laws, justice and imprisonment, eg:

<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Margaret Atwood
<i>The Unknown Citizen</i>	W H Auden
<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	Ray Bradbury
<i>Galileo</i>	Bertolt Brecht
<i>Nostramo</i>	Joseph Conrad
<i>Death and the Maiden</i>	Ariel Dorfman
<i>July's People</i>	Nadine Gordimer
<i>Brave New World</i>	Aldous Huxley
<i>The Trial</i>	Franz Kafka
<i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee
<i>The Crucible</i>	Arthur Miller
<i>1984</i>	George Orwell
<i>Mountain People</i>	Harold Pinter

- ◆ Examination of the role of the artist as dissident, eg. the poetry of Bertolt Brecht, paintings of Diego Rivera
- ◆ Writings of political detainees, eg:

<i>The Long Walk to Freedom</i>	Nelson Mandela
<i>Letters to Olga</i>	Vaclav Havel
<i>Grey is the Colour of Hope</i>	Irina Ratushinskaya
- ◆ Experiences of hostages, eg:

<i>An Evil Cradling</i>	Brian Keenan
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- ◆ Amnesty International reports
- ◆ Study of human rights, using *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (obtainable from Amnesty International) as a starting point
- ◆ Examination of the relationship between the law and the economic, political and cultural traditions of a society (eg. contrasts between South Africa and South America; Iraq and North America / Britain).

Lesson 1

Topic: Censorship and Freedom of Expression

1. In small groups the students should create three short scenes, lasting five minutes in total, entitled 'Matters of Concern for Young People Today'. They should be asked to imagine that they are making the piece to be shown on television. The TV producer (teacher in role) will reserve the right to make suggestions for editing the pieces after they have been devised.

2. The students show their pieces, but the TV producer chooses a particular criterion for 'censoring' the work, for instance: nothing that criticises the education system or the government, any references to sex, etc.

3. Discuss the following questions:
 - ◆ Were the TV producer's comments fair?
 - ◆ Who might have an interest in preventing statements on the issues which were censored here?
 - ◆ Should the media and arts in Britain have complete freedom to express all opinions, or should some views be censored?
 - ◆ How does freedom of expression in Britain compare with that of other countries?
 - ◆ What circumstances encourage people to speak out or keep quiet?

You could use the following examples as material for discussion:

- ◆ Plans for a parade through a Catholic community in Northern Ireland by the Orange Order, or a march by the British National Party through a multiracial community in mainland Britain.
- ◆ Attempts by ex officers of MI5 and MI6 to publish information on the workings of the UK's security services as a book, or on the Internet (David Shayler).
- ◆ The Salman Rushdie affair.

Lesson 2

Topic: Prisoner without a name

In Argentina during the 1970s, the ruling military Junta conducted a brutal war against groups considered to be enemies of the state. Jacobo Timerman was the editor of *La Opinion*, a liberal Argentinian newspaper which campaigned for human rights, such as freedom of expression, trade unions etc. In 1977 Timerman was 'disappeared' by the army and subjected to torture. No charges were ever brought against him.

1. Copy the extract from Timerman's book, *Prisoner Without Name, Cell Without Number* on page ? and read it with the group without filling in the background, then use it as a stimulus for discussion:

- ◆ Where is the action taking place?
- ◆ What kind of rules seem to operate in this society? Who makes the rules?
- ◆ Is the prisoner protected by law?
- ◆ Why might he have been arrested? What sort of crime might merit this treatment?

2. Explain the 'reasons' for Timerman's detention and tell the group he was held for two years before being released at the Junta's command. When he was finally set free his possessions were confiscated and he was expelled from Argentina.

- ◆ In which other societies are people tortured for expressing an opinion? Use the case studies on the following pages to stimulate further discussion:
 - ◆ What methods are used by governments in these countries to silence people?
 - ◆ What are the implications of continuing to speak out?
 - ◆ Why do such governments restrict people's freedom?

