

DANCING AMBIVALENCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
OF MARK MORRIS' CHOREOGRAPHY
IN *DIDO AND AENEAS* (1989), *THE HARD NUT* (1991),
AND *ROMEO AND JULIET*, *ON MOTIFS OF SHAKESPEARE* (2008).

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ABSTRACT

DANCING AMBIVALENCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MARK MORRIS' CHREOGRAPHY IN *DIDO AND AENEAS* (1989), *THE HARD NUT* (1991), AND *ROMEO AND JULIET, ON MOTIFS OF SHAKESPEARE* (2008).

Mark Morris is deeply engaged with dance traditions and the classics, but he transforms them into modern, eclectic pieces rather than merely restaging them. While attentive to musical structure, he disregards original choreographic styles set to it. He projects warm humanity in his dances, but refuses to mystify human nature. He avoids rigid gender distinctions in dance presenting multifaceted expressions of gender and sexuality. Characterizing Morris' dual attitudes as ambivalence, this study explores Morris' ambivalence as it appears in *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*.

To interpret Morris' ambivalence and the double meanings in his works, I use a multi-dimensional approach including analyses of narrative, gender and sexuality, and musicality. I interviewed Mark Morris twice for this study and traced the context of his productions, including the original story, the original score, materials on musicians, and compared his production with other dance versions.

When referencing the traditions, Morris uses sources without regard to their original contexts or codifications and skillfully weaves them into his own unique choreographic style. Morris often dissolves the distinctions between reality and fantasy, and good and evil, emphasizing reconciliation and love, without imposing moral lessons. He opens up possibilities for the characters by presenting gender and sexuality through

his trademark gender role inversions and emphasizes that identity is an ongoing process, something the characters actively learn. Morris is noted for his attentive reflection of musical elements, and has been often accused of creating “predictable” relationships to music. However, Morris sculpts his own story and characters from musical elements within the overarching musical structure, portraying the characters and their emotions through detailed variations of movement quality.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Approach to the Subject

At the Temple admission interview, one faculty member asked me, “Hwan, you’re a writer, dancer, dance researcher. If you can choose only one, what would you want to be?” I had not been asked that before, and had not thoroughly thought it through, yet my answer was almost instant: “I want to be an audience.” I think often of that moment which has been so important in my life. It makes me keep thinking of what dance means to me, and of the reason for all my efforts that have involved dance and dancing, such as writing, performing, studying, and watching dance. I realized that my lived experiences as an audience member have shaped my perspective, identity, value system, and personality as an individual. They also heavily influenced my desire to understand and write about dance.

The pleasure, enthusiasm, and excitement of appreciating dance leads many young audience members to become dancers. As a dancer, if there is a common point Mark Morris and I share, it is that we both made a decision to become a dancer because of a life-changing experience as a young audience member; I decided to be a dancer at the age of seven, fascinated by my sister’s dance at her school talent show; young Morris decided to be a dancer at a performance of José Greco’s flamenco troupe to which his mother took him (Acocella, 1993, p.20).

My first encounter with Mark Morris’ choreography was not at a live performance, since his tours never came to Korea, but through a videotape of *The Hard Nut* in the early

1990s. When I first watched this production I was a dance school student who frequently skipped dinner to keep her body weight below 100 pounds; I believed that the beautiful configuration of a dancer's body and her technical dexterity were the most important things in dance. As a young dancer who had not been exposed to diverse works of Western choreographers, Morris' *The Hard Nut* was a pleasant shock which urged me to realize what I often missed as a dancer: the pleasure of dancing! Due to the intensive training required of a young dancer in dance classes, I did not fully enjoy the super ordinary fun of dancing. I was fascinated by the natural and beautiful movement of dancers who have diverse body types as well as Morris' imaginative and witty choreography set to Tchaikovsky's music.

When I moved to New York in 2004, I had many chances to view Morris choreography such as *Plateé* (2005), *Mostly Mozart Dances* (2006), *Sylvia* for The San Francisco Ballet (2006), *King Arthur* (2008), and *The Hard Nut* (2010). As an audience member, I was impressed by Morris' ability to play with diverse genres and subjects as well as his humorous, yet insightful approach to dance. Moreover, what attracted me the most was his ambivalence which makes it difficult to classify his work as specific to a particular style. When I approach Morris' archives and materials as a researcher, it is hard to define his choreography due to his artistic versatility and unpredictability. Mark Morris' projects use a wide range of subjects and genres from Baroque opera to folk dance in combination with his own choreography; while Morris follows a narrative or a stylized mode of a classical work, he often mocks it by mimicking it in an imperfect manner; projecting an utopian vision with pure beauty of movement, he also presents its dark side

with grotesqueness. I became very interested in contextualizing his ambivalence, developing the following questions: In spite of Morris' versatility, what characteristics consistently appear in his works, contributing to the crystallization of his artistic direction? In what ways does Morris present and balance two contradictory concepts, generating such ambivalent meanings and reactions through his works?

This dissertation grows out of my perspective and experience as an audience member as well as a dancer. My choice of Mark Morris as my research topic is not only because of his significance as one of the foremost living choreographers, but because of the power of his choreography, which reminds me of the enthusiastic moment when I decided to become a dancer. This study is not, however, a homage dedicated to my favorite choreographer. Instead, through the analysis of Mark Morris' choreography, I aim to discover, not the artist's brilliant talent, but the dynamic structure of his choreography and the multilayered meanings in his works. In other words, by examining the ambivalence in Morris' choreography, I seek to affirm the dynamics of dance as an intellectual art which presents an insightful reflection on human beings within its codified structure.

According to Randy Martin, dance is not only "the reflexive mobilization of the body, but displays traces of the forces of contestation that can be found in society at large" (1998, p.6). In analyzing Morris' works, this study will show that, while dance maybe autobiographical, it also contributes and responds to the larger patterns of thought in a society. Also, by illuminating the ambivalent meanings embedded in a dance form, I argue that the meanings of dance are distinctive, yet not static.

Research Questions and Topic

Mark Morris has worked with a diverse group of collaborators, adopting a wide range of subjects and genres in his works. With the Mark Morris Dance Group he has choreographed 139 works; this extensive volume indicates his unceasing effort and curiosity towards creating new dance. Often referred to as a polymath, Morris' artistic versatility leads to contradictory viewpoints of him as a choreographer, ranging from "the last true inheritor of the modern dance tradition" (Siegel, 1995, p.190) to "an innovator of post modern dance" (Acocella, 1993, p.124), and from "new classicism" (Jowitt, 1988, p.99) to "a crusader for the politically correct cause of our times" (Siegel, p.190).

This study is an aesthetic inquiry into the choreography of Mark Morris which examines ambivalence as it appears in *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. Exploring a variety of dimensions of dance such as narratives and characterization, sexuality and gender, and use of musicality, this study analyzes the ambivalence in his works, considering the following questions.

- In the presentation of his version of classical works, how does Morris generate conflicting and complicated ideas, which create purposeful ambivalence in his dances?
- How does Morris create new versions of the classics which depart from the prevalent version while upholding the "classical" elements?
- How does Morris represent sexuality and gender roles, defying common notions of sexuality and gender?

- And finally, how does Morris choreograph dance corresponding to the music in both “reactionary” and “polemical” manners? ¹

I use the term ambivalence to characterize Morris’ choreography, which allows diverse and even contradictory interpretations. More precisely, the term ambivalence implies Morris’ role as a classicist, who is also called an intruder for twisting the classical version; his projection of contradictory norms and moods which feature both a utopian vision and its dark side; his multifaceted expressions of gender and sexuality; his diverse approaches to music from music visualization to his transposition of musical forms into dance; his incorporation of folk-inspired and ordinary movement into modern dance; and his pursuit of harmonious beauty and “narcissistic fondness for the grotesque” (Siegel, p. 189).

The title of this study, “Dancing Ambivalence”, implies the main dynamic of Morris’ choreography, which generates complicated and conflicting meanings and interpretations. Focusing on the three dances, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, I argue that Morris’ ambivalence is apparent not only in his body of work, which incorporates a wide variety of themes and subjects, but also within single works. Through the analysis of these three works, I argue that the coexistence of conflicting ideas, approaches, and concepts generates the unpredictability and dynamic in his dances. I suggest that Morris’ ambivalence differs from ambiguity, as it is purposeful rather than uncertain or arbitrary, and is

¹In the book *Mark Morris*, Acocella describes how Morris’ choreography relies on the music (1993, pp.159-162). Meanwhile, analyzing Morris’ *Gloria* (1981), Damsholt argues that Morris’ choreomusical aesthetics is “polemical” rather than reactionary or sentimental pastiche (2007, p.4).

distinguishable from diversity in the interplay of the conflicting concepts or approaches in his works. In other words, I argue that Morris' ambivalence is purposeful and dynamic, created by the juxtaposition of contradictory concepts.

In this study I will focus on four aspects of ambivalence in Mark Morris' dances. First, I examine Morris' ambivalent approach to classical works through the analysis of the narrative and characterization of his productions. When presenting his "versions" of the classical works, Morris both embraces and distorts the predominant style of the works. For instance, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The King Arthur* are based on the opera written by the English Baroque composer, Henry Purcell. Morris transposes them into "danced opera" (Kisselgoff, 1989, June 09), defying their original productions.² Also *The Hard Nut* is derived from the popular classic ballet *The Nutcracker*, using Tchaikovsky's score, but Morris' version gained its distinctiveness by departing from the familiar settings and dances. In *The Hard Nut*, he transposes a joyful ballet into a nightmarish American home in the 1960s.³ In his version of *Romeo and Juliet*, Morris eschews the cathartic and tragic ending, presenting instead a happy ending for the two young lovers, following the unperformed original version of the Prokofiev score. Interestingly, Morris refuses to say that he "reinterprets" the classics. In an interview with me,⁴ he argues, "I do not "recreate"

² In a review of *The King Arthur*, Rockwell argues, "it has long hovered on the outmost fringes of the operatic repertory" (2008, March 2, para.2).

³ "Mr. Morris' ballet is certainly a weird experience for those familiar with George Balanchine's standard-setting production of "The Nutcracker." "[Morris] takes a serious new look at an old classic" (Dunning, 1993, December 16, para.2 and 9).

⁴ The first interview was conducted on October 23, 2008 at Morris' office in the *Mark Morris Dance Group* in Brooklyn, New York.

or “reinterpret” someone else’s work. There is no original work... There is only a version.”

In reference to Morris’ ambivalent approach to the classical works, critic Michelle Kamhi (2005) calls Morris “a postmodern traditionalist”. Illustrating the discrepancies between Morris and other postmodern dancers, Kamhi points out that Morris’ choreography is far from the avant-garde artists who “contempt the past,” and remains “deeply ingrained in culture and custom” such as folk dance, classical ballet, and modern dance (para.1 and 9). Kamhi also argues that Morris uses music as the essential foundation of dance unlike other postmodernist choreographers such as Merce Cunningham (para.1). In this part, through the analysis of the narratives and characterization in his versions of classical works, I examine how Morris reconfigures the classical productions by both upholding them and twisting them into his dances.

The second aspect of ambivalence I focus on is Morris’ multifaceted expressions of gender and sexuality. As Acocella mentions, Morris was often called “bad boy” in the early years in part due to his provocative expression of sexuality and his “violation” of common notions of gender (1993, p. 90). In many of his works, Morris presents gender role inversions and explicit expressions of sexuality when he thinks it is necessary. Morris creates many unpredictable gender role switches in his dances, such as his portrayal of two main female characters in *Dido and Aeneas*, unisex snowflakes and male casting of Mrs. Stahlbaum in *The Hard Nut*, and female casting of Mercutio and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. Also, when presenting a couple’s dance, Morris has little interest in maintaining the conventional notions of masculine and

feminine. He challenges the common belief, reinforced through ballet and social dance, that couple dances must include a man and a woman. Instead, Morris uses all possible combinations in his couple dances. His interchanging of gender roles not only enhances the originality of the works, but also demonstrates the codified structures of dance by the creation of ambivalence. Interestingly, in the inversions of gender roles, by presenting imperfect imitation of one sex by another, Morris creates the instability of meaning. He displays the gender differences rather than concealing them (Acocella, p.94). In spite of the controversy surrounding his use of gender roles, Morris argues that what he wanted was “to extend the range of expressiveness for both sexes” (Acocella, p.92).

Third, I inspect Morris’ approach to music, discussing the dance qualities of his three works as related to music. He is very attentive to music, and his projection of musical elements into movement was often criticized as “music visualization.” “Music visualization” refers to a concept that called for movement equivalents to the timbres, rhythm, structure, and dynamics of music (Damsholt, 2007, pp 4-7). It was attempted by early modern dancers, notably by Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan. St.Denis mentions, “Music visualization in its purest form is the scientific translation into bodily action of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic structure of a musical composition, without intention to in any way “interpret” or reveal any hidden meaning apprehended by the dancer” (as cited in Cohen, 1992, p.130).⁵ Many modern dancers were against the preoccupation with music visualization, attempting to eliminate references to anything but movement itself (Damsholt, 2007, p.4).

⁵ The original source is *The Denishawn Magazine*, I, No.3 (Spring, 1925).

Morris hugely relies on music as a source of choreography. According to Acocella, unlike many other choreographers who first come up with a dance, Morris, almost always, conceives the idea for the dance from the music (p.196). “I study the score and I do all of the preparatory work in my room, analyzing the score” (Roseman, 2001, p.64). As he said, Morris listens to and analyzes the music before beginning his choreography and this process usually gives him ideas for the choreography.⁶ Regarding his choreography’s direct reflection of music such as the motif, structure, and rhythm in music, some critics have accused Morris of “visualizing” the pieces he choreographs, just as “a Disney animator” (Teachout, 2000, January 9, p.2).

Morris shows the intimate interplay of rhythm, phrasing, and dynamics between music and dance. At the same time, he is free from the music and its expected alliance with dance. For instance, Morris uses the full score of Tchaikovsky for *The Hard Nut*, but rejects the lavish and decorative style of nineteenth century ballet for which it was written. I argue that Morris’ approach is complicated and ambivalent rather than simply a “music visualization.” Further, this study touches a fundamental question regarding the idea of “music visualization” which presumes the subordinate relationship between music and dance. In spite of his reliance on musical structure, Morris claims that he strives for a perfect fit of music and dance, responding to “the laws of the body” (Acocella, p.172). Acocella sees Morris’ choreography as a translation of the emotional ideas generated by the musical structure. “People forget that somebody actually choreographed what Mickey Mouse does,” (Acocella, p. 177) Morris argues.

⁶ He insists on dancing to live music whenever possible and spends large portions of the company’s budget for the music (Acocella, p.176).

Mark Morris and His Choreography as a Research Subject

“My philosophy of dance? I make it up, and you watch it. End of philosophy” (Acocella, 1993, p.5). This was the reply that 32-year-old Mark Morris gave to a journalist in 1988, at the special press conference of Belgium’s state opera house. He had just taken over the position as the house’s director of dance. Twenty years later, I interviewed Morris at his office in New York. When I asked him if he had anything to add to his philosophy, he answered, “No, that’s it. I have nothing to add on.” Although his response is aggressively succinct, this episode illustrates his clear artistic direction as well as his personality.

With his outspokenness and extraordinary wit, Morris leapt into worldwide fame in his twenties. He was a dancer of astonishing power, an imaginative choreographer and intricate craftsman. By the end of the 1980’s, Morris was regarded as one of the greatest living choreographers of American modern dance and his works were recognized as classics (Macaulay, June 27, 2008, para. 2).

Over the last four decades, Mark Morris has choreographed 139 works with the Mark Morris Dance Group.⁷ His projects use a wide range of genres incorporating opera, classical music, folk dance, and writing. Prominent works of Mark Morris include *Gloria* (1981), set to Vivaldi, *Striptease* (1986), based on an essay by Roland Barthes,⁸ *L’Allegro*,

⁷ *The Mark Morris Dance Group* official homepage. Retrieved January 03, 2011 from <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/press>

⁸ Morris’ *Striptease* (1986) is based on Roland Barthes’ essay which argues that stripping de-eroticizes the body. By illustrating the stripper types, Morris focus on human vulnerability (Acocella, p.95).

Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato (1988), set to a pastoral ode by Handel, *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), his interpretation of Henri Purcell's baroque opera, *The Hard Nut* (1991), his eclectic version of *The Nutcracker* set in the middle class family in 1960s, *Grand Duo* (1993), *The Office* (1994), *All Fours* (2004), and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* (2008). Many of Morris' works are highly appreciated by both critics and audiences for being rich in pure dance and in meaning (Macaulay, 2008, June 27, para.4).

Morris has participated in a variety of collaborative works with diverse companies including opera, classical ballet, and modern dance companies as well as individual artists. For instance, Morris has created several ballet productions for San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Boston Ballet, and the Paris Opera Ballet. He also has worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, and English National Opera. As an avid admirer of opera and Baroque art, he has worked on many collaborative productions of opera in combination with his dances, such as *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), *Plateé* (2005), and *King Arthur* (2007).

Due to his artistic versatility, when I first approached Morris' archives and materials as a researcher, it was hard to characterize his choreographic "style." While the term "style" implies a consistent form of artistic expression,⁹ Morris' wide range of artistic choices makes it difficult to classify his work as specific to a particular style. I thought that this ambivalence was a pivotal characteristic of Morris' choreography,

⁹ Betsey Gibbons suggests a concept of style as "a constellation of qualitative features embodied by the dance work or by the artistic of the performer/choreographer" (1992, p.120).

making it difficult to characterize him or his work. Hence, after conducting an interview with him and proceeding to more study of him, I decided to focus on the analysis of the ambivalent character in his work, rather than defining the ambivalence as his static “style.”

Because a choreographer’s artistic style is distinctive, yet not static, I do not identify Morris’ choreographic style as fixed. In an interview with me, Morris refused to describe his style or philosophy specifically. “You can say I have a certain style, but I refuse to identify my work... I am freestanding...” Morris said, explaining that he is not interested in defining himself. As the term “style” implies an accumulation of qualitative features or a consistent strategy of an artist, it is hard to confirm that the ambivalence is consistently shown in all of his productions.

Also, as Morris’ works have been staged over several decades, the meanings or implications originally intended by the choreographer are not necessarily understood in the same way by contemporary society. For instance, in 1989 Anna Kisselgoff regarded Morris’ play of Dido as his declamation of “gay liberation,” but as Morris acknowledged in an interview,¹⁰ the political emphasis of gay liberation in his dances has been weakened nowadays. This illustrates the fluidity of meaning in dance disapproving the idea that the meaning of a dance is inherent and immutable.

Focused Subjects: Selected Works for the Analysis

In the analysis of Mark Morris’ works, I examine the ambivalence that appears in three representative works: *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On*

¹⁰ In an interview with me, Morris mentioned that, in earlier times, he used to include political statements related to sexuality in his dance, but because the times have changed so drastically, he is no longer concerned with such declarations.

Motifs of Shakespeare. In spite of their diverse themes and subjects, these productions share several features that exemplify his characteristic ambivalence. First, the wide range of artistic choices and directions, which appear in these dances, illustrate his versatility and unpredictability as a choreographer. Second, these productions were created in other genres and styles and Morris' productions reveal his unique approach to the classical works. In departing from their predominant forms and styles, Morris has revealed significant discrepancies in their plots and characterizations. Third, these productions include explicit sexuality and inversions of the gender roles, which defy the sexual assumptions of the original works. Morris has presented androgyny, unisex, and inversion of gender roles in these dances, expanding the range of expressiveness for both sexes as well as provoking diverse interpretations of his presentations. Fourth, music plays a significant role in these works, provoking extremely diverse criticisms from accusations of mere "music visualization" to excellent harmony of musical and dance.¹¹ More detailed contents of each dance work will be illustrated in following sections.

Dido and Aeneas (1989)

Mark Morris' version of *Dido and Aeneas* is a danced opera. First staged in 1989, it incorporates the full vocal and musical score of the opera written by English baroque composer Henry Purcell. Its narrative is the tragic story of Dido, the queen of Carthage, who reluctantly fell in love with Trojan War hero Aeneas, and then left Aeneas and committed suicide.

¹¹ Acocella mentions, "Morris choreography reflects the music to which it is set. The dance...is a reading of the music" (1993.p.160). Also, in the interview with Teachout, Morris says, "I don't see dancing...I start with the music" (Teachout, 2000, p.2).

Purcell was 30 years old when he conducted *Dido and Aeneas* in 1689, and Morris was 32 years old when he choreographed his version while in his residency in Brussels, Belgium. According to Acocella, one of the reasons Morris relocated his company to Brussels was so he would have the musical resources to produce *Dido and Aeneas* (1993, p.176).

Most of all, this production illustrates Morris' unique approach to classical works. Morris created several productions based on baroque opera, such as *Plateé* and *King Arthur*, and demonstrated many different approaches in his versions. In *Dido and Aeneas*, he upholds Purcell's narrative while interweaving music, dance, and mime, playing singers on the stage with dancers. From the premier in 1989 to 2000, Morris cast himself as the main female characters, Dido and the wicked Sorceress, who are in conflict throughout the narrative. Morris portrayed both of these contradictory roles in the same costume (black skirt and tight shirt) by using different movement qualities. Morris' powerful interpretation of these two women drew great amounts of attention from both critics and audiences, illustrating the expressiveness of movement. Sarah Kaufman wrote in *The Washington Post*, "He was superb then as the two women, proud and earthy and warmhearted as the queen, grandiose yet deeply human as the Sorceress" (February 18, 2008, C02).

Further illustrating the inversion of gender roles and explicit sexuality, from the inversion of gender roles to the masturbation scene, *Dido and Aeneas* provoked many discussions about the political aspect of sexuality in dance when it was first performed. Also, the musicality of this work has drawn both praises and severe criticism from dance

critics. While some favor the alliance of dance and live music and the interplay of music and dance, critic Alastair Macaulay criticizes the manner in which Morris sets dances to music, claiming that it was problematic and close to a mere visualization of music (March 12, 2008, para.4-7). Macaulay describes Morris works as “perilously close to Choreographic Musicality-by-Numbers” and claims that specific gestures are directly connected to certain words, without any literal meaning. For instance, he points out that Dido repeats the same peculiar jump (one leg bent sideways, one arm raised) each time the word “Heaven” appears (para.5). However, Morris’ alliance of a word and a movement provokes a fundamental question about the relationship between music and dance. In this study, I examine Morris’ musicality, especially the manner in which he corresponds to music, creating ambivalence in his works.

The Hard Nut (1991)

The Nutcracker is a long-standing Christmas tradition in Western society. It is the epitome of ballet’s dreamy journey into childhood, filled with dancing snowflakes and ethnic dolls. While the Tchaikovsky and Petipa staging of *The Nutcracker* presents the sugar-coated version, Morris sets his piece in a American suburban home in the 1960’s and inserts a subplot from the story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. Unlike the prevalent version, there is almost no magnificent classical dancing (Dunning, 1993, para 1).

This production also illustrates Morris’ ambivalence, which interlaces sheer beauty with the grotesque as well as tradition and with a satirical twist. In terms of theme and narrative, *The Hard Nut* stays within Hoffman’s framework, filling it with dark humor and wit. Dance critic Skene-Wenzel sees it as “a hybrid form” (December 12,

2004, para. 6), which intertwines traditional style with a new twist. With outrageous costumes and comic book sets based on the drawings of horror comic book cartoonist Charles Burns, this production presents three children, a maid and plenty of guests who dance disco to Tchaikovsky's score (Kisselgoff, 1992, para. 5). While Act One follows Petipa's original ballet order closely, Act Two follows a subplot in Hoffmann's narrative: Drosselmeier travels around the world in search of the hard nut and Marie finally unites with the Nutcracker.

In this work, Morris illustrates his talent for intertwining a plot and subplot, revitalizing an old classic with a modern feel and the deliberate orchestration of dance and music. Also, *The Hard Nut* challenges conventional gender divisions by presenting a unisex ensemble and same sex pas de deux. Speaking of the coexistence of the classical frame of narrative and choreographic structure and modern twist of the setting, characterization, and dancing, Skene-Wenzel argues that *The Hard Nut* projects "a spectacular fusion of popular and high culture, which highlights society's and ballet's traditions and lovingly parodies their characteristics" (para. 2).

Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare (2008)

Premiered at Bard's Summer Scape Festival in July 2008, Morris' *Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* is based on the Western world's most familiar love tragedy, but without the familiar ending. Instead of a tragic ending for the ill-fated lovers, Morris changes *Romeo and Juliet* into a story with a happy ending that allows the young lovers to survive and, in time, flee their oppressive families. Morris' unfamiliar ending is based on the Prokofiev's original composition, which has not been previously performed.

Morris choreographed the work when he accepted the invitation from the festival, which had dedicated the year to the music of Prokofiev.

This production presents Morris' ambivalent approach to the classical production, which both upholds and defies the predominant version. Along with his originality, which is very different from the predominant version, Morris' production retrieves the unperformed original version of the Prokofiev ballet score.¹² To honor Tchaikovsky's original piece, Morris includes Prokofiev's divertissement, "the dance of Three Moors", in Act Three, with folk-inspired dancing set to Prokofiev's exotic music. This production presents Morris' ambivalent approach to classical productions, bringing a fundamental change to the narrative by changing its essential tragedy into a story with a happy ending. Along with an unfamiliar narrative, Morris differentiates his characters from both Prokofiev's and Shakespeare's with his humor and inversions of gender roles. In terms of sexuality and gender, Morris uses both cross-gender casting and movement that are not part of classic ballet. Morris' Juliet is a strong and independent young lady who leads and lifts Romeo in their love duet. While young male actors performed the female characters in Shakespeare's play in his time, female dancers take the roles of macho rivals Mercutio and Tybalt in Morris' work.

¹² Mark Morris' *Romeo & Juliet* is the premiere of Prokofiev's original 1935 score, which was recently discovered by musicologist Simon Morrison. Between 1935 and 1940, Prokofiev's transcendently happy ending was abolished and a revised orchestration became prevalent (Deborah Jowitt, 2008, July 15, para. 1).

Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the study of dance in three aspects. First, this study urges a philosophical consideration of dance by examining codified structure of dance and its multilayered meanings. In *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of Dance*, Francis Sparshott examines the alleged reasons for neglecting the aesthetics of dance (1988, pp.7-13):

- Dance is a feminine art while Western civilization has been patriarchal;
- Dance is corporeal while philosophers have ignored the body;
- Christianity, especially Puritanism, ignores dance;
- Dance lacks occasion for theorizing;
- Dance lacks familiar and effective notation;
- Dance lacks familiar repertory.

Sparshott states that these alleged reasons are not sufficient, arguing that dance had been ignored by philosophers for not fully reflecting the spirit of its times, and was thus unable to validate itself culturally in history. According to Sparshott, the philosopher Hegel excluded dance in his fine art schema mainly because he thought dance “incapable of bearing anything but the most vapid symbolism”(1981, p.102). Joseph Margolis (1997), on the other hand, disagrees with Sparshott’s claim, arguing that Sparshott attempts to place dance “in the system of the world” (pp.46-47). In the article “Some Remarks on Sparshott on the Dance” (1997), Margolis points out the “historicity of all our practices” (p.47), noting that Sparshott disregards three important themes in dance,

which defy the idealized and totalized theory: “dance notation, dance style, and dance as the expression of a contingent culture” (p.46).

In this context, Mark Morris’ work is an example, which inspires philosophical examination of dance. He has expanded the boundaries of dance and amplified its meanings by reflecting and challenging the society around him. Morris’ unique interpretation can also be referred to as “the expression of a historical esprit” (Margolis, 1997, p.48). Through examination of Morris’ extensive artistic choices, which connect music, opera, novel with dance, this study aims to situate dance as an intellectual art. More importantly, examining the ambivalence in Morris’ works, this study illustrates the complicacy and fluidity of meaning in dance. By highlighting Morris’ confrontation of society’s sexuality and gender roles, this study emphasizes the way in which dance highlights social issues, and thus is an intellectually challenging practice.

Most of all, this study brings to light the multilayered meanings of Morris’ choreography and the incarnation of humanity within dance. In the interview with Morris, he mentions, “Every dance I make is about love. It is all about love.”¹³ As he insists, his works illustrate that dance denotes the individual’s vulnerability to and lived experience of human relationships. Morris’ portrayal of warm humanity in his choreography gives us reason to argue against Western academia’s traditional nonchalance regarding dance; dance finds a place among the fine arts, in which “human spirit finds its defining form” (Sparshott, 1981, p.102).

¹³ This was one clear “consistency” to which Morris admitted, although he does not want to be accused of having a specific style; “I am making dance that does not exist in the world,” he emphasized.

Second, as a reflective and comprehensive study focusing on one of the significant choreographers of our time, this study urges a fuller vision of the diverse expanse of dance study. My examination of the ambivalence in Morris' choreography focuses on three aspects: approaches to genres and themes and characterization, expressions of gender and sexuality, and use of musicality.

Through analysis of Mark Morris' choreographic structure and movement quality, this study argues that dance is visual yet textual. Moreover, through examination of a choreographer's ambivalence from diverse perspectives in terms of narrative and characterization, gender and sexuality, and musicality, this study will discuss the fluidity of meaning in dance. It also shows that the meanings of a dance are not inherent within the piece, but are interpreted by the viewers.

Third, this study will be a valuable archive of Mark Morris. While numerous concert reviews and newspaper articles about Morris and his works have been written throughout several decades, comparably little research touches on his dances in a comprehensive and analytical way. Among the massive volume of writings on Morris, I found that few of these articles are from scholarly publications; therefore, I believe that another comprehensive, analytical view of Mark Morris is a necessary addition to the works currently in existence.

There are only four theses and dissertations focusing on Mark Morris (searched by ProQuest, accessed on November 11, 2011): "The serious art of funny business: A critical study of comedy in dance" by Faulkner, Margaret, Ph.D., Texas Woman's University in 2005; "Criticism refined: An analysis of selected dance criticism of Alan M.

Kriegsman” by Bodensteiner, Kirsten Amalie, M.A., The American University in 2000; “Intersections of dance and theory: From Martha Graham to Mark Morris” by Antonides, Jill A. Ph.D., Stanford University in 1998; and “The effect of aural, visual, and aural/visual conditions on subjects’ response to perceived artistic tension in music and dance” by Frego, R. J. David, Ph.D., The Florida State University in 1996.

More precisely, Faulkner’s dissertation touches on comedy and comedic theories in modern dance and narrative ballet and examines Mark Morris’ *The Hard Nut* (1991) as one of the comedies of dance. Bodenstiner’s thesis focuses on the critic Kriegsman’s writing style, examining his articles on five representative modern dancers including Martha Graham and Mark Morris. Arguing that dance has been marginalized due to its “naturalizing” definition by scholars, Antonides demonstrates the compatibility between dance and theory, situating Morris as a modern dancer. Last, using Morris’ work *Gloria* as a stimulus, Frego studies the effect of aural and visual conditions on the emotional responses of musicians and non-musicians.

As illustrated above, although these studies touch on Mark Morris’ dances with diverse interests and insightful perspectives, including criticism, humor, musicality, and literary, they do not focus on Morris’ choreography as the main subject matter. I think that a comprehensive perspective on Morris’ works would be a valuable asset to approaching both Mark Morris and modern dance history. Also, I anticipate that this study on ambivalence as Morris’ distinguishable characteristic would urge further studies, which examine the diverse aesthetic dimensions of dance.

Lastly, this research is expected to promote dance scholars' and audiences' interest in Mark Morris by offering them an opportunity to understand Morris' choreography. This study's discussion of Morris' ambivalence would promote an audience's understanding of his works. I believe that Morris' personal voice collected from the interviews with him not only represents the intent of the artist, but also will be a useful addition to materials for future studies.

The intended audiences for this study are as follows: First, I include myself as the primary audience. This dissertation presents the academic research of a young professional, and also the last preparatory step towards my role as an independent scholar. More importantly, this research is not only the pinnacle of my efforts over the last several years of study, but also an index of my intellectual thinking and a reflection of my accumulated experience as a dancer and dance scholar.

The second audience, in my mind, is Mark Morris; Morris mentioned in an interview, "I read everything about myself." When Joan Acocella wrote a biography of Morris, *Mark Morris* in 1993, Mark Morris was only 37. He is now in his fifties and the expansive volume and diversity of his choreography requires a new perspective on his work and artistic direction.

The third audience is composed of other scholarly researchers, critics, and students in the dance field. This study could be useful to dance researchers focusing on modern dance, the choreographers and their creative processing, dance analysis study, and dance aesthetics.

The fourth audience group is anyone who is interested in Mark Morris or in modern dance. My strategy is to articulate my thoughts and the outcomes of this study with plain and clear language, not merely because English is my second language, but because I want to facilitate public access to the information that I provide. Considering Mark Morris' position in the international dance field, this study will assist the layperson in understanding modern dance. Although this study does not provide a specific method or solution to the problem of understanding dance, I hope that it will encourage people to approach dance without fear or hesitation.

The last audience will be my beloved son, Jaehee Yang. Not only because he is the son of a dance researcher, but also because I want him to be a curious and intelligent audience of dance. I hope that he will read this study, enjoy the beautiful art of dance, and explore the dynamic and humane aspect of dance.

Methodology and Materials

This research takes qualitative, aesthetic, and descriptive approaches in order to bring to light Morris' choreographic peculiarities. First, this study is a qualitative research study, which aims to understand Mark Morris' choreography by analyzing its ambivalence. In conducting this study, I rely on the information gathered from my interviews with Morris, personal observation of Morris' works, and analysis of documentary materials. Second, this study is an aesthetical inquiry, which focuses on the critical reflection of an artist and his works, examining the codified structure of dance as a sensitive art. In analyzing Morris' ambivalence, I refer to the aesthetical viewpoint, which understands dance as a crystallized form of human intelligence. Last, this study is

descriptive and exploratory. In illustrating and analyzing Morris' ambivalence in dance, I aim to vividly describe both the data collected and to expound my argument. As this study takes dance as a subject matter, I especially wish to help readers who may or may not have viewed the productions to understand the arguments and examples by providing detailed information.

Interview with Mark Morris

As the primary methodology for understanding Morris' works and his intention, I interviewed Mark Morris twice. The first interview was conducted on October 23, 2008 at Morris' office in the Mark Morris Dance Group in Brooklyn, New York, and the second interview took place on April 29, 2010 at the same venue. The first interview inspired me to rethink Morris' artistic direction, referencing his thoughts without their transmission through another person. I believe the second interview provided me with supplementary sources and a deeper insight into Morris' works.

In order to perform the interviews, I have complied with the IRB protocol and received an exemption from the IRB on September 19, 2008, which certified these interviews as an oral history project. The interviews are primarily based on the questionnaires submitted to the IRB, which focused on Morris' artistic perspectives and directions in the three works mentioned above. With permission from IRB, I used a non-written consent form to gain Morris' agreement and audiotaped the interview with his consent (see the Appendices for the exemption letter, non-written consent form, and questionnaires).

Robert S. Weiss, in his book *Learning from Strangers* (1994), points out that the analysis of a qualitative study relies on interpretation and integration (p.3). Although Morris is an interviewee who articulates his thoughts and intent in a very clear and candid manner, there is an arguable gap between verbal language and the written document. In spite of its formality, an interview is based on a conversation between two people. The transcription of Morris' words does not necessarily provide a full context with which to understand him. Just like his works, Morris' statements need to be understood in their original contexts. In the interview with Rachel Howard in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Morris once expressed his perplexity at being misunderstood. Morris (2005, September 18) said:

If someone asks me a question and it's a question I can't possibly answer, I say, can't answer that'... And it's reported as 'He arrogantly dismissed that'... I'm tired of being the crazy one, because I'm not. I'm tired of 'wacky Mark Morris.' It's a journalistic response that has nothing to do with reality. (para.5)

In order to minimize this problem, I intend to provide the context in which his reactions were given. Also, in interpreting Morris' statements, I focus on contextualizing his intent and idea in specific works, rather than portraying his personality or emotion.

More importantly, as a living artist, Morris' perspective, thoughts and attitudes towards certain topics cannot remain static. As Morris has acknowledged, his testimony could vary depending on the situation, his mood, passage of time or even the interviewer. For instance, when I asked questions based on his statements in other interviews, he said, "I don't remember that." Also, with the passage of time, Morris' original intention may have changed, corresponding to the changing paradigm of society. For example, Morris said

that he intended to challenge the social norm by the inversions of gender roles in earlier times, but that is no longer his goal. In order to minimize any risk of misrepresenting Morris' intentions, this study prioritizes my interviews with Morris, and cross-references this information with his statements in other interviews and articles.

After conducting the first interview with Morris, I realized that I should have considered the character of the interviewee, not only as the subject of research, but also as a human being who is being asked to talk about himself. No matter how familiar he is with the formal interview process, a man will inevitably become vulnerable when he talks about himself. The interview was performed in a limited amount of time and there was not enough time to solidify a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee.¹⁴ Some of my interview questions referenced unfavorable viewpoints of critics regarding Morris' works and he refused to respond to others' opinions on him. I now realize that these questions were part of a critical analysis, rather than an interpretation of a sensitive artist and his works. As I proceeded with the interview, I had to rethink many questions without abandoning my focus. The second interview was conducted with more careful consideration of these issues.

In addition to the interview, the research methodology and procedures used in this study draw from a broad interdisciplinary foundation in dance, aesthetics, gender studies, and my own background as a dancer and audience. The theoretical framework of this study includes aesthetic and interdisciplinary studies: dance theories adopting a semiological analysis methodology of images, contemporary discussions seeing dance

¹⁴ Morris replied in a clear and succinct way, very clearly rejecting those questions that he did not wish to answer.

through literary and cultural criticism, gender, queer and sexuality studies which examine dance as a form of symbolic bodily practice, and reflective studies on multiculturalism which discuss cultural equity and artistic hegemony. Literature on dance analysis and aesthetics helps delineate the constructs, premises, and methods of this study.

Specifically, readings from Francis Sparshott, Roland Barthes, Susan Leigh Foster, Joan Acocella, Gay Morris, and Sally Banes support the analysis and discussion of Morris' works. I also reference scholarly books and periodicals, examining various perspectives on Mark Morris' choreography. These materials further my understanding of Mark Morris, help form my questions and thesis, and contribute to the rationale of my study.

In order to interpret Mark Morris' choreography, I prioritize primary sources such as interviews with Morris; live concert viewings of Morris' works, videotapes of his works made for commercial or documentary purposes and archival documents and iconographic sources from The New York Public Library and The Mark Morris Dance Group. I reference my journal from the live concerts of Morris' works and interviews with Morris, photographs provided by the Mark Morris Dance Group, commercial trailers of productions, fliers, libretti, sound recordings, programs, sketches of costume design from *The New York Public Library*, and the official website of the *Mark Morris Dance Group*. In order to gain more diverse perspectives on Morris and to contextualize his choreography, I refer to Morris' writings in programs, brochures, magazines, and official website as well as interviews published in newspapers and magazines.

For the analysis of dance, I refer to the videotaped version of *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Hard Nut*. For *Romeo & Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, I was able to obtain a

copy of a DVD, with the kind assistance of Ms. Christy Bolingbroke, the marketing manager of the *Mark Morris Dance Group*. This DVD was recorded at the performance at the Zellerbach Hall, in Berkeley, California, on September 26, 2008 for preview purposes for journalists.

Limitations and Delimitations

In order to increase the feasibility of conducting this research, this study sets forward some delimitations. First, this study does not attempt to classify the movement by adopting a specific analytical model such as Labanotation to detect the ambivalence appearing in dance. Instead, as qualitative research, this study relies on analysis of the collected data from the observation of dances, the interviews with Morris, and documentations and films, seeing dance as a “condition producing certain knowledge” (Martin, 1998, p.204).

Second, in order to detect the ambivalence in Morris’ choreography, this study focuses on three specific works. By doing so, this study presumes inseparable relations of the choreographer and his work among Morris’ extensive volume of works. In other words, I propose these works are successful reflections of the artist’s intentions.¹⁵

Third, this study identifies the choreographer’s intent through his verbal and written testimony. A choreographer’s intent is difficult to translate into verbal discourse

¹⁵ In the interview, Mark Morris reluctantly agreed that *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare* are his favorite. He does not want to answer to the question, “Do you think they are your representative pieces?” (He replied, “It’s your paper. My opinion is not important.”) But he agreed that they are his favorite. “I do only little changes on the works I previously made. If I don’t like, I just do not perform it.” Morris said.

(Gibbons p.131). After my own experience as an interviewer, I realize that many of the quotes used by scholars to contextualize Morris' works have a dangerous propensity to disregard the fragile and contextual nature of verbal language. Also, because I have taken a living choreographer as my subject, I often encounter contradictory sources discussing Morris' ideas. This is a natural and inevitable problem, as one's statement needs to be interpreted in the context in which it is spoken, and as one's ideas or even beliefs tend to be fragile as time goes by. In this study, I will juxtapose other, possibly contradictory sources, to decrease any possible misunderstandings of Morris' intention.

Fourth, although I value and reference Morris' statements as significant keys to understanding his choreography, I will develop the body of the argument with the use of accompanying evidentiary sources whether or not they agree with Morris' statements. For instance, in the interview, Morris argues that he does not aim to teach a lesson or make a political statement through his dances, but some of his works have influenced the audiences in a specific way. As a critical study, this study documents Morris' statements as a part of the source, but does not aim to devote itself to recording them.

Meanwhile, this study acknowledges several limitations. The first limitation relates to the number of works being studied; by focusing on only three works— *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, this study might overlook other characteristics or artistic experiments that appear in other works, especially considering the massive volume of Morris' works. For instance, the dances shown in *Mozart Dances*, presented at *The Mostly Mozart Festival*, or the ballet *Sylvia*, choreographed or the *San Francisco Ballet* might be significantly different from the

examples used in this study.¹⁶ Also, as Mark Morris is a living artist who is continuously diversifying his approach to dance, this study faces the danger of oversimplifying his choreographical characteristic.

Second, for the detailed analysis on movement, I rely on the videotaped version of Morris' production and my reliance on videotapes causes a significant issue. For *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Hard Nut*, I refer to both tapes specifically set for filming and videotaped dances. In case of *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, I reference a videotape of a live performance. However, memory is feeble, and there is an undeniable difference between a videotaped dance and a live performance. For instance, the movement quality depicted by a camera could differ significantly from that of a live concert.

Organization and Outline of Chapters

This study contains the following major sections: chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. The research question, the topic, the significance, and the methodology of the study will be addressed as well as identifying the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 is the review of select literature. The large theoretical setting and contextual literature for the thesis will be discussed. Chapter 3, 4 and 5 are the core arguments and analyses of the thesis. Focusing on *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, these chapters discuss Mark Morris'

¹⁶ For instance, Morris' *Mozart Dances* is elegant and bright dance set to three Mozart piano pieces. "There's a lot of quotation and commentary here on some of the most elegant balletic arabesques and poses" Critic Joel Lobenthal said (2007 August, 17). Acocella also mentions, "he gives people the modern pleasure of seeing abstract work without leaving them scratching their heads over what it was about"(2007 August, 20).

ambivalence in four primary aspects. Chapter 3 examines Morris' unique approach of the classical works, which depart from the prevalent styles yet uphold the "classical" elements. Chapter 4 explores Morris' expressions of gender and sexuality, which defy common notions but acknowledge the differences of gender. Chapter 5 addresses Morris' controversial approaches to music, which verges on music visualization. These analyses will be summarized in chapter 6, the conclusion, exemplifying Morris' characteristic ambivalence. While summarizing and reporting the results of the study, for the expansion of dance study I will demonstrate the subjects and inquiries, which I wish to discuss further.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE IN PROGRESS

My review of selected literature involved in this study is divided into two sections. The first part focuses on the theoretical sources that provide a conceptual framework for the research. This literature also contributes to delineating the constructs, premises, and methods of this study as well as the development of a rationale for this study. The second part of this review of literature relates to the contextual sources that project a descriptive and analytical approach to Mark Morris. In this section of the review, I reference scholarly books and periodicals, which aid in my examination of the various existing perspectives on Mark Morris and his works. These materials further my understanding of Mark Morris, and contribute to my questions and thesis by providing diverse perspectives to approach him. This separation of literature does not indicate that the contextual sources fail to contribute to developing the structure or theoretical settings of this study. Rather, by separating them, I aim to emphasize the major arguments of literature, and to further the reader's understanding of the topic and its theoretical setting in context.