3. Working in groups of three people, one person in each group leaves the room for a few moments, while the other two decide on the 'crime' the absent person has committed. In role as interrogators, it is then their job to extract a confession from that person, even though he or she is innocent.

- ◆ Discuss the tactics used by the interrogators. How did they join forces to extract the confession? How did it feel to be interrogated?

4. Justice and further research:

Use cases of recent miscarriages of justice to debate the case for or against the reinstatement of the death penalty in Britain. The cases of Ruth Ellis, Craig and Bentley and Timothy Evans would all make an interesting starting point for drama work.

(The Craig and Bentley story has been scripted in a series of secondary Theatre-in-Education programmes, edited by Pam Schweitzer and published by Methuen. A BBC documentary, '14 Days in May' is a film account of the last days of an innocent man Edward Earl Johnson on death row in 1987.)

Further resources:

A human rights education video pack, 'Why Human Rights', is available from Team Video. Cost £38. Tel: 020 8960 5536. Web: www.team-video.co.uk

Leaflets, films, books, reports on prisoners of conscience and related topics are available from Amnesty International UK. Tel:020 7814 6200. Web:www.amnesty.org.uk

Extract from Prisoner Without Name, Cell Without Number

by Jacobo Timerman:

We arrived at a certain place. A pair of large doors opened up. They squeaked. Dogs barked quite close by. Someone said, 'I feel fulfilled'. I was taken out of the car and flung onto the ground.

A long interval elapsed. I could hear only footsteps. Suddenly, some bursts of laughter. Someone approached and placed what seemed to be the barrel of a revolver against my head. He put one hand on my head and from up close, perhaps leaning over me, said, 'I'm going to count to ten. Say goodbye, Jacobo dear. It's all up with you.' I said nothing. Again he spoke: 'Don't you want to say your prayers?' I said nothing. He started to count.

His voice was well modulated, what you might call an educated voice. He counted slowly, enunciating clearly. It was a pleasant voice. I remained silent, wondering: 'Was it inevitable for me to die like this? Yes, it was inevitable. Was it what I desired? Yes, it was what I desired. Wife, children, I love you. Adios, adios, adios...' ...Ten. Ha ha ha! I heard laughter. I too began laughing. Loudly. Great guffaws. The blindfold is removed from my eyes. I'm in a large, dimly lit study: there's a desk, chairs. Colonel Ramon J Camps, Chief of Police of the province of Buenos Aires, is observing me. He orders my arms, handcuffed behind my back, to be freed. This takes a while because the keys have been misplaced. Or again, it may have taken only a few minutes. He orders a glass of water to be brought to me.

'Timerman', he says, 'your life depends on how you answer my questions.'

'Without preliminary trial, Colonel?'

'Your life depends on your answers.'

'Who ordered my arrest?'

'You're a prisoner of the First Army Corps in action.'

Case Study A: Boy Freed on Doodling Charge

A Turkish court has acquitted a schoolboy of spreading Communist propaganda by drawing a hammer and sickle on his schoolbooks in a case seen as a test of the Turkish Government's stated desire to allow greater freedom of thought.

'Little MC,' as the Turkish press calls him to protect his identity, was denounced by his head teacher one year ago and has been suspended from school ever since. He was accused of drawing Communist graffiti on his books and desk and discussing left wing youth leaders. The fifteen year old spent more than three months in jail during his trial and another month in medical custody undergoing psychiatric tests before being released.

Reports showed that while he was mentally sound, MC had received a culture shock on coming to Turkey - he previously lived in West Germany and told the court that he was used to talking about whatever he wanted there.

The state security court prosecutor in the western city of Izmir asked for a sentence of at least seven years, but the judge acquitted the boy without comment. MC, now aged sixteen, fainted when he heard the verdict.

The chairman of Izmir human rights association, Dr Alparslan Berkay, welcomed the decision, but said that it had been made because of MC's age, rather than in defence of freedom of thought. Clauses in the Turkish penal code ban the formation of a Communist party or spreading Communist propaganda. They also ban the founding of an Islamic fundamentalist party. Both the Prime Minister and President have said the relevant clauses should be abolished.