Theoretical Sources

In her book, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (1986), Susan Leigh Foster suggests the active and interactive interpretation of dance as a system of meaning. Illustrating the unfeasibility of studying a dance and its creative process, Foster argues that due to the fleeting nature of the medium, many choreographers preferred not to talk about their dance, but to let the dance speak for itself

in a language all its own (xvi).¹⁷ Foster's insightful aesthetical consideration on dance encourages me to approach Morris' work, considering it as sensitive art as well as a codified structure. In the chapter "Reading Choreography," Foster suggests a blueprint for organizing choreographic meaning, dividing Western theater dance's choreographic compositions into five categories; the frame, the mode of representation, the style, the vocabulary, and the syntax (p.58). Although this study does not limit its subject as Foster suggested in approaching Morris' choreography, Foster's analytical perspective is a useful method to uncover meaning in dance.

While Foster offers a fundamental understanding to approach the work of a choreographer, references such as Barthes and Sturken provide a framework for examining and analyzing the data observed. In order to analyze Morris' works, I refer to literature that illustrates the manner in which image in dance is created and conveyed, and the meanings that are produced. Because there is no comprehensive set of semiotics in regards to dance, nor any universal lexicon in which to look up a particular movement, Roland Barthes's semiotic study is still regarded as a great asset in the analysis of meanings in dance. Barthes, who had a significant influence on the development of structuralism and semiotics, introduces a methodology for the semiological analysis of images and films.

In *Image, Music, Text* (1978), Barthes provides a useful basis for examining how images create meanings. By separating the signifier and the signified, he suggests that an

¹⁷ According to Foster, even Cunningham has refrained from talking about his work. Also he claimed that his dancers express nothing but themselves, and they focus on the physical facts of the body (p.32).

image can convey multiple meanings. This idea assists in the understanding of Morris' ambivalence, which projects contradictory concepts in his dances. Furthermore, Barthes' distinction of denotative and connotative meanings in an image suggests an insightful perspective in analyzing the multifaceted components of Morris' works. Also, Barthes suggests that for the analysis of image there are three levels of meanings; an informational level, a symbolic level, and "the third meaning" (pp.52-68). I believe that these three levels of meaning can also be found in dance through the analysis of narrative and characterization, choreographic structure and movement quality.

In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (2001), Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright refer to Roland Barthes's theory in their discussion of the textual meanings in visual culture. While Barthes provides the fundamental ideas used to interpret the embedded meaning in the images, this book illustrates an approach to understanding the dynamic of looking, emphasizing viewers' practices of looking and the specific ways in which people interpret images. Sturken considers the way in which images can be used as elements of discourse, institutional power, and categorization.

In analyzing dance as a visual culture, this book suggests that meanings are produced through a complicated social relationship, which involves "how the viewers interpret or experience the image" and "the context in which an image is seen" (p.45). Sturken emphasizes that an artist is not in full control of the meanings that are subsequently seen in work; meanings are created in the minds of the people by whom images are consumed, and not only by producers (pp.46-47). This idea encourages me to

approach Morris' choreography, either agreeing or conflicting with Morris' own statements about his works.

For the last several decades, body theory and identity politics have flourished in cultural studies. Dance and movement studies have, through their intersections with cultural studies that focus on body and identity, contributed to the current debates in traditional disciplines. Much of the recent research and publications on dance connect dance to social and cultural contexts. In contextualizing Morris' unique presentations of body and gender in the larger context, I reference the theories of other dance scholars such as Randy Martin.

In *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (1998), Randy Martin insists that dance does not merely reflect social political circumstance, but also assists in the understanding of politics. Through his Marxist perspective, Martin displays social and political theories relating to dance as an analytic frame and a method of connecting to the social context. In approaching the analysis of dance, Martin suggests an interesting concept inspired by the notion of reading dance; he insists that dance should be seen not as a subject of a certain knowledge, but as a condition producing a certain knowledge (p.204). According to Martin, this shift manifests the conceptual priority of dancing over dance, rather than stressing the importance of identifying dance (pp.204-205).

In approaching the sexuality and gender issue in Mark Morris' works, the studies of Sally Banes, Ramsey Burt, Gay Morris, Jane Desmond, and Jamake Highwater have made huge contributions both in method and content. In *Dancing Women* (1998), Sally Banes argues that images of women dancing on stage have represented gender identities

and social norms in cultural contexts. According to Banes, female characters in western theater dance represent the manner in which women fit into society. Although her subject is limited to the female in dance, this study demonstrates her insightful analysis of movement, which detects meanings from movement and contextualizes them in a socio-cultural context. By analyzing movement qualities in dance productions, Banes testifies that dance represents socio-political issues such as class, the institution of marriage, political structure and ideological dispute.

Dancing Desire: Choreographing Sexualities On And Off The Stage (2001), edited by Jane Desmond, offers rich resources both in the theoretical setting for analysis of dance and an approach to sexuality issues in dance. Centering on the issues of sexuality and sexual identity, this book includes scholarly articles that examine the dancing body using queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. Desmond argues that the issues of non-normative sexuality play a constitutive role in dance history. Some articles in this book examine various dimensions in male dancing in the context of queer theory. Susan Leigh Foster examines four male choreographers' works to detect their masculinity and "closeted sexuality," arguing that male dancing has been regarded as "unmanly, hence deviant, effeminate, and probably homosexual" (p.151).¹⁸ Also, Ramsay Burt examines Morris' *Jealousy* (1985), arguing that Morris appeals to a reorganization of socially oppressive codes and structures imposed from the outside (p. 226).¹⁹

¹⁸ Foster (2001), "Closets Full of Dance: Modern Dance's Performance of Masculinity and Sexuality." pp.147-208.

¹⁹ Burt (2001), "Dissolving in Pleasure: The Threat of the Queer Male Dancing Body." pp.243-266.

In *Myth and Sexuality* (1990), Highwater examines the social construction of myths and its interplay with sexuality. Exploring prevalent mythic associations of body, femininity, and sexuality, Highwater's writing inspires dance researchers who study sexuality and gender in dance. Focusing on the issues of body and alleged gender differences, Highwater examines the prevalent and powerful myths about body, sexuality and gender. Based on the premise that the body is constantly transformed by the flux of a mythic mentality, he criticizes Western viewpoints, which, he states, think of sexuality in terms of binary opposites: male and female, heterosexual and homosexual, marital sex and pre- or extramarital sex.

In spite of the scholarly quality of this work, which leaves something to be desired, Highwater's critique on the binary norm of gender in western society inspires me to consider Morris' representation of gender, especially that Morris' famous "inversions of gender" in dance were regarded as provocative, partially because they are compared to the stereotypical gender role "norms" in dance. Also, Highwater's critique leads me to consider that many researchers and journalists have made a connection between Morris' expressions of sexuality and gender in dance and his own sexual identity.

In approaching to Morris' musicality, Stephanie Jordan's *Moving Music, Dialogues with Music in Twentieth-Century Ballet* (2000) and Elizabeth Sawyer's *Dance with the Music* (1985) help the understanding of the dance-music relationship. Jordan, with her background and knowledge as a dancer, musician and dance critic, writes about theories on the relationship between music and dance. Introducing a list of structural equivalents between dance and music developed by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Jordan

explains how choreographers in Twentieth-century ballet and early modern dance approached the music, both as individuals and with partners. Interestingly, Jordan draws a distinction between the terms “visualization” and “parallelism” (pp. 74-75). Music visualization refers to a choreographer’s musical technique that creates concurrence between music and dance or imitation of music by the dance by choosing certain aspects of music (e.g., rhythm, form, dynamics, texture). Meanwhile, parallelism is the result when music and dance clarify each other.

Elizabeth Sawyer’s *Dance with the Music* (1985) presents the author’s perspectives on the relationship of dance to music based on her experience as an accompanist for Juilliard dance division, in particular Antony Tudor, for many years. Sawyer’s book, rather than dealing with analytical studies or historical problems between dance and music, presents practical knowledge about music for dancing. In the earlier chapters, Sawyer explains the special nature of movement and dance, and the qualities they share, arguing the necessity of continual interchange between dancer and musician. In later chapters she provides more practical information, illustrating the role of musician and teacher, selection of music for specific dance combinations, and rehearsal or studio situations.

Although they are not directly related to the methodology or subject matter, I want to count Francis Edward Sparshott’s article “Why Philosophy Neglects the Dance” (1989) as a significant reference because of its influence in my entrance into dance study. I first encountered Sparshott’s writings such as *Off the Ground* and “Why Philosophy Neglects the Dance” when I was a senior in college, and since that time, they have had a

great influence on my avid interest in dance study, affirming dance as a serious art as well as a subject of study. In “Why Philosophy Neglects the Dance,” Sparshott points out that the main reason for the philosopher’s avoidance of dance is its lack of significance and meaning in society. His criticism urges a consideration of what makes a practice a humane and intelligent art, which contributes, to the human society, as well as encouraging an appreciation of the philosophical reflections of dance. Further, his writing inspired me to take on an aesthetical examination on Morris’ dances, focusing especially on the ambivalence, which generates the dynamic meaning of dance.

Contextual Sources

Thanks to his innovative choreography, Mark Morris has been a popular subject for both dance critics and researchers. After numerous visits to *The New York Public Library* and *Temple University Paley Library*, I was able to obtain numerous articles about Mark Morris and the *Mark Morris Dance Group*. These materials provide an insightful perspective to understand Mark Morris and his dances.

The book *Mark Morris* (1993) contains the most comprehensive approach to this versatile choreographer. Written by dance critic Joan Acocella, this book was published while Morris was still in his thirties. It was completed with the choreographer's full cooperation and thus includes incomparable primary sources, notably the vivid voice of Mark Morris himself.²⁰ The text describes Morris’ family and early education, personal relationships, his perspective and concerns as a dancer and choreographer, and his

²⁰According to his assistant Ms. Bolingstoke, Morris often suggests to refer to this book to an interviewer who asks a routine question.

journey to become a renowned choreographer. Describing the aspects of body, sexuality, tradition, and music in Morris' works, she provides a context to understand Mark Morris, who was at that time a young, brilliant, and provocative choreographer.

In *Dance Masters: Interview with Legends of Dance* (2001), Janet Lynn Roseman interviews Mark Morris, inquiring especially into his musicality and choreographic process. Roseman successfully draws out and records Morris' candid thoughts on his working process and his perspective on his routine. Joyce Morgenroth interviewed a dozen contemporary choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin, David Gordon, Trisha Brown, and Mark Morris, to write *Speaking of Dance: Twelve Contemporary Choreographers on Their Craft* (2004). Based on collaborated interviews with Morris, the chapter "Mark Morris" is written by Morgenroth with Mark Morris in the first person voice. This article provides both the personal and professional aspects of Morris as a choreographer and dancer. Morgenroth pulls out the stories of Morris' routine, his life as a choreographer, his inspirations and emotional ups and downs while creating new works.

Mark Morris, who is noted for outspokenness, candidly discusses prevalent assumptions about himself. Morris also expresses his perplexity regarding critics; "When reviews bother me it's because the journalists are reviewing a dance that they wish had happened instead of the one that existed" (p.178).

Mark Morris' l'Allegro, Il pensoroso, Ed Il Moderato: a Celebration (2001) is a book which commemorates Morris' piece of the same name which is regarded as one of his representative repertoires. The dance was premiered in 1988 and this book was edited

by Jeffrey Escoffier and Matthew Lore in 2001. Morris choreographed *l'Allegro, Il pensoroso, Ed Il Moderato* to a musical oratorio of the same name composed by Handel. The book contains numerous pictures and illustrations that capture Morris' creative process. It includes the libretto, musical components, set and costume designs, and critics' essays on the dance. Exploring the creative process of dance production, it is a valuable resource that records the journey of dance making.

While the books mentioned above provide the primary sources that help to understand Mark Morris' creative process, personality and style, I also refer to scholarly articles that use critical and analytical perspectives to study Mark Morris' works as they relate to sexuality and gender, musicality, identity and tradition.

Gay Morris' article "Style of the Flesh" in the collaborated book *Moving Words* (1996), presents a scholarly analysis of Morris' presentation of gender. Seeing gender as a "performative" identity, she examines the performed gender as it appeared in Morris' *The Hard Nut* and *Dido and Aeneas*. Arguing that gender is inscribed on a sexed body, Gay Morris insists that Mark Morris' performance as Dido embodies "gender discontinuities that undermine a binary structure of identity" (p.146). Further, she argues that Morris' unique presentation of gender is not a parody or exaggeration, but "a complex mix of gender cues, movement and the disruption of heterosexually based dance convention" (p.146).

Sarah Cohen also provides an insightful perspective on the "performativity" of gender that appeared in Mark Morris' *The Hard Nut*. In "Performing Identity in *The Hard Nut*: Stereotypes, Modeling and the Inventive Body" (1998), Cohen argues that *The*

Hard Nut engages *The Nutcracker*'s familiar score, characters, and movement to produce a new vision of "staged performativity" (p.486). While the traditional ballet versions present characters with "fixed identities" which are clearly distinguished through gesture, costume, movement style and music, Morris presents their identities as ongoing processes that characters must try on and learn. Cohen analyzes Morris' characterization and narrative and compares it with the traditional ballet version, arguing that Morris adopts the codification of ballet language while destabilizing its meanings. She claims that Morris works with stereotypes, rather than against them. For instance, in the Waltz of the Snowflakes, while the costumes and movements include the traditional ballet image of a snowstorm, Morris distorts the conventions through altered movements and unisex dancing (p.496).

The collaborated book, *Looking out: Perspectives on Dance and Criticism in a Multicultural World* (1995) provides insightful debates on the modern choreographer's use of ethnicity. In this book, dance critics and writers dispute their perspectives on multicultural dance. Urging reconsideration of the Eurocentric perspectives which have been applied to non-European forms of dance, this book presents alternative perspectives to the proscenium stage presentation. Joan Acocella's "Growing up Multicultural: A Choreographer Soaks up the World" is essentially an interview with Mark Morris, demonstrating his interest and use of international music and dance. In this interview, Acocella introduces Morris' encounters with traditional dance and music, and how he applied them in his dances. Besides the influence he received from world dance and art, this study barely includes critical perspective on his application.

On the other hand, in the article “On Multiculturalism and Authenticity,” Marcia Siegel criticizes the appropriations of traditions by Western artists from Ruth St. Denis to Mark Morris. Siegel states that this is “a form of cultural imperialism” (p.227), and argues that no matter what these artists took from other cultures, their works are recognized as Western dances, “in which these (cultural) elements have been inserted to make them interesting” (p.227). Siegel further states that the “eclecticism” of western artists should not be confused with multiculturalism.

Valerie Briginshaw’s *Dance, Space, and Subjectivity* (2001) introduces an expansive range of current theoretical approaches to space, subjectivity, and the representation of bodies. In her article “*Carnavalesque Subversions in Liz Aggiss's Grottesque Dancer, Mark Morris' Dogtown and Emilyn Claid's Across Your Heart,*” she examines the “carnavalesque,” grotesque qualities in Mark Morris’ *Dogtown* which describes the base life of city dwellers. Exploring the subversive elements in *Dogtown*, Briginshaw analyzes the grotesque body, the ambivalent merging of self and world, and the transgressed sexuality and gender embedded in Morris’ dances (p.162).

Inger Damsholt presents an analytical study of Morris’ controversial musicality. Morris has often been criticized for his attempt to create visualization of music. In the article “Mark Morris, Mickey Mouse, and Choreomusical Polemic” (2007), Damsholt analyzes Morris’ *Gloria* (1981), illustrating the direct reflection of musical sequences and musical sensibility. He argues that Morris’ choreomusical aesthetics is “polemical” rather than reactionary or sentimental pastiche (p.4). He proposes that Morris’

choreography exhibits “the coexistence of both a musical sensibility and a critical reflection on the later” (p. 7).

Jennifer Fisher’s *Nutcracker Nation* (2003) provides an insightful perspective and historical background for understanding Morris’ *The Hard Nut*. Fisher illustrates how *The Nutcracker* became an important annual ritual in America. She claims that, after immigrating to the West, the Nutcracker’s child-friendly aspect was connected to Christmas, and became a huge success in America (2003, pp.41-49). In North America, unlike in Russia where the ballet was born, Christmas has evolved into a jovial, secular holiday, and watching and dancing *The Nutcracker* is “a secure yet exhilarating Christmas treat (p.45).” From the time of its birth to its numerous, current variations, Fisher traces *The Nutcracker*’s expansion with detailed explanation.

In analyzing Purcell’s opera *Dido and Aeneas*, the basis for Morris’ dance of the same name, I reference Ellen Harris’s book, *Henry Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas* (1987) and Curtis Price’s *Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas an Opera* (1986). First encountering Purcell’s opera as a singer, Harris was fascinated with *Dido and Aeneas* primarily because of the unique qualities that set it apart from the baroque mainstream. Starting with an explanation of the cultural and political climate in which the opera was born, Harris reports its reception in chronological order. Part of this book focuses on the musical composition, the musical and dramatic structure, carefully distinguishing between the textual and musical sources. The book *Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas an Opera* was edited by Price. Half of Price’s book focuses on the opera’s musical sources, presenting the whole score and libretto. The remainder of the book features the criticisms

and analyses of scholars from diverse perspectives. Price explains the opera in its cultural and musical context. He also introduces the political allegory embedded in the opera and analyzes the libretto and score with an explanation of its musical context.

Roland John Wiley's *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* (1991) and John Warrack's *Tchaikovsky Ballet Music* (1979) provide ample sources to understand Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, the basis for Morris' *The Hard Nut*. In *Tchaikovsky's Ballets* Wiley presents a detailed analysis of the music of *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker* with descriptions of the first productions of these works in Imperial Russia. Using vivid quotes from letters written by Tchaikovsky and the producers, Wiley thoroughly explains the musical background of the Tchaikovsky-Petipa ballets. In the chapter on *The Nutcracker*, he gives details of Tchaikovsky's life while he was composing the ballet, including his personality, the death of his younger sister, his depression, his reluctance to compose *The Nutcracker* and his overcoming it. This book provides an interesting perspective for understanding the ballet as it shows how the music itself influenced the choreography.

Warrack's *Tchaikovsky Ballet Music* is a BBC music guidebook. In spite of its concise format, it includes insight into Tchaikovsky's ballet music, especially for those who are not familiar with musical theories. Warrack analyzes the musical structure of *The Nutcracker* with explanations of Tchaikovsky's libretto, and introduces Tchaikovsky's musical technique and the instruments he uses. Although Warrack's analysis provides practical information on musical sources rather than academic insights, this book is

helpful in understanding Tchaikovsky's musical structure, an important influence on Morris' choreography.

The performance reviews and articles from popular newspapers such as *The New York Times* provide ample primary sources in my research. Critics such as Joan Acocella, Terry Teachout, Alastair Macaulay, Tobi Tobias, Anna Kisselgoff, and Jennifer Dunning have written extensive volumes of articles on Mark Morris' dances for the last several decades, and they are valuable resources for understanding Morris in the context of dance history. As primary sources, they illustrate the vivid descriptions of Morris' works with the writers' embodied experience gained at the performances. I refer to these reviews and articles in my research, illustrating the characteristics of Morris' works, supplementing my reasoning process, and often juxtaposing them with my argument.

In order to bring Morris' choreography into more rigorous critical discourse, I explore the theoretical literature pertinent to this topic. To understand the interrelation between dance and philosophy, I reference Sparshott's *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* (1988), which touches on the fundamental aesthetic issues of dance. I also refer to Joseph Margolis' publications on art and aesthetics, including *Philosophy Looks at the Arts: Contemporary Readings in Aesthetics* (1987), which is a collection of philosophers' articles on art, and *What, After All, Is a Work of Art?: Lectures in the Philosophy of Art* (1999), which illustrates the idea of "historicity" and the culturally emergent nature of human persons and artworks.

Also, I draw on performing art studies which include decoding the structure and quality of a movement or image. I include Patrice Pavis' study, which explores the

questions of semiology in performing art. In relation to the analysis of Morris' musicality, I refer to analytical and methodological studies which focus on the relationship of dance and music. For example, in Rachel Duerden's "Predictability and Inevitability in Dance-Music Relationships in Mark Morris' Falling Down Stairs" (2008) explores the relationship between music and dance in Morris' choreography. As analytical, aesthetic, and qualitative research, I anticipate that this literature will solidify the theoretical background while amplifying the analysis of this study.

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE AND CHARACTERIZATION

Mark Morris has an avid interest in classical music and dance. From Baroque opera to Balkan dance, Morris uses a wide range of traditions and classics in combination with his own choreography. Roger Copeland believes that Morris is the choreographer who has most widely opened himself to dance-historical references from Baroque, ballet, early modern, and even the Judson group (Autumn 1997, p.19). While some modern choreographers resist ballet's heritage, Morris conflates balletic movement with his choreography. In *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, Morris clearly quotes from (or alludes to) ballet's language. He preserves the main part of the ballets' theatrical schemes including pas de deux and divertissements, referencing classical ballet movements while adding his own humorous choreography and gender role twists. He, in fact, practices and teaches ballet to his company as regular exercise.²¹ Copeland illustrates that Morris shows "Isadora-ish ribbon-swirling exercises" in *Ten Suggestions*, and Denishawn's exoticism in *O Rangasayee* (p. 19).

Morris' interest in the tradition is not limited, however, to ballet or a particular dance form. Calling it "perfect architecture" (Acocella, 1994, p.163), he is fascinated with Baroque composers, including Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, George Frederic Handel, and Henry Purcell, and he presents a unique collaboration of music and dance in his works. His interest in vocal music enabled him to choreograph Henri Purcell's Baroque opera *Dido and Aeneas*, and *The King Arthur*, as a danced opera.

²¹ During our first meeting in September 22, 2008, Morris' assistant Ms. Bolingstoke told me that Morris himself teaches a ballet class to the company.

Morris is also noted for reworking the classical versions. With his artistic versatility and unpredictability, he changes a familiar story and characters into novel and original ones. Following the structural frame of the story, Morris often inserts a new episode or restores a deleted part in the well-known versions. In spite of his ambivalent approach to the classics, one thing is clear; Morris is a good storyteller (Acocella, 1994, p.137). Acocella points out that Morris' detailed narrative is based on the music, and even his use of vocal music is related to his interest in the stories. "He is interested in what the singer is saying. He likes the stories." Acocella explains (p. 137).²²

Much of Morris' work tells stories, especially the old classics. *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare* are based on famous stories that have been told in many other genres and styles. Most major ballet companies have their own *Nutcracker*, and *Romeo and Juliet* has been a beloved subject for many choreographers.²³ Focusing on the narrative and characterization of Morris productions, in this chapter I explore how Morris interprets the classical works, departing from the prevalent styles, yet upholding the "classical" elements. Also, I consider his projection of contradictory norms and moods which feature both a utopian vision and its dark side. To contextualize Morris' approach to the classical works, I compare Morris' productions

²² There are some pieces solely set to music, including *New Love Waltzes*, *Love Song Waltzes*, *Deck of Cards*, *Dogtown*, *Lovey*, and *One Charming Night*. These works talk about what the songs are about (Acocella, p.138).

²³ Many choreographers have created their own version of *Romeo and Juliet*, notably John Cranko (1962), Kenneth MacMillan (1965), Jean-Christophe Maillot (1996), and Peter Martins (2007).

with predominant versions, illustrating the discrepancies and similarities.²⁴ For this, I refer to both the prevalent production and its original source such as the novel or opera libretto. For instance, in order to analyze Morris' *The Hard Nut*, I reference E.T.A. Hoffman's *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* and Alexandre Dumas' revised story, *The Tale of the Nutcracker*.

Dido and Aeneas

Mark Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* is based on the opera of the same name written by English Baroque composer Henry Purcell. Purcell composed this work in 1689 and exactly 300 years later, Morris revived *Dido and Aeneas* as a dance. Morris first staged his production in 1989 during his residency in Brussels, Belgium, and since then, it has been performed frequently as one of Morris' representative repertory works.²⁵ Morris is fascinated with Baroque music and opera, and has transposed two of Purcell's five operas, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The King Arthur* (2008). Morris also achieved recognition as a dancer by casting himself in two main female roles in *Dido and Aeneas*. From the

²⁴ However, in conducting my analysis, it was difficult to determine which production I should use for the comparison. Which version is "the traditional *Nutcracker*" or "Most prevalent dance version Romeo and Juliet"? Because of the "omnipresence" of *The Nutcracker*, for instance, it is hard to select "the most traditional version or "the most influential version." Also, the inaccessibility to the original piece is a factor. Even if I am able to trace Petipa's version back, it is difficult to say that the original version is the most influential or the most prevalent *Nutcracker*. For this reason, I did not limit the "traditional version" to a specific production and refer to a production which is familiar and attainable.

²⁵ Mark Morris Dance Group has staged *Dido and Aeneas* for thirteen of the last twenty years. http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/performance_archive/work/dido-and-aeneas

premier in 1989 to 2000, Morris cast himself as the main female characters, Dido and the wicked Sorceress, who are in conflict throughout the narrative.

Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* was a monumental musical achievement in seventeenth century England. According to Ellen Harris (1987), at that time the pre-Commonwealth royalty preferred spectacle to drama and the popularity of masque was expanding. However, Purcell offered drama through his music. Three of his five operas were based on plays by Shakespeare or Fletcher (pp. 5-8). *Dido and Aeneas* is comprised of three acts and lasts only an hour, unlike the extravagant dramatic operas of his time.²⁶ In spite of the limited use of the orchestra²⁷ and the lack of machinery, *Dido and Aeneas* survived and is still enjoyed due to Purcell's refined composition which expresses human passion by his skillful combination of words and music. *Dido and Aeneas* is a progressive work, but on a small scale, mainly because the composer created it for a private girl's school in Chelsea, not for royalty or the public theater.²⁸ The first known performance was at Josias Priest's girls' school in the spring of 1689 (Harris, Price). However, Purcell's scores were either lost (or neglected) after his death and the earliest surviving score was copied a century after his original composition (Price, 1994 p.124).

²⁶ In the modern sense of the term opera, *Dido and Aeneas* is Purcell's only opera (Harrison, 1987, p.6).

²⁷ The orchestra consists only of strings, whereas other dramatic operas include writing for woodwinds and trumpet as well. (Harrison, p.7).

²⁸ Most Purcell scholars, such as Curtis Price and Ellen Harris, agree on the premier year, but in a recent study, Wood and Pinnock (1994) claim that *Dido and Aeneas* was first staged in 1683-4 before King Charles II, not 1689. They argue that the 1689 semi-public performance was a revival.

Morris, preserving the full vocal and musical score of Purcell's opera, creates a unique form of dance which interweaves song, dance, text, and mime. In his work, Morris reveals his ambivalent approach to the classics. He creates a series of iconographic movements which are directly set to the music, but his arrangement of movements make the meaning symbolic and ambivalent. Even though he uses Purcell's narrative, Morris' trademark gender inversions and expression of explicit sexuality changes the characters from archaic figures to humans with desire. In spite of Purcell's Baroque style, Morris' production is both classical and contemporary due to its "ahistoricity" and diverse referencing from classical dances to modern pop art. Morris creates *Dido and Aeneas* based on Baroque Opera's refined structure, but it is built with a dynamic mixture of mythology, Baroque opera, Indian classical dance, ballet, and modern dance.

To contextualize Morris' approach, I refer to Nahum Tate's libretto for the opera *Dido and Aeneas*,²⁹ the filmed opera *Dido and Aeneas* (1995) directed by Peter Maniura, and Mark Morris' film adaptation of *Dido and Aeneas* (1991). I also reference Morris' videotaped performances from The New York Public Library: a performance at the Théâtre Varia, Brussels, on March 19, 1989 and a performance at Zellerbach Hall, University of California, on September 23, 2000. These last two dances have the original cast members, Mark Morris (Dido/ the Sorceress) and Guillermo Resto (Aeneas).

²⁹ I refer to the libretto from the official homepage of Mark Morris Dance Group. <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

Coexistence of Modern and Classic

Purcell's opera is based on a libretto by Nahum Tate which is, in turn, based on the story of the legendary Queen of Carthage, Dido, and the Trojan refugee, Aeneas, from the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Aeneas and his crew leave destroyed Troy in search of a new state for the new Trojan empire in Italy (Rome). When they are shipwrecked in Carthage, Dido welcomes them, and Aeneas and the queen fall in love. However, Dido resists her feelings because she took a vow of chastity after her husband's death.³⁰ The goddesses (Juno for Dido and Venus for Aeneas) agree to create an opportunity for Dido and Aeneas to be alone together and consummate their love. However, Jove, discovering Aeneas' dalliance, sends Mercury to remind Aeneas of his destiny to found a kingdom. Aeneas is stunned by this message and acts on it immediately. As he leaves Dido, she in deep sorrow kills herself on his sword (Harris, 1987, Preston, 2000).

In fact, the story of a woman who is left by a foreign officer and commits suicide was popular in opera history. Illustrating that this subject appears in Delibes's *Lakme* and Puccini's *Madam Butterfly*, Harris speculates that Purcell premiered it at the girl's boarding school as a warning for the young women that "young girls should not accept the advances of young men" (Harris, 1987, p.3, 17). When Tate wrote the libretto, he made several basic changes from the *Aeneid*. He simplifies the number of characters, and replaced the mythological figures with witches who successfully plot Dido's death. Also, instead of the violent death in the original story, Dido dies more poetically. In *Aeneid*,

³⁰ Dido even changed her name after her husband's death and the founding of Carthage, from Ellissa, meaning divine woman, to Dido, meaning bold woman (Harrison, p. 15).

Dido tries to tempt Aeneas to stay but fails. Dido builds a huge funeral pyre, climbs on top of it and stabs herself with Aeneas' sword. In Tate's libretto, there is no sword or violent action; instead, Dido dies from sorrow (Harris, P.14).

In presenting this ancient story, Morris disregards the historicity of both the story's background and Purcell's Baroque music. Unlike his other transpositions of the classics, such as *The Hard Nut* or *The King Arthur*, he does not place the story in a modern setting. While the dance follows Tate's libretto of the ancient love story, he does not refer to any specific style or time in which the story takes place. Preston (2000) points out, "Morris' anachronistic juxtaposition of these historical periods creates an ahistoricity, or timelessness" (p.344). Morris focuses on the thematic material, the characters and their emotional expressions. Preston maintains that Morris' intentional "timelessness" makes the ancient story "archetypal" and, therefore, relevant to the end of the twentieth century (p. 344). In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris talks about the universality of humanity— love, hate, betrayal, and fidelity.

Unlike in classical ballet, Morris' settings and costumes are simple but versatile. The stage is actually a square ring whose three sides are steps through which dancers enter and leave. There is a backdrop, designed by Robert Bordo, which represents the sky, the home of the disguised Sorceress, or the sea, the Mediterranean at which Aeneas often stares. The backdrop changes color from blue during Dido's scenes to dark green for the Sorceress, a foreshadowing of her evil spirit and the upcoming tragedy. The only props are the balustrade which runs across the back of the stage and a bench in the same pattern as the balustrade. Dido and the Sorceress use the bench when they dance. It becomes the

Sorceress' chair and Dido's tomb. Morris explained his setting and costumes in our interview:

I wanted everyone to be entirely versatile, so everybody plays every character. There was no reason to make it fancy; I wanted as little as possible. So the Sorceress only changes hair; they pull their "sarongs" for the sailors and just little as possible. So we could get as much done as we can. The chorus never sings more than a few bars at a time. In a stage production you bring people on, they sing and then they leave. It seemed stupid to me. I wanted to make it as quick and as unencumbered as possible, simple and direct. That was the idea.³¹

Morris minimizes the costumes to increase their dramatic effect. Other than Aeneas who reveals his chest, the dancers wear simple black tunic-like tops and sarongs. Morris double casts himself as Dido and the Sorceress, but they are not distinguishable by their appearances. Morris differentiates them only by movement qualities and facial expressions. Morris' disregard for historicity is a change from other productions of Purcell's work. The videotaped *Dido and Aeneas* produced in 1995, was filmed on location at Hampton Court House, England, where magnificent old settings were available in the house and grounds in order to emphasize the historicity of the tragic story. The characters wear heavy, extravagant costumes, which are a mixture of clothes from medieval times and Ancient Rome.

Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* blends the full musical and vocal score of the opera with his characteristic choreography. Each solo dancer corresponds to a vocal soloist, and the group dancing occurs when the chorus is singing. Musicians and singers are located in the orchestra pit, and the dancers are on the stage. Morris uses one-to-one relationships

³¹ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010. "Sarong" is a skirt worn by men and women in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Pacific islands.

between specific words and movements as his choreographic strategy. Amber Darragh, who played Dido after Morris, says, “Every gesture and movement represents words. That’s how we’re speaking to each other” (August 2006, p. 75). Preston, analyzing Morris’ work, illustrates a lexicon of movements which are identified with specific words in the songs. For example, whenever Dido mentions “press’d” or “torment” she puts one hand on her breast and the other under her navel, fingers towards the crotch, while in a grande pli  position.

Although closely following the text and the music, Morris uses iconographic movements derived from a wide range of classical dances as well as pop arts. In spite of the “ahistoricity” of its setting, the movements of the chorus have archaic and classical characteristics, as if referencing the dance’s ancient background. Dancers frequently use gestures and postures which give the impression of a two-dimensional picture. For example, the chorus sits on the balustrade in a line with their bodies facing diagonally and their hands on their laps, reminiscent of ancient tomb murals.

In describing the narrative and the characters’ emotions, Morris quotes a wide range of classical dances. In our interview Morris mentions his references to Graham and Indonesian dances.

It refers a little bit, not directly, to Martha Graham's early dancers where everyone was in these shifts and just had white, black and red makeup, and that's it. The makeup was just black eyes and nails were colored, and very pale skin and red lips for everybody that I wanted to be uniform. When we first did it that was in the film too, everybody dyed their hair black...And I wanted to do that also because it's a tribute to Indonesian dancing also, and South Indian dancing a little bit. It's all just ideas.³²

³² The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Preston (1998), in her analysis of *Dido and Aeneas*, describes how the dance employs gestures taken from the classical dances of India, Indonesia and Europe, and from the musical films and cartoons of Morris' childhood (p. 246). She explains that a series of delicate hand positions is related to the word "fate" and these finger movements are taken from Indian Classical dance. Also the gestures assigned to represent words such as "fair", "flame", and "sorrow" are similar to those in classical ballet (p. 246-247).

However, Morris' use of classical dance is distinguishable from mere appropriation of other classics. Even though he takes these movements out of their indigenous settings, he never implies that they are "authentic." Rather, he intentionally mixes them with movements from a wide variety of other sources and removes their indigenous context and meaning. In fact, his use of Indian classic dance or ballet mime will not likely be noticed by the majority of audiences who are not familiar with these vocabularies.

Macaulay believes that Morris' two ambivalent roles, Dido and the Sorceress, are "as much self-portrait as were Martha Graham's" and "far more revealing as a reading of Purcell's opera and Virgil's *Aeneid*." (June 2000, p.815) Preston also points out that Morris' use of black dress, mythological subjects, and tragic themes calls to mind the work of Martha Graham (Preston, 1998, p.247).

Morris references other modern artistic works. In the portrayal of the Sorceress, Morris drew on the cartoon character Cruella de Vil from Disney's 1961 animated film adaptation of *101 Dalmatians* (Preston, 2000 p. 347). Cruella is a mysterious, wealthy villainess who kidnaps Dalmatian puppies for their fur. She is characterized with long nails, an extravagant hairstyle, black and white clothes, and a cruel character. Morris'

description of the Sorceress reveals a similar character, from her black attire, curly hair, exaggerated finger movements, and femme fatale style.

Differentiation of movements

Morris' production consists of three acts and five scenes. Act One takes place in the palace where Dido languishes in sorrow while her sister, Belinda, and the Second Woman try to comfort her. Dido and her courtiers' dance represent their noble character and humanity. Inspired by Indian classic dance, Morris uses many delicate hand and finger movements for Dido and courtiers. Dido is a proud and levelheaded woman. Her posture is straight, and her movements are made with clear precision and delicacy, no matter how quickly they pass. Dido strictly controls her body even in lament, and her dances, both solos and with others, imply her standing and responsibility as the Queen. Dido's movements are related to Belinda, Aeneas, and the chorus; Dido and Belinda, and Dido and Aeneas frequently make a symmetrical pose or mimic each other's movements; Dido's performs her solo surrounded by the chorus's formations, or she joins the chorus' dancing through corresponding movements.

Dido's movements are energetic and controlled when she is torn between her loyalty to her dead husband (and Carthage) and her feelings for Aeneas, or when she indulges herself in her love for Aeneas. Belinda and the Second Woman, who encourage and soothe anxious Dido with graceful optimism, show nimble and repetitious jumps with delicate arm and hand movements. In the palace, the chorus' movements emphasize angular shapes and clear formations with limited facial expression, whereas they show twisted and irregular movements when in the Sorceress' cave.

Aeneas enters the stage and swears his love to Dido. "Aeneas has no fate but you! / Let Dido smile and I'll defy / The feeble stroke of Destiny." When Aeneas convinces Dido, his dance is iconographic and exploratory. As seen in Dido's movements, his movements are also connected to a specific word. In the palace, Aeneas frequently uses angular and diagonal arm gestures. After reassuring Dido, Aeneas joins her dance and follows her as if wishing to gain her confidence. In their duet, they make symmetrical poses which symbolize their royal positions. Their duet is stern rather than sweet.

The impressive symmetrical pose of Dido and Aeneas (it is the picture on the DVD/VHS cover) symbolizes how they are connected. After Dido accepts Aeneas, they stay in the same pose while the chorus is dancing. They bend one leg towards each other, and touch one palm to each other's; the other hand is placed on each other's thigh. Their faces are almost deadpan. This symbolic pose is somewhat bizarre for lovers who have just confirmed their feelings; rather, it implies the tragedy that their relationship will bring. Their symmetrical pose with bodies at the same level suggests that they are politically equal. Their hands touching each other's thighs implies that they are physically unified based on their mutual fidelity. It is interesting to note that instead of holding each other's hands, their hands are crossed hands. This implies that their unity will break without a mutual, consistent effort to maintain it.

From the beginning, Dido resists Aeneas's wooing, not only because she fears losing her chastity, but also because she fears that her downfall will cause the fall of Carthage. To ensure Dido, Aeneas sings, "If not for mine, for empire's sake/ Some pity on your lover take." In their duet, they have little physical contact, and do not express the

sweetness of love. Their love is celebrated by the chorus, rather than themselves. Act One ends with the chorus celebrating their unity, “Go revel ye Cupids, the day is your own.” However, the chorus ends their dance with continuous foot stamping which implies the upcoming inauspicious future of these two lovers.

Act Two begins in the cave where the Sorceress and her followers live. The followers are danced by the same chorus as the courtiers, but in contrast to the courtiers’ upright and harmonious movements in the previous chapter are spasmodic, downward, and dragging. Morris talked about the dance of the Sorceress and witches in our interview:

The group of witches are very very improvised. A lot of it. I mean structurally it's the same every time, but really, I never like it to be the same. That being the sort of opposite of Dido, of Dido's court. So it's chaotic. It's meant to be a big mess. And of course, the Sorceress is funny, evil, and vicious. But it's not exactly the opposite of Dido. It's another aspect. It's the fun, horrible, cruel part.³³

At the beginning of Act Two, the chorus walks around with their eyes screened by their hands as if they lived in darkness. The Sorceress enters and lies on the bench, in an upside-down “dead frog” pose (her head towards the floor and legs toward the ceiling). As illustrated by Purcell’s songs, she plots Dido’s fall and rejoices. She plans to send a false messenger from Juno to Aeneas, commanding him to leave Dido immediately. Danced by Morris, who just played Dido in the same costume, the Sorceress displays distinctive movements which are freer and humorous. Whereas Dido’s dance is stylized with precise movements, the Sorceress interweaves formal and ordinary movements

³³ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

(nodding head, shaking leg, folding her arms). To express the Sorceress' wicked side, she uses her facial expression whereas Dido maintains a stoic look.

After introducing the Sorceress' dreadful plot, Morris inserts a love scene between Dido and Aeneas in Scene Three which does not appear in Tate's libretto. According to *Aeneid*, as Juno and Venus agree to help their love along, Juno conjures up a storm during a hunting party, so that the lovers must take shelter in a cave (Harrison, p.11). In Morris' work, without any accompanying text, Dido and Aeneas enact a love scene; two lovers making love. Ironically, in the most intimate scenes of Dido and Aeneas, they barely have eye contact in spite of the sensuality of the act. Dido, unlike her previous movements which represent her noble character, leans toward Aeneas and embraces him, Aeneas, with an indifferent rather than passionate look, stares at a distant place (the sea). Acocella points out that this scene is the miniature of the whole story, which represents her love, his destiny, and his betrayal (p.98).

Act Two continues with the hunting party. Dido's courtiers dance to entertain Aeneas, playing the story of Diana and Actaeon, who was devoured after watching Diana's nakedness. This tragic ending foretells their upcoming tragedy. As the Sorceress conjures up a sudden thunderstorm, Dido and her followers hasten their return to the palace, leaving Aeneas alone. Disguised as Mercury, the spirit of the Sorceress commands Aeneas to leave Carthage that night. Aeneas laments his fate and worries about Dido, but decides to obey the message. After his lament, he roams around the stage as if he were lost in the forest. Morris, by eliminating all dramatic expression from his movements, makes Aeneas look more helpless and desperate.

Act Three starts on the ship. Aeneas commands his crew to leave. The Sailor's song almost mocks Aeneas, who promised his love and then left. "Take a boozy leave of your nymphs on the shore/ Silence their mourning/ With vows of returning/ But never intending to visit them again." The sailors (chorus) repeat this while executing lively jumps. Meanwhile, the Sorceress and the witches rejoice over their success in plotting Dido's fall. The Sorceress foresees that Dido will die after Aeneas leaves and her empire will be ruined. The witches sing, "Elissa (Dido) bleeds tonight, and Carthage flames tomorrow. Ho, ho, ho, ho..." Their dance is celebratory and animated. At one point the witches (chorus) lie on the floor on their backs, mocking Dido's love by mimicking her story. One dancer approaches another, they kiss, and one is killed (as a dancer crosses the other's neck, he falls). Excited by her success, the Sorceress and the chorus sing, "Deconstruction's our delight." The Sorceress lies on the floor, moving one hand over her crotch and the other over her breast, implying masturbation.

The final scene shows Dido, who is desperate, in the palace. She knows her destiny after Aeneas leaves, but asks him to leave anyway. Dido maintains her calm and powerful movement quality. Aeneas pleads with Dido, saying that he wants to stay, but Dido rejects him. When he turns his back, she sings, "Death must come when he is gone." Belina stays with her, but it is Dido who consoles the survivors. Singing "Remember me, but forget my fate," she dances with gentle and soft movements. Dido slowly moves to the bench which will soon become her tomb, and falls onto it.³⁴

³⁴ Dido lies on the bench upside down in the same pose as the Sorceress at her entrance.