Source: *The Guardian*, October 1989

Case Study B: Jailed for Recording a Song

Ngawang Sangdrol is a Buddhist nun from Tibet. She was first jailed for four months in 1990 for taking part in a five minute demonstration calling for Tibetan independence. In 1992 she was arrested in another protest in central China, again calling for Tibetan independence and she was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

In 1993 this sentence was increased to nine years when she, and thirteen other jailed nuns in Drapchi Prison, were found guilty of composing and recording messages to their supporters and pro-independence songs and poems. A tape recorder had been secretly smuggled into the jail. One song includes the words:

No matter how hard we are beaten
Our linked arms cannot be separated

The time will come when the sun
Will shine through the clouds

Torture is endemic in China, causing many deaths each year. Treatment of political prisoners in Chinese jails, including that of detained Tibetan nuns, is often brutal, with widespread reports of the use of electric batons that give powerful shocks, beatings, the prolonged use of handcuffs or leg irons in ways that cause intense pain, and the suspension of prisoners for lengthy periods by their arms, often combined with beatings.

In 1996, while being punished for a breach of prison rules, Ngawang Sangdrol shouted out 'Free Tibet!'. As a result she, and four other nuns who were also being punished, were reportedly beaten by prison guards. Ngawange was held in solitary confinement with reduced rations, and in July 1996 her sentence was increased to eighteen years.

Source: Amnesty International

Case Study C: No Joke

Two stand-up comedians, U Pa Pa Lay and U Lu Zaw, from Myanmar, belong to a theatre group. In January 1996, to mark the 48th anniversary of Burma's independence, they joined in a performance in front of a crowd of two thousand supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The concert took place in Yangon at the home of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the leader of the NLD and winner of the Nobel Prize. She has been under almost continuous house arrest since her landslide election victory in 1990 was ignored and set aside by Myanmar's military junta.

The two comedians sang comic songs about the country's military rulers, satirising military repression and government co-operatives. Both men were arrested a few days after the performance and charged under the Emergency Provisions Act, which provides imprisonment for anyone who 'causes or intends to spread false news, knowing beforehand that it is untrue'. They were sentenced to seven years in prison and sent to work at the Kyein Kran Ka Labour Camp with iron bars on their legs.

Source: Amnesty International

Case Study D: Environment and Death

Whether I live or die is immaterial. It is enough to know that there are people who commit time, money and energy to fight this one evil among so many others predominating worldwide. If they do not succeed today, they will succeed tomorrow.

Ken Saro-Wiwa, a distinguished environmental activist and well-known Nigerian novelist, poet and TV script writer, was the president of MOSOP, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in Nigeria. Half a million Ogoni people live in Rivers State in Eastern Nigeria. MOSOP campaigns to protect their environment from environmental damage and the pollution of water, air and soil through the exploration and oil pipeline activity of oil companies such as Shell. MOSOP campaigned for piped water, electricity, adequate roads, schools and medical services, as well as for compensation and a greater measure of autonomy for the Ogoni people.

In May 1994 Ken Saro-Wiwa was arrested by the Nigerian authorities, along with fourteen other Ogoni activists. They were charged with responsibility for the deaths of four Ogoni tribal leaders in a riot, even though Ken Saro-Wiwa had actually been hundreds of miles away at the time.

During their eight month imprisonment in Port Harcourt, the Ogoni detainees were denied adequate food, water and medical attention. Torture of prisoners is routine in Nigeria and many political prisoners have suffered serious ill health and death as a result of medical neglect and malnutrition in prisons.

The trial of the Ogonis was conducted by the state appointed Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal, specifically created for the purpose by Nigeria's ruling military junta. In the

tribunal, 'being responsible for contributing to a civil disturbance' was held as grounds for a finding of murder - the mandatory punishment for which was execution by hanging. Relatives of the detainees and their defence lawyers were assaulted and arrested and lawyers in the defence team withdrew from the case. Nine of the accused were found guilty and were hanged at Port Harcourt Prison on 10 November.

Source: Amnesty International

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