Although Morris choreographs based on Purcell's music, Morris' characterization does not copy that of Purcell. On the videotaped version, the camera often shows the dancer and singer in the same scene. Although the dance and music correspond, the difference between the two artists' expressions reveals Morris' departure from Purcell's characterizations. For instance, the camera shows the dancer Dido and the singer Dido in one shot. While singing Dido, played by a middle aged female soprano, skillfully uses her voice to express feminine fragility before her death, Morris' Dido is an energetic and determined Queen with ambivalent gender. By showing the two artists at the same time, Morris juxtaposes the differences between Purcell's and his own Dido, rather than merging them into a single role.

Ambivalence of Human Nature

Presenting an ancient epic through his dance, Morris only casts twelve dancers.³⁵ By double casting dancers, he not only simplifies the number of main dancers, but also demonstrates the ambivalence of human nature. Besides Aeneas, most of dancers play two characters; those are in conflict throughout the narrative. Morris plays Dido and the Sorceress; Belinda and the Second Woman also play the First/Second Witches. The most versatile and ambivalent character is the chorus. They are Dido's loyal courtiers, the Sorceress' dissipated witches, and Aeneas' valiant sailors. When Tate wrote the libretto, he made several basic changes from *Aeneid*. Tate removes the whimsical goddesses and inserts an evil Sorceress. Staying true to Tate's narrative, Morris transforms a mythological story into a drama, focusing on human emotions and a broken heart. Morris

³⁵ Mark Morris Dance Group Official homepage.
<http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

freely expresses love and sexuality and there are no moral lessons in Morris' piece. This is best illustrated in the character of the Sorceress. Whereas the opera portrays her as a revengeful and twisted witch, Morris presents her with a femme-fatale look and a sense of humor. The Sorceress presents feminine attraction through "the vamp-like walk of the femme fatale" (Preston, p.247) and exaggerated arm gestures with sharp and well-manicured fingernails. Rather than dark and twisted, she is salty, creative, and proud of herself (she mocks her victims' foolishness by mimicking them). Whereas Dido is never fully happy with her decision, the Sorceress is full of joy. Her dance is as vigorous as Dido's and even freer in its style.

Dido, played by Morris, is described as a strong and reserved woman who knows her destiny as well as her desire. When she suffers from her passion for Aeneas, she fears Aeneas' infidelity as well as the downfall of Carthage. Dido's passion for Aeneas makes her weak, but Aeneas' infidelity makes her strong. When she realizes his betrayal, she never pleads with him to stay. Calling him "crocodile" ("Thus in fatal banks of Nile / Weeps the deceitful crocodile") and "faithless man" ("No faithless man/ thy course pursue/ I am now resolved, as well as you") she commands him to leave. When Aeneas tells her that he would obey his love, she slaps his face and turns her back to him. As he leaves, she calmly walks back to the bench and sits for a while, with her dispirited back to the audience. This stillness signifies the desperation and exhaustion which will lead her to eternal rest. Dido suffers "a spiritually induced death" (Harris, p.11).

Gay Morris, in her article *Styles of the Flesh* (1996) points out that Dido's movements are different according to the changes of her mind and situation. When Dido

is worrying about her unspoken desire, her dance with her courtiers is dominated with hierarchic, angular steps. In her second dance with Aeneas, she creates a sense of sexuality, with spiral twists of the body and shoulder ripples (p.145). When Dido dies, her movements are different from her previous dances. At the highlight of the tragic ending, Morris minimizes Dido's movements, in spite of the dramatic voice of the dying soprano, and focuses on her mind. After Aeneas leaves, Dido turns her back on the betrayed lover and calmly walks to the bench. She sits on the bench at center stage, turning her back to the audience, disconnected from her lover as well as from her world. While the chorus signs a slow and gentle dance, Dido stays on the bench, almost collapsing her upper body; her body reveals her devastation.

When Dido starts dancing with her sister and the chorus, Dido recovers from self-absorption. She lifts her head and starts to lead the dance once again. Dido's movements are effortlessly soft, continuous, and grounded, showing that mind has transcended agony, desire and even fear of death. Instead of blaming the irresponsible lover who has caused her downfall, she comforts her sister and the chorus. Asking her sister to "forget my fate," Dido consoles Belinda with gentle arm gestures, and then peacefully walks to her tomb. Other than Dido's sentimental aria, no dramatic movement is made. She prepares herself and accepts her destiny.

Whereas Dido plays a strong queen who knows what she should do, Aeneas plays a fool (Harris, p.17). He pleads with Dido, and swears his devotion to her. When Dido refuses him singing, "Fate forbids what you pursue," he replies, "Aeneas has not fate but you!" Dido tries to push him, but Aeneas assures her by repeating her movements. In the

end he blames the gods for his decision, rather than his own weakness. “How can so hard a fate be took?...Yours be the blame, ye gods! ”

In Purcell’s opera, as seen in the Greek prototype, the chorus not only observes an event, but also explains it and provides commentary. Morris expands this role.

According to Carol Martin’s (1999) analysis, nearly half of the dances are assigned to, or include the chorus (p.130). They are observers, witnesses, and narrators who are actively involved in all events; with Dido and Aeneas, they are warm supporters who celebrate “the work of Cupid” (Scene One)³⁶; with the Sorceress, they are evil conspirators who plot the death of the lovers (Scene Two and Four); at the death of Dido, they are witnesses who “entreat the Cupid to watch over Dido’s tomb” (Martin, p.134).

According to Harris (1987), the opera *Dido and Aeneas* is derived from the seventeenth-century English masque tradition. The purpose of the masque was to distill the diverse and entertaining elements of the court masque which included spectacle, dance, poetry, and music, into a unified plot, and musically to seek an effective way to compose dramatic declamation (p.7-8). Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, although it does not have scenic displays and stage machinery, has a significant number of dances. According to Harris, the 1689 libretto contains eleven dances in its three acts, whereas in the 1700 version only six dances are indicated.³⁷ The eleven dances include (Harris, 1987, p.64):

³⁶ Chorus sings, “The hero loves as well as you...”

³⁷ According to Harris, there are two different kinds of chorus, and two different kinds of dances. The chorus may dance or not, and dance may be pantomime or formal. The formality of the dance depends on the music. For instance, “the baske” which has rhythmic patterns is a formal dance, whereas the Lanthorn dance, with irregular and inconsistent rhythm, is a freer style dance (P.67). In Morris’ work, the formality of the

- Act One : 1. Dance this cho. The baske [sic]
 2. A dance Gittars chaony [sic]
 3. The triumphing dance
- Act Two 4. Enter two drunken sailors, a Dance
 5. Eccho [sic] Dance
 6. Gitter [sic] ground a Dance
 7. A dance by Dido' women to Entertain Aeneas
 8. The Groves Dance
- Act Three 9. The Sailors Dance
 10. Jack of the Lanthorn [sic]...A Dance
 11. Cupid Dance

In Morris' work, while each scene begins with the leading characters' dance corresponding to the text, the scenes end with dances performed by the chorus and characters without any accompanied text or song. These dances show the unspoken stories which the songs do not foretell. After Dido confirms Aeneas' love at the court, the chorus alludes to the upcoming tragedy that Dido fears. After the Sorceress plots Dido's downfall, her dance illustrates Dido's demonic desires and her positive creativity. Aeneas dance, after he decides to leave Dido, reveals his unspoken agony. At the end, when Dido dies Morris shows the ambivalent side of Dido. When she is expecting Aeneas's love, she is a worried woman, but when she is waiting for her death, she is a determined queen. Morris highlights Dido's change of emotions from agony to acceptance, rather than her response to the betrayer.

With its multiple layers of meanings, Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* is a far more revealing interpretation of Purcell's opera and Virgil's *Aeneid*. Morris illuminates the Baroque opera by interweaving diverse elements: the ancient myth and Morris' self-

dance depends more on the character. Dido and her courtiers' dances include more stylized movements with referencing to the classical dances, whereas Sorceress' dance is more informal and free.

portrait of characters, Dido and self-invented the Sorceress, demonic desire and sexual desire, and the connections between love and death.

The Hard Nut

The Hard Nut is Morris' version of *The Nutcracker*, based on E. T. A. Hoffmann's famous story, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* (1816). Morris choreographed *The Hard Nut* during his three-year contract in Belgium. It was a great success in Brussels whereas his previous works, such as *Dido and Aeneas* and *Love song Waltzes*, were not well received by the public at that time.³⁸ Since then, *The Hard Nut* has become one of Morris' most popular pieces and has been staged annually except in 1994 and 2008.³⁹ In 1992 when Morris introduced it to New York, this work drew great attention from both critics and audiences for its unique interpretation of an "American Christmas tradition" (Fisher, 2003), and PBS televised it in their program *Great Performances*.

The ballet *The Nutcracker* was first staged in 1891 by Marius Petipa, who served as a ballet master (*Premier Maître de Ballet*) of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres. E.T. A. Hoffmann's 1816 short story, "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King," was very popular in Russia at that time. Ivan Vsevolozhsky, director of the imperial theater, chose the story for the ballet. Tchaikovsky agreed to compose the music for *The Nutcracker*

³⁸ When Morris staged *Mythologies* which was based on Roland Barthes's trilogy, one of Belgium's influential newspaper criticizes it with a headline, "GO HOME MARK MORRIS" (Macaulay, 1991, p. 659).

³⁹ The official homepage of Mark Morris Dance Group, www.mmdg.org.

after his collaboration with Petipa on *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), but he was very disappointed when he read Petipa's revised libretto and choreography due to its weak narrative (Wiley, 1991, p.11).

Vsevoloshsky and Petipa, both French speakers, relied on Alexandre Dumas' libretto, "The Story of a Nutcracker (1948)," which was a lighter version of Hoffmann's tale (Joachim Zipes, 2007, p. vii, Fisher 2003, p.3). Petipa simplified the story and included many original dance parts in his libretto. It is interesting to note that the addition of dance to the scenario had nothing to do with Hoffman's story. The famous dances in *The Nutcracker*, such as the Waltz of Flowers, the Waltz of the Snowflakes, and ethnic dances are the principal dancing parts, but they are creations of Petipa's; they do not add to the narrative coherence. There is no logical connection between the Mouse Queen's battle and Marie's everyday life. Wiley explains, "The audience is left at the final curtain asking what point of the piece was, and what more it must know for the story to make sense... Above all, Nutcracker loses the element of relation to human experience that *Sleeping Beauty* gained in the process of adaptation from story to ballet. As a result, *Nutcracker* remains a simple children's tale, without significance as an allegory or a parable..." (Wiley, 1984, p.198).

In spite of Tchaikovsky's brilliant composition, the first versions of *The Nutcracker* failed to satisfy the Russian audiences at its premiere. Czar Alexander III complimented Tchaikovsky on his music, but the Russian audiences, accustomed to the Romantic ballet style, were confused with the random array of episodes and the late entrance of the prima ballerina (Patrick, 2000, December, p.42). After its premiere in

Russia *The Nutcracker* was full of ups and down. It wasn't a virtuoso showpiece in its native land, and went through several re-choreographings. Often only the second half was performed or the ballet was relegated to school performances. Interestingly, it was not associated with the Christmas season, and its child-centered libretto was a problem to overcome for dancers and producers (Fisher, 2003, p.18).

After several decades *The Nutcracker* was introduced to the West and quickly became a Christmas tradition for middle-class families. In the book *Nutcracker Nation*, Jennifer Fisher points out that *The Nutcracker* has become a family ritual in America thanks to the child-friendly aspect and its connection to Christmas (2003, p.41-49). Fisher personifies *The Nutcracker* as an immigrant who successfully settled in the new world after taking leave of his homeland.

In 1944 William Christensen produced the first American *Nutcracker* in San Francisco using his experience in the Maryinsky Theater (Patrick, p.44). Always with Tchaikovsky's music, many choreographers have staged this production, including: Nicholas Sergeyev for the Vic-Wells Ballet in 1934, George Balanchine for the New York City Ballet in 1954, Yuri Grigorovich for the Bolshoi Ballet in 1966, John Cranko for the Stuttgart Ballet in 1966, Rudolf Nureyev for the Royal Swedish Ballet in 1967, Flemming Flindt for the Royal Danish Ballet in 1971, John Neumeier for the Frankfurt Ballet in 1971, Mikhail Baryshnikov and then Kevin McKenzie for the American Ballet Theatre in 1976 (Patrick, p.44, Craine & Mackrell, 2000, p.351). Also, two modern choreographers, Mark Morris (1991) and Matthew Bourne (1992) have staged their own versions of *The Nutcracker* with modern twists.

The Nutcracker story has numerous twists and turns, and its narrative has been altered depending on companies and choreographers. However, they start from the same place—at Mr. Stahlbaum’s Christmas party on Christmas night. A young girl Marie (or Clara, Mary, Made, or Masha according to the version (Patrick, December 2002, p.43)) is presented with the Nutcracker as a Christmas gift from her godfather, Herr Drosselmeier. Her younger brother Fritz breaks the Nutcracker and she, with loving sympathy, takes care of the broken Nutcracker. In the middle of the night, the Nutcracker comes alive and has a battle with the evil Mouse King (or Mouse Queen, rats, or occasionally coyotes). Marie helps the Nutcracker and, as the Mice retreat, the Nutcracker transforms into a handsome prince. He, as a reward for her kindness, takes her to the magical world (according to Hoffman, the Land of Snow). Act One ends here with a beautiful group of dancing snowflakes. Act Two, without any conspicuous story, begins in the Land of Sweets and is filled with magnificent dances of all the ethnic dolls (or tea and candies) and the Sugar Plum Fairy, all to entertain Marie.

Morris used Tchaikovsky’s entire score for *The Nutcracker*, but changed the title to *The Hard Nut* instead of *The Nutcracker*, referencing the subtitle of Hoffmann’s story, “The Tale of The Hard Nut.” With Tchaikovsky’s music and E.T.A. Hoffman’s plot, Morris’ *Hard Nut* exudes the exhilarating and joyful qualities of the classic *Nutcracker*, but reveals several discrepancies from the classical tale. Morris modernizes the story by setting it in an American nuclear family in the 1960’s, instead of a nineteenth-century bourgeois home. With wit and dark humor, this production has a strong narrative which transforms a fairytale into a satirical and multilayered anecdote.

In what follows, I discuss Morris' ambivalence, how Morris has revealed significant discrepancies in the narrative and characterizations from predominant versions, rejecting some and upholding others. For the contextualization of Morris' approach, I refer to E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Nutcracker and Mouse King* (1816), and Alexandre Dumas' *The Tale of the Nutcracker* (1845). For the analysis of this work, I reference Mark Morris' videotaped dance of *The Hard Nut* (1992), the New York City Ballet's *The Nutcracker* (1993) choreographed by George Balanchine, and San Francisco Ballet's *The Nutcracker* (2008) choreographed by Helgi Tomasson.

Return to Hoffmann

In approaching one of the most popular ballet pieces, Morris both twists and upholds conventional ballet heritage. In spite of Morris' dramatic modification of settings from the nineteenth century to modern life, Morris is the only choreographer who follows Hoffmann's original story closely. Macaulay points out that many of *The Nutcracker* producers attempted to revive Hoffman's narrative to add more logic to the ballet narrative, but "no one can have managed to tell as much of the Hoffmann story as Morris" (1991, p.659).⁴⁰

Morris returns to Hoffmann's narrative and revives main episodes that were disregarded in Petipa's version. Although Hoffman's story was widely read in Russia at the time, Petipa chose to use Alexander Dumas' sweeter version as the basis for his

⁴⁰ Macaulay later wrote in *The New York Times*, "Every Nutcracker choreographer at some point imposes a scenario different from the one Tchaikovsky was illustrating, but Mr. Morris goes much further than most, and there are incidental sequences in which his scenario grows overambitious and perplexing (2010, December 12, para.3).

ballet's libretto, simplifying Hoffmann's complicated story with its time lapses and flashbacks (Zipes, 2007, vii). Morris altered the settings and modernized the characters, but was faithful to the original narrative and its message. Morris revived the episodes of the Mouse Queen and her revenge on Princess Pirlipat, Drosselmeier's travels around the world in search of the hard nut, and the love story of the Nutcracker and Marie.

Morris' references to Hoffmann's narrative provide a logical progression in the story. Many critics and researchers agree that *The Nutcracker* displays the absence of a coherent narrative and several flaws in its logic. Jennings mentions, "there is an all-but-unbridgeable fault line in its narrative" (Spring 2005, p.31). Jowitt says, "spectators accept the resultant inconsistencies and flaws in logic"(25 December 2002, p.25) and Wiley critiques, "in general the adaption was faulty as drama...the episodes selected make no sense when they are strung together" (1991, p.8).

Jack Zipes, the translator of Hoffman's story, insists that the tale of Hoffmann's fairytale "Nutcracker and the Mouse King" is misleading because the story is more about the curious Marie and ambivalent Drosselmeier (2007, xxii). In fact, Hoffmann's writing is dark rather than sweet. He describes how Marie, almost painfully, goes through many difficulties to protect the Nutcracker. Drosselmeier repeatedly assures Marie that she is the only one who can save the Nutcracker, and Marie sacrifices her precious dolls and dresses for the Nutcracker. Hoffmann spends more pages in describing their dilemma than their exotic journey to the magical world (Hoffmann, p.39-47). While Hoffmann emphasizes irony and complexity of life in his tale, Dumas simply beautifies the scenes and closes the tale sweetly. In this way, he could entertain a large group of children (2007,

i-xxx). Zipes criticizes the ballet, *The Nutcracker*, as ambiguous because Hoffmann's text has been "destabilized" by Dumas and other adaptations (xxviii).

In this ballet, Petipa chopped up Hoffman's narrative and failed to provide an adequate substitute for it. In the traditional ballet *The Nutcracker*, only a few of Hoffman's original episodes survive, such as the Christmas party, the battle of the dolls and the mice, and the visit to the magical world. After its premier in 1891, Russian critics lamented that Hoffman's beautiful tale was distorted and unrecognizable. "Mr. Petipa took extreme advantage of his right as regards simplicity and non-complexity of subject matter. In *The Nutcracker* there is no subject whatever" (Wiley, p.9).⁴¹

Many ballet producers inserted additional scenes in an attempt to explain how the story begins or the relationship between Drosselmeier and the Nutcracker. For instance, in the 2010 production of the American Ballet Theater, choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky, the choreographer included an episode with a little rat in the kitchen during the overture. In The Royal Ballet's production, choreographed by Anthony Dowell, the prologue shows the story of Drosselmeier, who is concerned about his enchanted nephew the Nutcracker.

By retrieving a subplot from Hoffmann's story, Morris revives Hoffmann's message. Hoffman wrote *Nutcracker and Mouse King* in 1816 for his friend, Julius

⁴¹ Tchaikovsky agreed to compose *The Nutcracker* after the success of *Sleeping Beauty*. But he had to go through a hard time while working on the music. Tchaikovsky liked Hoffman's story, but when he found out that Petipa's libretto resisted any interpretation deeper than that of a simple child's tale, he was perplexed and lost his motivation. He wrote to the director on 15 April 1881, "Nutcracker...the images ...frighten, horrify and pursue me, waking and sleeping, mocking me with the thought I shall not cope with them" (Wiley, 1991, p. 11-12).

Hitzig's children, but this tale is more about social class, especially how bourgeois children were being raised (Zipes, 2007, xix). Hoffmann was unhappy with the bourgeois' disciplinary education of children and believed that parents should not restrain their children's imagination, as seen in Marie's story. Morris shifts the focus from the display of exotic dolls and spectacular dancing to the main characters, especially Marie who opens her eyes to the world through a series of events. At the end of Act One, Drosselmeier takes Marie through the snowstorm to the Kingdom where the whole story begins.

Act Two takes place in the kingdom where Drosselmeier served as the royal clockmaker. The King and Queen had a precious daughter named Pirlipat. (The King and the Queen are actually the dancers who played Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum, and the nurse is the housemaid). When the baby princess is with the nurse, the Mouse Queen (Dame Mouserink)⁴² appears on the stage. The Mouse Queen is furious with the king for killing her children and, as revenge, curses the baby princess transforming her into an ugly, malformed monster.⁴³

Drosselmeier finds a solution to the princess's dilemma. The Princess will be able to break the curse and have her beauty back only if she eats the legendary hard nut,

⁴² The Mouse Queen justifies her position and stays at the court by claiming she is related to the royal family and is the queen of the Mouse Kingdom (Hoffmann, p.103).

⁴³ According to Hoffmann's story, the Mouse Queen and her children had eaten most of the bacon prepared for the King and the Queen's dinner. The King was enraged at the Mouse Queen for spoiling his supper and upsetting his wife. He ordered that Mouserink and her children be killed. Drosselmeier invented mousetraps and the Mouse Queen's children were caught and killed (Hoffmann, p.33).

Krakatuk. Drosselmeier travels all over the world in the search of the *Krakatuk* and a man who can break this hard nut (Hoffmann, p.33). When Drosselmeier visits his hometown at the end of the journey, he meets his nephew who is able to break the nut. As the Nutcracker breaks the nut with his strong jaw, the princess regains her beauty. However, when the Nutcracker leaves the princess' bed he accidentally steps on Dame Mouserink, and she receives a fatal wound. Dame Mouserink is about to change the Nutcracker into a hideous figure, promising that her seven-headed son will revenge her death by killing the Nutcracker (Hoffmann, p. 32-33). This is where Marie interrupts the original narrative in Morris' version. She realizes her feeling for the Nutcracker, and shouts it out loud. Suddenly, every curse and antagonism disappears.⁴⁴ Everyone—King and Queen, Mouse Queen, Drosselmeier, and the Nutcracker—start celebrating Marie and the Nutcracker's love.

Morris skillfully interweaves Hoffman's narrative and Petipa's divertissements. He includes the prime dancing parts such as the Waltz of the Snowflakes and the Waltz of the Flowers without abandoning their festive moods and the beauty of the movements, but excludes the parades of performers which do not contribute to the construction of characters or narrative. Morris inserted some important anecdotes deleted from Hoffman's story. He shows the curse of the Mouse Queen, Drosselmeier's search of the Nutcracker, and the accidental killing of the mice by the Nutcracker. These anecdotes

⁴⁴ In Hoffmann's story, Mice attack the Nutcracker every night, and Marie and the Nutcracker repel the attack of the Mice by giving the Nutcracker a sword from Fritz's toys.

provide a better explanation of the characters and their relationships while transforming the piece from a festive children's story to a complicated postmodern fairytale.⁴⁵

Fantasy and Reality

Another aspect of Morris' ambivalence is shown in the way he intersects reality and fantasy, projecting both utopian fantasy and its dark side. *The Nutcracker* is the epitome of ballet's dreamy journey into a fantastic world, filled with dancing snowflakes and ethnic dolls. In Petipa's *The Nutcracker*, the distinction between reality and fantasy is clear. Once the mice disappear, Marie stays in a supernatural world until she wakes up and realizes it was a dream. These two worlds are separate, and never influence each other.

Interestingly in *The Nutcracker*, although these two worlds are not merged they are basically similar. They both are fun, child friendly, welcoming, and nicely controlled by their own systems. The dances during the Christmas party are arranged according to the distinctions of age and gender, and the luxurious ethnic dances in the magical world are arranged by their characters. To connect these two worlds, the ballet implies that Clara is dreaming.⁴⁶ Jennings points out, "Our heroine sinks into sleep, the transformation occurs, the orchestra and corps de ballet whirl through the snowflake dance, the adventure begins. This is the ballet's dramatic axis, and...sadly the point at

⁴⁵ Meanwhile, some critiques state that Morris' description of the narrative is confusing and unclear. "All this is fun and theatrical but it doesn't improve on the scenario." Siegel says.(1991, p.62)

⁴⁶ In Hoffmann's story Drosselmeier visits Marie the next morning to convince her that her dream was real and tells her the story of Princess Pirlipat and the Queen of the Mice.

which the narrative turns to slush” (Spring 2005, p.31). In Tomasson’s production for The San Francisco Ballet, the ballet ends up with Marie’s mime; she wakes up in her bed and realizes that she has had a strange dream. She runs to her mother and hugs her, reassured that she is safe.

In *The Hard Nut*, the boundary between reality and fantasy is not as clear. Morris freely mixes Marie’s everyday and fantastic worlds. In Morris’ works, Marie and Drosselmeier freely pass into the Kingdom through time leaps. She goes to the past where she observes the story of Princess Pirlipat and the curse of the Nutcracker. The intersection between reality and fantasy is also different in Morris’ work from Hoffmann’s original story. In Hoffmann’s tale, Marie’s fantasy is not fun. Unlike the classical ballet, Marie’s experience is not a one-night dream, and Marie cannot defeat the Mouse Queen with a slipper. She has to defend herself and the cursed Nutcracker from the Mice troop’s attack every night. Both Marie and the Nutcracker are cursed into ugliness at different moments. The attack of Mouse Queen and her troop is consistent and harsh, and Marie’s dreams intrude into her everyday life. For instance, Marie spends time during the day preparing for her next battle.

While the fantasy Morris presents is not dreamlike and playful as seen in the classical ballets, it is also free from Hofmann’s dark, harsh story. While Hoffman’s Marie painstakingly fights against the mice troop for the Nutcracker almost by herself, Morris’ Marie finds her solution with the support of adults.⁴⁷ Morris never loses his focus on the

⁴⁷ In Hoffmann’s story, after the night when Marie first encountered the Nutcracker and the Mouse Queen, Marie talks about her strange experience, but her parents think that Marie had a feverish dream.

child, Marie, and devotes the whole story to Marie's growth through her unique experience.

Morris doesn't even fantasize the magical moment when the Nutcracker transforms into the Prince. In Balanchine's production, the transformation is done in a magical way, enhancing the piece's fairy tale quality. Morris has two male dancers in servant costumes come to the Nutcracker, and change his costume and take off his mask. In Act Two, when the cursed Princess changes into a beauty, she calmly takes off her wig and dresses with the help of servants. Morris, illustrating the transformation as a natural event, implies that the change is the result of human endeavors rather than a magical event.

In Morris' story, the distinction between good and evil is not clear. The Mouse King attacks the Nutcracker in revenge for his mother's death. The King and Queen care about food and their appetites, but are merciless, killing anyone they dislike. Drosselmeier looks for the Nutcracker to save his life, and a princess must regain her beauty before she can achieve her identity. The good and evil is more ambiguous at the end when all the characters, from Stahlbaum to the mice soldiers, celebrate Marie and the Nutcracker's love.

"Inner Child" vs. Dark Humor

In his approach to this child-centered narrative, Morris removes the cloying sweetness which suffuses *The Nutcracker*, and includes his own dark humor. *The Hard Nut* has the exhilarating and joyful qualities of the classic *The Nutcracker*, but Morris disengages from the idea of innocent childhood and nostalgia. Zipes, the translator of

Hoffman's story, proclaims that *The Hard Nut* is an anti-fairytale as it is "unsettling, macabre, and provocative" (xxi). Morris presents neither a child dancer, nor a welcoming fairy. Marie, instead of indulging herself in a sweet and exotic dream, is asked to grow up through both internal and external journeys. It includes the grotesque as well as the fanciful, showing the dark side of reality such as revenge and curse.

The Nutcracker and *The Hard Nut* start on Christmas night. In Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, he presents or creates an extravagant Christmas party of the upper-middle class. The party is full of Christmas spirit and extravagant decorations. There is a giant Christmas tree with glittering ornaments carefully decorated by the host; the spacious living room is filled with luxurious and antique furniture; women and children wear lustrous new silk dresses which tastefully match the other decorations; formal social dances are arranged for the guests and their children.

Balanchine's Christmas party, though filled with old-fashioned style and formality, is held for the children. The ballet begins with two of the Stahlbaum children, Clare and Fritz, desperately waiting for the beginning of the Christmas party and their presents. Fulfilling their wishes, the Christmas party is full of events for the children. There is the lighting of the giant Christmas tree and the opening of the Christmas presents, including the surprise presents from the godfather. In a seemingly joyful mood, children are playing with peers, segregated by gender.

According to Fisher, the huge success of *The Nutcracker* in America was due to its early association with Christmas and children. Many major ballet companies only stage it during the Christmas season, as the ballet depicts a magical event on Christmas

night. Since the Victorian era, where people idealized childhood and its innocence, Christmas has been regarded as a children's holiday, and *The Nutcracker's* child-friendly narrative accommodates both the Christmas spirit and the American culture which honors youth (2003, p.49). *The Nutcracker* gained popularity with the growth of the baby-boomers in 1960's, as the ballet's emphasis on the "inner child" appealed to them and their children. (p.41-51).

Fisher sees the connection with Christmas as the prime character of *The Nutcracker*. However, for Morris Christmas is only the setting during which the events take place. "It just starts on Christmas Eve that's all. It's not about Christmas. That's just the situation." Morris said during our second interview. Morris shifted the focus of the story from Christmas magic to Marie's need to grow through this adventure.

Unlike Balanchine, Morris draws a party for the grown-ups. Other than the Stahlbaum's three children, who are, in fact, played by adult dancers, no child is invited to Morris' party. There is no game and no refreshment for children, and only alcohol is served for the party which is why people get intoxicated. Siegel says, "The Stahlbaum kids seem to be allowed in only as tokens of parental pride and solicitude" (1991, p.59). The house is decorated in modern chic, using only black and white.

Although Morris is not interested in depicting the innocence of childhood, he shows the "inner child" of the grownups without any moral judgment. The party guests are boisterous hipsters of the 1960's, who wear loud shirts and miniskirts. Morris' party guests consider Christmas as a good excuse to get drunk and act out, rather than a sacred holiday celebrating family and tradition. In Stahlbaum's house everyone except the

minors drinks as much as they want. They get drunk, sing and dance, kiss and flirt with anyone they want, and even steal gifts from their host. During this party, in spite of the presence of children, the grown-ups reveal their untamed and uncontrolled “inner child”.

While Balanchine shows a carefully prepared formal social gathering where everyone acts appropriately, Morris mocks the idea of a genteel Christmas Eve social gathering. Morris’ party is full of accidental events performed by drunken (or dishonest) adults and disobedient children. These characters are far from the Christmas spirit or the innocence of childhood. “Morris uproots the nineteenth century vision of how adults and children can live in harmony and decorum,” Siegel says (1991, p.59). Parents shove their children; children sit in front of the television; a teenage daughter tries to drink alcohol and flirts with a man; a troublesome drunkard (played by Morris) fights with other guests; drunken guests are singing or weeping; voluptuous adults flatter and kiss the wrong person; and a guest steals back the present he brought.

In Balanchine’s version, everyone has fixed identity and they understand their positions. The characters are almost idealized stereotypes of a nineteenth-century bourgeois family where everyone behaves accordingly. The parents are benevolent yet disciplined, the servants are polite and humble, and children are innocent and docile even when they are running across the stage. The group dances in Act One imply shared ideologies and practice within the community. In spite of its “child-centered” idea, the dance in the party represents children as miniature adults. Without any shyness or fidgeting, children delicately perform the same steps with the adults, as if they were taking a lesson (or a test) of their assigned roles. Dancing in symmetrical formations, they

pair up with someone of the other sex, exhibiting dexterity and disciplined movement. Their dance seems to imply what their education is about: respect for tradition, acting civilized, compliance with social etiquette, and segregated gender roles.

On the other hand, dance at Morris' party is informal, sporadic, and voluntary. At the party scene, Morris' guests greet, talk, and fight with each other and teach, mimic and join in each other's movements. There is no hierarchy in learning and dancing, and a party is a party, not a class to give a lesson to the children. Drosselmeier teaches movements to the doll who then carries out the steps while party guests follow the doll's movements. The dancing does not appear to be choreographed. Instead the movements characterize the guests, both children and adults, and emphasize how they "share" a dance at the party. To create a realistic party scene, Morris allows the dancers to create their own dances based on the music. Morris said,

The party, the first act is very, very open and improvised. I mean everyone's at the right place at the right time but every show is completely different, and it's great. We tell the story, but behavior can change enormously. When different people go in, they don't necessarily recreate the same character. So people are responsible for participating in it. So it's quite free and complicated. But no, it's the same text.⁴⁸

Sarah Cohen claims that *The Hard Nut* discriminates itself from the ballet tradition by opening the process of sharing a dance. She wrote in "Performing Identity in The Hard Nut : Stereotype, Modeling and the Inventive Body,"

[The Hard Nut] departs more radically from the Nutcracker predecessors by openly showing their progress of learning. From the revelry at the opening party to the more lyrical dances later in the ballet, the characters demonstrate a proclivity to share and assimilate their movement through constant example and practice...Nutcracker ...is the illusion that all of

⁴⁸ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

those bodies move the way they do naturally, or as if by magic...The Hard Nut characters...resist the notion that a body can know what it is without some kind instruction or model. (199b, p.497)

In Act one, after Marie saves the Nutcracker, Morris has a duet between the Nutcracker and Drosselmeier instead of Marie and the Nutcracker. “Drosselmeier is his uncle, and It's teaching him how to exist in this world. That's what he's doing, he gives everybody lessons. Drosselmeyer gives them presents, which teach them lessons and he's watching out for them. He wants them to be in the world, so that's what he does.” Morris explains.⁴⁹

Morris, by interweaving Act One and Act Two, reconciles the discrepancies between the main characters and main dancers in *The Nutcracker*. Wiley points out that in Petipa's *The Nutcracker*, the lack of connected episodes and narrative cause a disconnect between the important characters (Marie and Drosselmeier) and important dancers (Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier) (1991, p.9). This results in an imbalance of dance and mime; Act One is filled with the main characters' mimed movements which introduce the narrative and characters. Besides the Waltz of the Snowflakes, the main characters in Act One— Mr. and Mrs. Stahlbaum, Marie and his brother Fritz, Drosselmeier, Mice, and the Nutcracker—were excluded from the most accomplished dancing in the piece, performing mime parts to foreshadow the upcoming dances. In the traditional *Nutcracker*, audiences see the main dancing in the later part of the work. Act

⁴⁹Ibid.

Two presents a collaboration of virtuosic dancing by dancers who have secondary roles in terms of the narrative.⁵⁰

However, In *The Hard Nut* Marie is played by a mature dancer who takes a leading role in both Act One and Act Two. With the help of time travel, Marie participates in Drosselmeier's story, which happened in the past. When she sees that the Mouse Queen is about to curse the Nutcracker she prevents it by declaring her love for him. To celebrate her love and growth, characters from Act One join to the group dancing in Act Two. Marie's parents are double-cast as the Queen and the King. In the finale, all the characters from both the real and magical worlds, from the party guests to the snowflakes, the housemaid to the Mouse Queen, are dancing together, replacing the traditional grand pas de deux of two main characters.

Approach to Ethnicity

In *The Hard Nut*, the ethnic dances are presented in the middle of Drosselmeier's search around the world. In Balanchine's and Tomasson's versions, these dances are the extravagant divertissements which combine ballet's elegant technique with some sense of ethnicity. Balanchine emphasizes ballet technique with international flavors rather than ethnicity. The dance of Coffee is a slow and sensual solo by a ballerina whose dance and costume are reminiscent of an odalisque; she, on pointe shoes, wears a sheer costume that emphasizes her feminine beauty. In the Chinese Tea dance, a male dancer who has black hair does continuous acrobatic jumps, accompanied by two black haired female dancers

⁵⁰ For this reason, Marie is often replaced by an adult dancer. For instance, in The Moscow Stanislavsky Ballet's production, Masha (Marie) is transformed into a beautiful maiden, and young Marie abruptly disappears (Jennings, 1991, p.31).

in Chinese-patterned silk costumes. Meanwhile, Choreographer Tomasson, for The San Francisco Ballet, tries to add more “authenticity.” Tomasson uses The Chinese Dragon Dance (舞龍) as his Chinese dance to highlight its ethnicity.

Morris also uses ethnicity, but at the same time mocks the ballet’s traditional appropriation of ethnicity. Morris presents the Arabian, Chinese, Spanish and Russian dances with emphasis on their lack of authenticity. Macaulay explains that Morris makes them “corny, inauthentic, cute, silly and delicious” as if they came from a world tour brochure (April 1991, p.659). He shows the Arabian dancer with sunglasses, and Spanish dancers with Flamenco. He even includes French dancers on pointe shoes with a fashion magazine and pompous, arrogant attitudes.

When the dancers are on stage, a light is blinking on the huge world map to indicate where the dance came from. Rather than multicultural, these dances are hilarious and sarcastic because of Morris’ exaggeration and intentional disregard of authenticity. Critic Siegel once criticized the appropriations of world dance by Western artists (including Morris) calling them “a form of cultural imperialism” (1995, p. 227). Siegel argued that these (cultural) elements have been inserted to make them interesting” (227). In fact, Morris’ use of cultural elements is distinguishable from Balanchine’s, because he mimics “the international flavor” ballet has produced, rather than the culture itself.

Characterization

Morris enlivens the characters by establishing their actual characters and roles; each character has his or her own story, instead of merely serving to highlight the main characters. For instance, Marie’s elder sister, Louise, who does not appear in most

versions, is a neurotic teenage girl who strives to act and be treated like a grown-up. She desperately wants to mingle with the young adults, tries to drink alcohol, and attempts physical contact with the men (including Drosselmeier) through dancing and a kiss.

Drosselmeier, who adores Marie, is cool towards Louise.

In *The Hard Nut*, Drosselmeier is the hero of the tale (Jowitt, 2002, 51).

Drosselmeier is no longer the half-bald, eccentric, old man shown in Balanchine's version, but an attractive and intelligent dandy. Morris portrays him in several ways from a mysterious magician to the gentle godfather of Marie to the royal clockmaker in the Kingdom. Drosselmeier is an ambivalent and enchanting leading character. Cohen (1998) explains that Drosselmeier is a "quintessential teacher and bearer of ideas for corporeal self-styling" (p.498). He is a handsome middle-aged man who easily attracts girls at the party (Louise attempts to kiss him, but he rejects her), and a mysterious magician who suspends time and travels through it. In Act One, when he makes his first entrance, Drosselmeier touches the wall clock, as if he is manipulating it. The party guests check their watches after he touches the clock as if something strange happened. Later on in Act One, when he takes Marie through time, his face appears on the face of the clock as the owl figure vanishes. In the story of the Kingdom, he is a loyal and responsible servant, who left in search of the hard nut for the cursed princess.

For Marie and the Nutcracker, Drosselmeier is not merely a guide to a magical world, as in the traditional version, but a catalyst who changes their inner nature. In the beginning of Act One, he acts as a gentle godfather who has a fatherly love for Marie. Later he serves as Marie's mentor, assuring her that what is happening is real, not the

result of her fever. For his unfortunate nephew, the Nutcracker, Drosselmeier plays the role of instructor, and this relationship is portrayed in the duet of Drosselmeier and the Nutcracker at the end of Act One. The Nutcracker and Drosselmeier dance the same soft and tender steps with The Nutcracker dancing behind a sheer curtain; Drosselmeier gently teaches The Nutcracker about his role.⁵¹

Meanwhile, Marie's character shows the most significant difference from other prevalent versions. In the traditional ballet, Marie is conventionally performed by a young girl, emphasizing the naïve and imaginative character of a child. Marie, Fritz and their friends are typical children in a bourgeois home. Marie shows strong attachment to her doll, while Fritz torments his sister, playing a naughty boy. In Morris' work, Marie hovers between a child who is imaginative and sympathetic and an adolescent who just begins to realize what she wants. In Act Two she is not an excited child who was just invited to a magical world she dreamed, but a girl who starts to understand herself and what she wants. Instead of a visitor to a wonderland who is watching a variety of dances (while eating from a candy buffet), she is actively involved in the events, crossing time and place with Drosselmeier. Her proclamation of her feeling towards the Nutcracker is the most important event in Morris' story as it portrays her inner growth.

The story ends suddenly and happily with joyful and magnificent dancing. Morris, claiming this dance is about love, emphasizes that one needs to grow in order to

⁵¹ Deborah Jowitt noticed that Drosselmeier is given impresario Diaghilev's streak of white hair, and the duet with the Nutcracker "contains an in-joke about the relationship between Diaghilev and his protégé Vaslav Nijinsky"(The Village Voice 47:52 25 December 2002, p.51).

recognize love.⁵² Through the celebration of Marie's growth, Morris transmits Hoffman's message. Illustrating the interplay of dreams and reality in Marie's story, Hoffmann urges bourgeois families to free their children's imaginations so the children can recognize and fulfill their desire (Zipes, xxi). Two centuries later, a child grows up in much the same way. Marie, in Morris' work, grows up when she leaves her seat in front of the TV and dives into a new world. When she realizes her feelings and honestly accepts them, she can achieve what she wants— her Nutcracker.

Anti-Fairy Tale Based on a Fairy Tale

In spite of Morris' rejection of sweetness and nostalgia, both he and Petipa take love and magic as their theme, but the love they are illustrating is very different. *The Nutcracker* illustrates the magical side of love and the concept of immutable destiny. Marie's love for the Nutcracker is often referred to as the traditional hallmark of certain love. Fisher says that when asked, many in *The Nutcracker's* audience respond that Clara (Marie)'s message is that "Dreams can come true" (2003, p. 50).

Meanwhile, Morris takes a more egalitarian attitude in describing love. He argues, rather than by magic or dreams, love must be acquired by (through) one's internal growth and appreciation of the other. At his short speech on the videotaped production, Morris claims that *The Hard Nut* is not just a love story between two heterosexual couples, but a story for everyone who wants to celebrate love. In Act Two, where the traditional ballet highlights the extravagant pas de deux of young lovers, Morris inserts a large group of dancers involving all the characters, regardless of their relationships within the story. By

⁵² Mark Morris' speech in the film adaptation of *The Hard Nut*, 1993.

doing so, he celebrates love's humanitarian spirit. Interestingly, Morris does not romanticize Marie and the Nutcracker's love as a happily ever after ending. In Act Two, at the end of their love duet and after confirming their feelings for each other, a group of miniature Mice follows the young lovers. This scene implies the trials and difficulties every couple must face.

Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare (2008)

Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare is one of Morris' recent works, premiered at the Bard's Summer Scape Festival in July 2008. Morris' *Romeo & Juliet*, based on Shakespeare's most famous love tragedy, reveals Morris' unique approach to the classics. Instead of the trademark tragic ending for the ill-fated lovers, Morris presents *Romeo and Juliet* as a happy-ending story. Juliet wakes up in time; they flee their oppressive families and live happily ever. Morris' unfamiliar ending is based on the Prokofiev's original composition which has not been previously performed. Morris choreographed the work when he accepted the invitation from the festival which was dedicated that year to the music of Prokofiev. After its premier, the production began a tour which included Berkeley, Norfolk, London, New York, and Chicago.⁵³

Many choreographers before Mark Morris, choreographed works based on Shakespeare's love story. Most of the productions were classic ballet, highlighting the ill-

⁵³ "Performance Schedule," The official home page for *the Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, <http://lovelives.net/home.shtml>

fated love.⁵⁴ Shakespeare's love story was popularly produced as a ballet after two major musicians composed their works of *Romeo and Juliet*. Tchaikovsky was inspired by Shakespeare and wrote works based on *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* (Holloway, 1993, p623). In 1869, Tchaikovsky composed *Romeo and Juliet* and the first ballet set to Tchaikovsky was choreographed by Birget Bartholin in Paris in 1937. In 1997 Kent Stowell choreographed the production for the Pacific Northwest Ballet (Reynolds, 1995, p.261).

Another famous *Romeo and Juliet* is the music of Sergei Prokofiev who worked closely with Diaghilev and Ballet Russes early in his career. Vladimir Mutnykh, the new artistic director of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, asked Prokofiev to compose *Romeo and Juliet*. At that time, Prokofiev lived in France and America and immersed himself in avant-garde stage art.⁵⁵ In May 1935, Prokofiev, with close cooperation with Kirov ballet authorities and Shakespeare specialists, composed a four act *Romeo and Juliet*, with a happy ending.⁵⁶ Prokofiev wrote a detailed number-by-number scenario of the ballet in

⁵⁴ The first known choreographer was an Italian, Eusebio Luzzi, who choreographed a five -act ballet at the Théâtre Samuele in Venice, Italy in 1785 using the music of Luigi Marescalchi (Craine & Mackrell, 2000, p. 400).

⁵⁵ He fled from his Russian homeland after the October Revolution.

⁵⁶ Sergey Dinamov, a Central Committee official on the board of the Bolshoi Theater reviewed the plot, and suggested, given the happy ending, the ballet be subtitled "on motives of Shakespeare." "Chronology of Sergey Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*," The official home page for *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. <http://lovelives.net/discovery/chronology/>

1935, and Morris choreographs the happy ending scene based on this scenario. In Act Four, Prokofiev wrote,⁵⁷

“Romeo thinks that she has died and prepares to stab himself. Friar Laurence enters the room and tries to stop him; the two struggle for control of the knife. The ruse is revealed as the sleeping potion wears off and Juliet begins to breathe. Friar Laurence joyfully sounds the alarm for the townspeople to gather. Romeo first moves to embrace him, then approaches Juliet, carrying her away from the crowd into a space all their own. Friar Laurence directs the attention of the townspeople to the departing lovers. They are now alone. Juliet slowly comes to herself in Romeo’s arms; everything in their movement reflects their emotions.”

However, Prokofiev’s original score with the “happy ending” was never performed before Morris’ version. Soon after Prokofiev finished the score, Stalin’s Terror began with its censorship and resulting fear and caution in the arts.⁵⁸ Prokofiev, now living back in Russia, changed the ending back to comply with Shakespeare’s ending.

After the Kirov Theater decided not to go through with its production, Prokofiev’s score was set to premiere at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theater in 1935. But when he presented his score to the Theater, dancers complained that his work was too difficult to dance. Because his music describes every detail of a scene, the dancers had to comply

⁵⁷ “The synopsis of the original ballet,” The official home page for *the Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. <http://lovelives.net/discovery/synopsis/>

⁵⁸ At this time, a special bureau, the "Composers’ Union", was established in order to keep track of the artists and their work. Prokofiev, after his return to the Soviet Union, had to cease his experimental modern approach, and instead focus on classical models and fairy tales. He conducted *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Cinderella* for his ballet music (Morrison, 2008).

with the composer's guides.⁵⁹ "This is blood-and-guts programme music. A passage of air music means Juliet should leap gaily," Jowitt points out (May 2007, p.50).

Prokofiev's work suffered severe criticism and he was forced to alter it during his lifetime. It was first staged in Czechoslovakia in 1938, and this premier suffered a crushing failure. The first successful performance set to Prokofiev's score was Leonid Lavrovsky's choreography for the Kirov Ballet in 1940. After the Soviet production was introduced in the West, many choreographers created their own version of *Romeo and Juliet*. The most prevalent productions set to Prokofiev's music are the works of Kenneth Macmillan's (1965) and John Cranko's (1962) productions (Ulrich, July 2008, p.20).⁶⁰ More recently, in 2007 Peter Martins staged *Romeo + Juliet* based on Prokofiev's score for the New York City Ballet.

On July 4, 2008, based on a new discovery by musicologist Simon Morrison, Morris staged the original Prokofiev score which is significantly different from the widely known version. Simon Morrison, author of *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (2008) exhumed the original scores in the Moscow archives, obtained permission from both the Prokofiev family and the *Russian State Archive of Literature and Art in Moscow*, and reconstructed the entire score.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Choreographer Kent Stowell, when he produced the ballet, dismissed Prokofiev's music because he thought that it was "too programmatic" and "too baroque" (Reynolds, 1995, p.261).

⁶⁰ In 1962 John Cranko choreographed *Romeo and Juliet* for the Stuttgart Ballet and in 1965 choreographer Kenneth MacMillan produced the ballet for the Royal Ballet.

⁶¹ "About Simon Morrison," The official home page for *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

This production presents Morris' ambivalent approach to classical productions, bringing a fundamental change to the narrative by changing its essential tragedy into a story with a happy ending. Along with an unfamiliar narrative, Morris differentiates his characters from both Prokofiev's and Shakespeare's with his salty humor and inversions of gender roles. Whereas ballet productions emphasize dramatic themes and spectacles, Morris, with twenty-eight dancers, a relatively small number, emphasizes the characters and musicality.

In order to contextualize Morris' approach, I refer to Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev's original libretto that Morris used,⁶² videotaped ballet productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, Kenneth MacMillan's choreography for the Royal Ballet (2000) and Leonid Lavrovsky's choreography for the Bolshoi Ballet (1954). Although Morris declares that he did not refer to any other dance productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, the comparison with other production will be helpful to analyze his unique approach.

I also reference film productions of *Romeo and Juliet* which Morris referred to when he was making the work: Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 production featuring Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting and George Cukor's 1936 production starring Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard. For the analysis of Mark Morris' production, I attained a videotape of the performance at Zellerbach Hall, University of California, on September 26, 2008. I also refer to the official home page of *Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, which provides the sources of Morris' creative processes from Prokofiev's original scenario to Morris' personal references.

⁶² I refer to the libretto from the official home page for *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

Saving Romeo and Juliet

The first intriguing ambivalence in Morris' work is its unfamiliar ending. In presenting the prototypic romantic love story, he gave it a happy ending, defying the essence of Shakespeare's tragedy. Morris' inversion, however, is not solely an artistic decision based on his unique approach to the classics. When Morris was invited to the Bard's SummerScape Festival 2008 which was dedicated to Prokofiev, Mark Morris Dance Group was given a commission of \$1.3 million to produce a piece using Prokofiev's original score.⁶³ Morris was obligated to accommodate Prokofiev's detailed scenario and music.

There are several possible reasons why Prokofiev originally wrote his *Romeo and Juliet* with a happy ending. First, Prokofiev was known as a Christian Scientist who did not believe in the idea of "death" (Acocella, May 18, 2009). Instead of death, they believe that people ascend to a higher realm. His beliefs are reflected in *Romeo and Juliet*, where the star-crossed lovers are survivors who bravely struggle for their love and are rewarded with eternal happiness in the end.

Prokofiev himself gave another reason for the happy ending; he thought it was more suitable for the dancing. In 1941, Prokofiev wrote an autobiographical sketch for publication in *Sovetskaya Muzyka* (*Soviet Music*):

"There was quite a fuss at the time (1935-36) about our attempts to give *Romeo and Juliet* a happy ending in the last act, Romeo arrives a minute earlier, finds Juliet alive and everything ends well. The reasons for this bit

⁶³ "Romeo and Juliet Tour date announcement," Press Release from Mark Morris Dance Group, May 20, 2008. The official home page of the Mark Morris Dance Group. http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/press_releases/109?set=company_recent

of barbarism were purely choreographic: living people can dance, the dying cannot.”⁶⁴

Morris uses Prokofiev’s ending, making Juliet awake in time and having Friar Laurence prevent Romeo’s suicide. Morris agrees with Prokofiev’s interpretation saying, “I kind of agree with Prokofiev... Dead people don’t dance...when you see Kenneth McMillan he spends a long time swiping the corpse around. Wow, she is a ballerina, but it gets heavy after awhile.”⁶⁵

Disconnection of Love and Death

When Leon Botstein, the Bard College’s president and conductor, first approached Morris, he asked if Morris had heard about “the newly discovered score of *Romeo and Juliet*.” Morris instantly replied, “The one with a happy ending?”⁶⁶ Since he had no idea about it, he was making a joke. However, in accepting the Bard College’s invitation, it is apparent that Prokofiev’s newly discovered original score and unique ending fascinated Morris, who loves to stage the classics using both historical sources and his own, personal style.

Morris, when staging a dance, always starts by studying the music and the historical sources. For example, in *The Hard Nut*, Morris revives Hoffman’s original story, and he uses the Baroque Opera for *Dido and Aeneas*. Music and story are always

⁶⁴ “Chronology of Sergey Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*,” The official home page for the *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*.

⁶⁵ “The interview with Mark Morris,” The New York Times building’s Times Talk series, Videotaped archive from Mark Morris Dance Group, <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/media/5-r-j/>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Morris' most significant inspirations.⁶⁷ Morris, inverting the tragic ending into a happy ending, brings his new perspective to the old story. Whereas Shakespeare connects love and death, Morris dissolves them, celebrating love and its vitality. If Shakespeare talks about love and its eternity through death, Morris talks about the transcendence of love and young lovers' struggles to survive. In Shakespeare's play, adolescent lovers are full of desire, and they need to take their lives to complete their love. Juliet has to kill herself (the first time pretending death and the second time stabbing herself) to be with Romeo.

Levenson points out that Romeo connects his desire with death in his speeches (2000, p.29); Romeo mentions his feeling for Rosaline as "a living death" ("Do I live dead, that live to tell it now") and he perceives himself as a "dead man" when interring Paris. In Macmillan's ballet, the dance portrays the young lovers' tragic deaths which take place in Juliet's bedroom, where their love was first consummated. Romeo finds Juliet, apparently dead, and drinks poison; Juliet soon awakes, sees Romeo and stabs herself with the knife which Romeo used to killed Paris; Romeo died on the floor beside Juliet's bed, and Juliet lies on the bed reaching out to Romeo.

In contrast, Morris breaks the old connection between love and death by dissolving their direct relationship and, instead, celebrating love and reconciliation. He includes explicit expressions of sexuality between the young lovers, and excludes the violent death of the lovers. In Shakespeare's play, through their death, Romeo and Juliet

⁶⁷ "What inspire you the most when you approach to a classical work?" Morris replied, "Story and music." The first interview on October 23.2008.

achieve “a glooming peace”⁶⁸ in Verona (Levenson, 2000, p.41). Their fathers celebrate the marriage and regard the lovers as “poor sacrifices of our enmity.”⁶⁹

Morris, without victimizing the young lovers, brings “the cheerful peace” in Verona. After the secret departure of Romeo and Juliet, Friar Laurence gathers the wondering people and tells the whole story. The dancers, portraying the two families, divide into two rows, meet in the center in pairs where they hug, hold hands, and talk. The deep antagonism which caused all the problems faced by the innocent young couple suddenly disappears. This reconciliation is somewhat sarcastic, destabilizing the tension built for a dramatic ending. Audiences often start laughing during the last scene. The happy ending through reconciliation is a familiar theme in Morris’ work. It is also seen in *The Hard Nut*’s finale dance, where the characters gather and dance together regardless of their stations in life and relationships in the story. Morris is more interested in celebrating the universality of love, rather than staying in the structure of the story. Morris, in the interview with me, mentions the sudden reconciliation. He said,

The quickness, that's what I love about it. It's fine, everything is alright. They're together, they're fine, they're not dead. The blood feud that's been going on for generations is over. In the play that happens in a way they realize that it's ridiculous all this bloodshed everyone laughs and of course that happens in real life... So I wanted all of that to happen fast, which I love. What else are you gonna do? It's like, at the end of a farce when everyone gets married... It's like music, everybody get in, make up, done! I don't mind that it's funny. Surprising, interesting, and wrong. Some people think that it's wrong, but too bad.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The prince says, “A glooming peace this morning with brings, The sun for sorrow will not show his head” (Shakespeare, 5. 3. 310).

⁶⁹ Capulet says, “O brother Montague, give me thy hand” (Shakespeare, 5. 3. 295)

⁷⁰ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

As illustrated at the ending scene, Morris enjoys the contrast of tragedy and comedy. When he explains the newly added “Three Dance of the Three Moors” in Act Three, he points out the coexistence of “tragedy and comedy” within the scene. In this scene, Paris, accompanied by Lord and Lady Capulet, enters Juliet’s room with exotic presents for her just after Juliet drinks the poison. While the dancers, dressed in exotic costumes, are performing what Morris calls “somewhere else’s dances” (dances Morris made up without any specific references),⁷¹ Juliet is slowly dying in pain. “It ironically happens. They give these worthless presents, when she is dying. Oh, great, what’s she gonna do with this stuff? This scene is both comedy and tragic.” Morris says.⁷²

Reference to Paintings and Movies

Presenting one of the most popular ballet repertoires, Morris emphasizes that his production is not a “reinterpretation” or revival of anyone else’s work, but a new staging of the original piece. When I asked him about his “reinterpretation of the classic,” he says, “The original *Romeo and Juliet* is already fucked up by Lavrovsky for the Bolshoi ballet. It was completely changed (from Prokofiev’s original composition)... My dance is not based on anyone else’s ballet. I don’t do a “take” or “refer” to this or that. It is not a reactionary (one).”⁷³ In the case of *The Hard Nut*, Morris intentionally alludes to Petipa

⁷¹ Criticizing European’s Orientalism and appropriation of other cultures, Morris says that he does not reference dances from other cultures any more. The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

and Ivanov's choreography, but this time he claims to "make a dance that never existed."⁷⁴ He also mentions, "I am taking big risks in violating what people are used to hearing and seeing with Romeo...But I think it will be worth it" (Ulrich, July 2008, p.20).

As he argued, this production is closer to Shakespeare's story and Prokofiev's music than any other production. In order to portray a Renaissance Italian village in his setting and dances, Morris references the paintings of two great Italian artists, Simone Martini and Giotto di Bondone.⁷⁵ His references to Giotto are intriguing. At the center of the stage, there is a blue backdrop which is the size of a door and is half covered by the huge wall setting. Romeo often pauses in front of it after his entrance, so that his entrance looks dramatic. The blue backdrop has tiny gold star patterns (small holes that allow the light to shine through them) which are copied from Giotto's *Lamentation*, *The Presentation of the Virgin*, and *The Flight into Egypt*, where one can see blue skies and gold stars (or golden haloes around the angels). At the end of ballet, when Romeo and Juliet flee from Verona and arrive at their own place, the blue with gold star backdrop surrounds them as if they are in a magical place where their love will last forever.

Morris also references Simone Martini, a Gothic style painter who is famous for courtly elegance and decorative features (Jannella, 1989). Romeo and Juliet frequently present picturesque poses with two-dimensional angles, reminiscent of Gothic style paintings. At the first symbolic pose in Act Four, they make an angular shape with their

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Morris identified these materials on the official website of *Romeo and Juliet On the Motive of Shakespeare*, <http://lovelives.net/production/materials/>

arms and legs, as if they have moved to a place where only picturesque scenery and magic love exist.

Morris also lists the film productions of *Romeo and Juliet* as his sources. Several motifs are drawn from the production directed by Franco Zeffirelli. In the film, when the young couple first meets at the Capulet's ball, they dance together with their palms touching. This is their first physical contact, and later Romeo flirts and kisses Juliet while holding her hands.

Juliet: For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, and palm-to-palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo: Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Juliet: Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer. (Shakespeare, 1.4, 212-215)

Morris developed this "palm to palm" motif in his dance. When Juliet first dances with her fiancé, Paris, at the ball, she reluctantly puts her palm to Paris' (whom she later rejects) showing her disinterest in this marriage. When she first dances with Romeo, they initiate their physical contact with the contact of palms, and develop the dance from this contact: they lean towards each other, then one lifts the other. This motif continuously appears in their love duets.

When Romeo and Juliet first meet, they are instantly attracted to each other, but this is not the big moment; though they are staring at each other, the party guests keep moving around, often hiding their encounter. But when they have that first physical contact, palm-to-palm, they fall in love and the whole world stops; no one is moving, including the couple.

In Zeffirelli's film, after the first encounter during the social dancing, the young couple is looking for each other while the guests perform a circle dance. Morris, similarly, inserts a circle dance during the same scene. They are separated by people dancing in a formation, and cannot easily approach each other. This circle dance scene implies that their lives are complicated by the social circumstances (the dance formation). It also alludes to their dizziness from the heart-stopping encounter. This circle dance motif also appears at Juliet's wedding negotiation, but in a different context; in Act two the Capulet's decide to marry her to Paris and all hold hands and start dancing, except Juliet.

Celebration of Love

Shakespeare's play portrays the lovers as "vulnerable, fragile embodiments of ideas and values" (Levenson, 2000, p.42). Meanwhile, Prokofiev sees these lovers as "young, strong, and progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family."⁷⁶ Morris demonstrates how these adolescents grow through love, rather than their struggle or innocence. In Morris' production, before Romeo meets Juliet, he is portrayed as a thoughtful youth who is neither as active as Mercutio, nor as controlled as Paris. Even at the Capulet's ball, Romeo hangs around Rosaline, but cannot present himself before a woman, probably because of his shyness and hesitation. McMillan, in his ballet, portrays Romeo in a manner similar to the portrayal of a prince in a classical ballet with a solo dance allowing Romeo to display his

⁷⁶ The official home page for *the Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*
<http://lovelives.net/home.shtml>

masculinity or dexterity. Morris shows a different side of Romeo after his encounter with Juliet; he portrays Romeo as a sweet and responsible young man.

Juliet, in Act One, is a child who is pampered by her Nurse who constantly looks after her, checking Juliet's nails, hair, and clothes. Lady Capulet teaches Juliet all the detailed movements, from holding her skirt to how to present herself, in order to prepare her for the ball. In McMillan's ballet, Nurse urges Juliet to grow up. Juliet is still playing with a doll, but Nurse surprises her by touching her breast. She seems to say, "See? Put away that doll. You are a woman now." In Morris' work, when Juliet is first introduced at the ball, in spite of Lady Capulet's careful directions, she seems confused and unsure of herself. She reluctantly participates in the social dance, often missing her place in the formation and not following the tempo of the music.

However, after she falls in love with Romeo, she matures into a confident young lady, who bravely takes risks to get what she wants. After her wedding night with Romeo, Lord and Lady Capulet enter her room, and force her to marry Paris. Juliet jumps to her bed, and announces her refusal without any hesitation. When her violent father ignores her, she becomes more determined. In MacMillan's ballet, Juliet becomes hysterical and shows "several bars of turbulent meditation" (Acocella, July 2008, p 44) before she runs to Friar Laurence. In Morris' production, Juliet calmly rises from the floor where her father just threw her, pulls herself together and leaves the room in search of a solution.

Morris portrays Juliet as an independent and confident woman who has entered adulthood by finding her true love. For instance, in their love duet, Juliet lifts Romeo, even more frequently than he lifts her. Ironically as Romeo's wife, her first task is to risk

death and deceive her family. Therefore, in spite of their happy ending, these lovers do not live in Verona. Morris does not allow them the opportunity to reconcile with their families. Morris, who loves to interweave reality and fantasy, darkness and brightness, saves these couples from their reality, and takes them to another realm where their love can blossom for eternity. Romeo and Juliet escape to the magical world, a starry heaven.

In this chapter I focused on narrative and characterization in Morris' work to explore how he tells the story from a new perspective focusing on humanity and comedy, while keeping many of the elements of the classic versions. Although referencing the originals, Morris breaks their historical context or performance traditions, and selectively uses the structural framework of the story, inserting a new episode or restoring a deleted part of the original text. In Morris' works the distinction between good and evil, fantasy and reality are not clear. In *Dido and Aeneas* Morris double casts himself as Dido and the Sorceress highlighting the ambivalence of human nature. In *The Hard Nut*, Morris freely mixes Marie's everyday and fantastic worlds. Morris claims that his theme is always "love," and focuses on celebrating love's humanitarian spirit rather than romanticizing it. In *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare* Morris breaks the old connection between love and death that dramatizes passionate love and, instead, celebrates love and reconciliation. To constitute his own story, Morris presents a utopian place that is either timeless (*Dido and Aeneas*) or is full of humanitarian spirit where the characters freely experiment with their identities (*The Hard Nut*) or where young lovers fulfill their prohibited love (*Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*).

CHAPTER 4

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Because sexuality and dance share the human body as the medium and core subject, sexuality is one of the main subjects within dance. Dance not only implies sexuality through the expressive movement of the body, but also reveals the social concerns and interests inscribed and prescribed within dance as related to sexual identity or orientation and gender roles—what it is traditionally ascribed to male and female. Mark Morris is one of the choreographers who challenges the stereotypic gender roles in dance. Called “the bad boy” of modern dance in his earlier days, Morris has been famous for his attack on compulsive heterosexual sexuality and binary gender images in dance. After founding Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, he spoke openly about his homosexuality in many interviews (Morris, 1996, p. 142). Morris told me in our interview, “Twenty-five, thirty years ago, I was very much more politically active (in talking) about sex... many choreographers and dancers at the time were queer, but were pretending not to be.”⁷⁷

In his works, through the presentation of gender role inversion, explicit expressions of sexuality, and ambivalent gender performance, he has confronted many issues on gender and sexuality including sexual orientation, sexual identity, gender roles, and power. Because his presentation of gender and sexuality issues is apparent and provocative, many of his works are labeled scandalous. Acocella mentions, “Morris’ questioning of traditional images of sex and love has been extraordinary stubborn,

⁷⁷ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

extreme, sustained” (1994, p. 105). According to Gay Morris, Mark Morris’ interest in gender issues began in the 1980’s, and is especially apparent in his early works such as *Jr. High* (1982) and *Love Song Waltzes* (1982). In *Jr. High* Mark Morris presents a young teenager’s confusion regarding his gender identity and in *Love Song Waltzes* Morris challenges rigid gender boundaries (Morris, 1996, p.142). Since then, he has presented many role-reversals, notably in *Championship Wrestling after Roland Barthes* (1984), *Striptease* (1984), *The Hard Nut* (1990) and, most recently, *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare* (2008). Besides presenting gender-bending casting, Mark Morris himself stepped into the female role arena. Long before his famous female performance in *Dido and Aeneas*, he performed female or androgynous roles, presenting unstable and ambiguous gender identity. Gay Morris explains that Mark Morris, dressed in pink pajamas, imitated the music visualization of Ruth St. Denis and Doris Humphrey in *Ten Suggestions* (1981). In *Deck of Cards* (1983) Morris presented an androgynous role, juxtaposing feminine dancing and the masculine body (p.142).

The 1980’s were a time when gay rights activism was increasing throughout the US, especially after the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic (Gay Morris, 1996, p.143). Many other artists, such as Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, started to talk about homosexuality and gender issues. Mark Morris wrote in *Dance Magazine*, “ In the earliest days when certain things needed to be said in public that are now old hat, like queerness and feminism, I wouldn’t choreograph anything that couldn’t be done equally well by men or women” (2006, p.67). It is not only through his choreography that Morris uses himself to make a statement on gender and sexual identity. Gay Morris (1996) observes that Morris

cultivated a persona in which gender confusion reigned, in part through his ambivalent image, which combined “blue-collar style beer drinking and chain smoking coupled with effeminate gesture and shoulder-length curl” (p.142).

Along with his interest in gender issues, Morris is also famous for his apparent and provocative representations of sexuality. Morris frequently shocks his audiences by representing explicit sexual intercourse. In *Stripteases* dancers present typical strip shows to exhibit Morris’ perspective that stripping in fact de-eroticizes. In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris performs a masturbation scene to Purcell’s music, which is regarded as the first female masturbation scene in concert dance history. Morris’ dancers frequently wear underwear-like costumes, and he never hesitates to reveal dancers’ bodies to make his point. As Acocella points out, Morris shows heavy use of crotches and buttocks, as seen in works like *Gloria* (1981), *L’ Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1988) and *Lovely* (1985). Interestingly, when exposing a body part, he often refuses to refine the way he presents the body. Instead of sexuality or sensuality, he is more interested in exposure itself and human vulnerability. Acocella (1994) wrote, “The dancers in *Gloria* look as though they are hanging on to their crotches for dear life. Elsewhere, the point, again, is simply exposure: something private being revealed, something inside being forced out” (p. 79).

How Morris Challenges the Conventions of Gender and Sexuality

In presenting his perspectives on gender and sexuality, Morris defies the common notions of sexuality and gender, often juxtaposing conflicting ideas. First, Morris frequently creates gender role switches or inversions that attack the binary gender

division. In almost all of his narrative works, he freely cross-casts dancers regardless of the character's gender and reverses the gender of a role that is traditionally ascribed to men and women; a male dancer takes a female character, and a female takes a male character. According to Acocella (1994), when Morris casts his dancers, he often casts against type, character, and gender. He chooses someone who is not natural to the assigned role because he does not want them to imitate themselves (p.41).⁷⁸

Second, Morris violates the general notions of masculine and feminine. In his works, Morris avoids the stereotypical gender movements or distinctions. Dancers usually wear similar patterns of costume regardless of their sexes; women lift men as often as men lift women; female dancers execute powerful movements or jumps while male dancers employ delicate movements. By disregarding the traditional distinction of movement as feminine or masculine, Morris values the diversity of dancers and their democratic harmony.

In the early years, his company was famous for its dancers' diverse body types, ethnicities and age ranges. In 1994 most of the company's members were over thirty, and included Puerto Rican, Vietnamese, American African, half Japanese, half Indonesian and half Filipino dancers (Acocella, 1994, p.38). Female dancers were strong and big compared to the women in most dance companies. Morris once told a journalist, "Big bottoms, and large breasts— okay with me!" (Ibid, p.38). Ruth Davidson, a dancer from

⁷⁸ In the audition, Morris looks for people who seem somewhat awkward or insecure. According to Jon Mensinger, a former principal dancer with Mark Morris Dance Group, "If there isn't something about them that's a little vulnerable, they don't have a chance...those for whom the dance being rehearsed is a natural are the ones who won't get to do it." (Acocella, 1994, p.41).

Mark Morris Dance Group joked, “We used to be known as the ‘big butt dance company’ and that’s what people come to see. So we’ve got to keep the weight up” (Maxim, 1998, p.67). Morris also challenges the common belief, reinforced through ballet and social dance, that couple dances must include a man and a woman. In Morris’ dances there is no such rule. Morris uses diverse combinations in his couple dances, man-to-man, female-to-man, and female-to-female.

Third, Morris expresses sexuality in an explicit way, but often de-eroticizes the scene without any effort to romanticize it. When Morris deals with sex, he does not hesitate to display a nude or even sexual intercourse.⁷⁹ Interestingly, his apparent and provocative depiction of sexuality is often far from sensual. Accocella (1994) argues that Morris differentiates between love and sex, and when he presents a sexual scene which is not related to the expression of love, he “demystifies” it (p.94). According to her, *Striptease*, a dance based on Roland Barthes’ 1955 essay of the same name, illustrates Barthes’ argument, that stripping de-eroticizes bourgeois self-deception. Accocella (1994) believes that Morris’ juxtaposition of fantasy and reality in sexuality highlights the human body and its vulnerability (p.95). In contrast, Morris portrays Romeo and Juliet’s first night scene as warm and erotic focusing on the emotional interplay of two young lovers.

Fourth, Morris illustrates the “performative” character of gender. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler argues that the gendered body is performative and has “no

⁷⁹ In his version of Purcell’s opera *King Arthur*, a group of dancers demonstrate an explicit sex scene. “Because the music talks about it,” was Morris’ simple explanation during our interview.

ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality” (p. 74). Butler differentiates between “performativity” and “performance” by claiming that a performer cannot control gender performativity whereas “performance” connotes willful control. Morris presents atypical gender performance through his use of gender role inversion. In his dances, it is common to see male dancers playing female characters and female dancers playing male characters.

Morris expands the range of expressiveness for both sexes. In her article, “Making the Invisible Visible (2001),” Desmond points out the feminization of spectacle in western theater dance. She claims that many classic ballets such as *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* are full of feminine roles that feminize both male and female dancers. She claims that female dancers are already feminized, already positioned as spectacle (p.18). By freely mixing men and women in the group dancing, Morris attacks the feminized spectacles of classic ballet. Morris transforms the epitome of female group dancing, such as the Waltz of the Snowflakes and the Waltz of the Flowers, into a postmodern dance that upholds an egalitarian spirit and unique beauty. In the discussion that follows, focusing on *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, I will examine the ambivalent interplay of gender and sexuality within Morris’ works.

Dido and Aeneas

According to Gay Morris (1996), throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Mark Morris focused on gender issues, and his interest is reflected notably in *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Hard Nut* (p.141). In these works Morris presents many gender role inversions,

questioning the cultural metrics that divide “feminine” and “masculine.” Along with his public announcement of homosexuality, Morris’ provocative presentation of gender was regarded as his political declamation to the world. Referring to his two female roles in *Dido and Aeneas*, Anna Kisselgoff wrote, “The queen of Carthage is a political statement about gender roles, gay liberation and the male and female in all of us” (1989, June 9, para.4).

Although *Dido and Aeneas* is based on Purcell’s opera, Morris’ reconfiguration of the characterization and treatment of sexuality make the production modern, dynamic and ambivalent. Acocella (1994) describes *Dido and Aeneas* as “the juxtaposition of grave tragedy with obscenity and hilarity.” She explains that Morris departs from the seventeenth century’s typical theme that “passion can lead to death,” and interweaves humor and sexuality into the tragic love story (p.100). Morris revives the detailed sensual descriptions of love and desire from Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Curtis Price, in his book *Dido and Aeneas, An Opera* (1986), points out that when Nahum Tate wrote the narrative for Purcell’s opera, he eliminated the *Aeneid*’s detailed descriptions of Dido, especially her “sexual indulgence and subsequent guilt” (p.11).

In the *Aeneid*, in spite of its mythological aspect, Virgil thoroughly describes Dido’s humanity, her agony and guilt, struggle and desire, and rage and despair. After her husband’s death, Dido makes a vow of chastity, and refuses courtship from the king in the neighboring country. When Aeneas woos her, she suffers from her passion and guilt. Tate does not provide any detail about Dido’s late husband or why she resists Aeneas’ wooing. In Scene One Tate begins the opera with Dido’s lament, a song about her

unspeakable suffering, “Oh! Belinda, I am press’d with torment not to be confess’d...I languish till my grief is known, yet would not have it guess’d.”⁸⁰ However, Belinda already knows about her sister’s secret. “Then let me speak. The Trojan guest into your tender thoughts has press’d.”⁸¹ Price (1986) believes that Tate tried to emphasize Dido’s noble character by concealing how quickly she forgot her husband. However, because mere widowhood does not explain Dido’s resistance to Aeneas’s courtship, Tate’s omission makes Dido a neurotic widow rather than a heroic queen (Price, 1986, p.12). According to musicologists, Tate’s omission of Dido’s dilemma was due to at least two reasons. First, when Tate wrote the libretto for Purcell’s opera, he had to consider that “young gentlewomen” at a girl’s boarding school would premiere the opera. With a rapid progression of the story, morality takes the place of pleasure in life and the pain of love. Ellen Harris, in her book *Henry Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas* (1988) argues that Purcell, through the tragic ending of Dido, wanted to deliver a moral message to his young audience that “young girls should not accept the advances of young men no matter how ardent their wooing or how persistent their promises” (p.17). In Purcell’s opera, Dido has a single indiscretion and suffers the ultimate punishment for her “sin.” Her life is taken from her as she loses her love and reputation.

A second possible reason given for Tate’s omission is that *Dido and Aeneas* is a strong political allegory (Price, 1986, p.10). Price explains that most of the English

⁸⁰ For the reference to the libretto that Morris had used for his choreography, I refer to the libretto from Mark Morris Dance Group Homepage. <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

⁸¹ Ibid.

operatic works written from 1656 to 1695 were designed to complement the monarchy. *Dido and Aeneas* was first viewed in 1689 during the first year of the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II (p.10). However, the story of a suicidal queen and foreign prince who abandons the queen does not honor the new monarchs. Rather than a compliment, Price explains, Tate dramatizes the possible fate of the British nation if the Dutch King William fails in his responsibility to his English queen. Because Dido is Queen Mary, Tate suppressed Dido's desire and instead highlighted her noble and austere side (Price, 1986, p.6-14).

Mark Morris, working within an overarching structure and narrative, abandons the didactic treatment of love in Tate's narrative and Purcell's opera. He disregards the political allegory and didactic message of the original opera, while enlivening the characters and narrative through expressions of sexuality and gender-bending roles. In Morris' *Dido and Aeneas*, the most conspicuous gender inversion is his double casting of Dido and the Sorceress. Although the story is a narrative about the love of Dido and Aeneas, Morris focuses on the juxtaposition of two female characters rather than descriptions of Dido and Aeneas. The drama's time structure shows Dido-Sorceress (Chapter One), Dido-Sorceress (Chapter Two), and Sorceress-Dido (Chapter Three). Morris attempts to extend the expressivity of gender performance by playing the roles of two women who have opposing characteristics. In our interview, Morris said, "[In *Dido and Aeneas*] I am dancing women's parts. Men and women are different from one and another. And I am not interested in unisex. I am interested in everybody being able to be

everything, not being limited. [I am interested in] being able to be more extensive, varied, and versatile.”⁸²

Juxtaposition of Dido and Aeneas

In portraying Dido, Morris relies on the musical sources such as text and songs, but did not limit himself to them. Morris explained in our interview, “Nowhere in the score does it say anything about her. And nowhere in the writings. Whether it's a historical Dido or not it doesn't matter, because what's described in the text is, you know there's nothing about size or hair color or anything; we know where she came from and everything else is in the situation musically.”⁸³ Although the story derived from the ancient legend, Morris shows unique types of women who do not adhere to traditional stereotypes. Hélène Cixous (1975) argues that Western art follows stereotypical social roles imposed on women and constructed on the premise of woman’s abasement. She illustrates three roles, mother, virgin, and prostitute (p.62-67). Cixous explains that mother represents (re)productive nature while the virginal woman has pure exchange value. The virgin is nothing but a possibility, a place, and a sign of relations among men. In and of herself, the virgin does not exist. The prostitute represents a woman’s body. The prostitute is “useful” and has “value” because she has been appreciated by a man, and serves as the locus of relations among men. Cixous (1975) observes that none of these female characters has a right to pursue her own pleasure (p.64).

⁸² The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

⁸³ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

On the contrary, Morris' women, Dido and the Sorceress, pursue their own good. They are not mothers; Dido does not express any motherly feelings for her people or courtiers. Dido and the Sorceress are not virgins or prostitutes who acquire value through their relationships with men. Dido has political power and the Sorceress has magical power. They have their own specific qualities that do not serve what Cixous has termed "as reflection, as image of and for men" (Cixous, 1975, p.64). However, in Purcell's opera, as opposed to their independent characters and positions, Dido's sexuality is not free from the subordination of the feminine to the masculine order. Dido loses her chastity which results directly in her loss of position as well as her life. While Dido struggles between her passion and responsibility, Aeneas never hesitates between his mission and love. He instantly replies to the false messenger's order, preparing his ships before notifying Dido. While Aeneas tries to comfort Dido by saying that he would stay, she knows that he does not mean it. Dido's sexual indulgences destroy her and her country; Aeneas' mission and position remain undamaged.

Cixous(1975) points out the dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles where the woman is always located at the negative pole: activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature, day/ night, head/ heart, intelligible/ palpable, logos/pathos, and activity/passivity (p.68). Similarly, in Purcell's opera, Dido and Aeneas make opposite choices. Dido follows her heart and chooses Aeneas over her country. Although his passion for Dido was as strong as Dido's for him, Aeneas chooses fulfilling his mission over preserving her love. He follows his head rather than his heart, representing logos instead of pathos.

However, through his performance of Dido, Morris mixes up these binary gender roles. Morris highlights the whimsical side of love, rather than stereotypical male behavior as Purcell does in his opera. Morris' Dido is strong and determined, and knows what she wants. Morris' dancing highlights his big, strong male body, thereby portraying the queen's bold, dignified, and sturdy character. His dismissal of traditional gender roles is apparent in the duet of Dido and Aeneas. Dido leads the dance as often as Aeneas, even lifting Aeneas. In Act One when Dido and Aeneas confirm their love in "Triumphal Dance," Dido runs along the balustrade holding Aeneas' hand. Preston (1998) sees this as a reflection of the moment in the scene, "You are sixteen, going on seventeen" in *The Sound of Music* (p.247). However, Morris' reference to *The Sound of Music* is not easily noticeable, mainly due to his mixing of gender and movement signs. In the movie, the scene highlights the sweet moment of young love with a clear indication of traditional gender roles and gender differences. The young man leads the girl and the girl follows his lead. In Morris' version, the lovers hold each other's hands in turn to lift each other on the balustrade. Aeneas first supports Dido, and then Dido supports Aeneas on bended knee.

Morris tries to extend the range of expressiveness for both sexes in his works, and the chorus plays a versatile role in this effort, explaining and even leading the story. Morris observes, "My guys are articulate... and my gals are brutish. And they're both both. They can all do everything" (Acocella, 1994, p.91). The chorus consists of ten male and female dancers who are identically clothed. Instead of neutralizing their genders, Morris assigns them expanding gender signs depending on the situation. They incorporate

both traditionally male and female steps, illustrating gender differences. For instance, in Act One the choral dancers play the courtiers of Dido in a traditionally feminine way. Their dance is organized, delicate, gentle, and clear, as if illustrating Dido's lamentation and celebrating her love with Aeneas. In the sailors' dance in Act Three, the same dancers uses typical male movements to portray the tough, naughty sailors of Aeneas. Their movements are hilarious and exuberant.

Ambivalent Human Nature

Although Tate portray Dido as having a noble and calm character, in Virgil's book, Dido is a far more passionate and emotional woman. Morris' Dido allows Aeneas to leave her although she knows her destiny. Dido does not lose control or beg him to stay. In the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas leaves, Dido curses him and his Trojans:

Go, seek Italy before the winds; Seek the kingdom through the waves. I truly hope, if the dutiful gods have any power, (you) will drink to the cup of punishment in the middle of the rocks, and will often call "Dido" by name. I shall pursue, being absent, with Black fires; And chilly death has parted my body from its sprit, in all places my ghost will be there. You will pay the penalty, wicked one (*Aeneid*, 4.380-387).

In the *Aeneid* Dido proclaims endless hate between Aeneas and the descendants of Troy, foreshadowing the Punic Wars. While Virgil's Dido dies in a violent way, Purcell romantically describes Dido's death as spiritually induced by a broken heart. In the *Aeneid*, Dido has her sister, Anna, build her a pyre under the pretense of burning all that reminds her of Aeneas, including weapons, clothes, and the couch they shared (*Aeneid*, 4.584, 4.642). Dido ascends the pyre, and then falls on the sword that Aeneas gave her (*Aeneid*, 4.666). She doesn't die immediately, but lays suffering until Juno sends a messenger to end her life quickly.

Purcell transforms this passionate woman with fervent emotions into a noble and lovesick woman. Purcell romanticizes Dido's passivity with her femininity, and her death as a destiny of love. Although Morris highlights the tragedy of love, he excludes the weak and passive side of Dido. Morris' Dido is a stubborn and determined woman who does not forgive the betrayal of her lover. When Aeneas comes to her and tells her that he will stay, she refuses him. As the soprano sings "Away," she straightens her arm diagonally and turns her whole body from Aeneas, as if she is cutting off someone's head. Interestingly, in Morris' work, it is the Sorceress who resembles Virgil's passionate, vindictive Dido. Morris' Sorceress is fervent, revengeful, violent and honestly expresses her desire. Whereas Dido never fully experiences her happiness, the Sorceress savors every moment and knows how to satisfy herself.

Morris juxtaposes Dido's nobleness and the Sorceress' wickedness through his use of the same dancer for both roles. This also highlights the ambivalence of human nature. Having the same person play as the evil conspirator and the noble queen, Morris juxtaposes "the noble and ignoble sides of the human mind" (Acocella, 1994, p.100). Dido shows stylized and refined movements, whereas the Sorceress shows humorous and grotesque movements. Alastair Macaulay writes that Morris' contrast of the two female characters is more radical and revelatory than Matthew Bourne's portrayal of the male Swan/Stranger in *Swan Lake* (June, 2000, p. 816). Whereas the Stranger shows the other side of Swan, the Sorceress is danced by the same person with Dido, and therefore actively contributes to her own fall. Macaulay, contrasts Dido and the Sorceress as passive

and active respectively. “Dido, passive, feels love’s wounds from her first dance; the Sorceress, active, makes wounds and trains others in their making” (June 26, 2009).

Interestingly, neither Tate’s narrative nor Morris’ choreography explains the Sorceress’ motive to plot against Dido. In the *Aeneid*, it was two meddling goddesses, Juno and Venus, who make the lovers fall in love and then break them apart. Aeneas leaves Dido in order to obey Jupiter’s message in search of the promised Italian lands. Excluding the mythological aspects of the story, Tate gives the Sorceress the magical power. Price explains (1986) that Tate make reference to various documents on witchcraft for the Sorceress’ ritualistic language and weird behavior. In describing the Sorceress’ evil spirit, Tate uses the famous witch, *Mother Demdike*, who was believed to have murdered three people with her witchcraft (Price, 1986, p.10).

Morris enlivens the Sorceress’ character and offers a clue to understanding her motivation. Morris’ Sorceress is not a mere dark and cursed creature, but a woman who knows her desire and tries to fulfill it. Just as Dido follows her desire for Aeneas for her own pleasure, the Sorceress plots Dido’s fall for her own pleasure. The Sorceress plots neither to usurp the throne nor to avenge Dido. Morris makes this clear by highlighting the Sorceress’ joyful moments in her dancing. In Act Four, the Sorceress and chorus are dancing in pleasure and singing about their happiness: “Destruction’s our delight, Delight our greatest sorrow...Ho, ho, ho”. Referring to Dido and Aeneas as a “psychological drama,” Macaulay (2000, June) compares Dido and the Sorceress to “the two halves of the Norman Bates character in Hitchcock’s *Psycho*” (p.816).

Acocella (1994) also points out that the destructive power of the Sorceress is in fact the self-destructive side of Dido. She writes, “By adding obscenity to the witches’ violence and thus linking their violence to Dido’s passion, he gives tragic force to evil, shows that it is not something outside us but something within us” (p.100). In fact neither Purcell nor Morris explains the relationship between Dido and the Sorceress or why the Sorceress hates Dido with such passion. While Purcell presents the Sorceress as an evil creature in contrast to the noble Dido, Morris does not present one character as good and the other as evil. Morris, instead, depicts the Sorceress as a creative, smart woman who completes her own happiness and self-fulfillment by destroying Dido. The Sorceress is very delighted when she is plotting Dido’s downfall.

Morris’ juxtaposition of the two females is more complicated than a mere contrast of good and evil, as happens with the ballet *Swan Lake*’s Swan and Black Swan. . . Morris’ two females have different desires, and the pursuits of their desires result in opposite consequences. The Sorceress is the one who achieves her goal, enjoys her moment, and is satisfied with her decision. While Dido’s sexuality brings her death, Dido’s death brings the Sorceress an orgasm.

Juxtaposition of Love and Sex

Acocella (1994) claims that Morris changes his treatment of sexuality when he gets to *Dido and Aeneas*. According to this critic and scholar, Morris focuses on the distance between fantasy and reality in his previous work, but he respectfully presents the tragedy of sex in *Dido and Aeneas* (p.100-101). Although Morris’ perspective on Dido’s love is gentle, he still distinguishes between honorable love and shameless sexuality in

the characters of Dido and the Sorceress. In Act Two, Dido's and Aeneas' love scene is sensual, private, and implicit. It takes place in a clandestine garden of the hunting site in the moonlight accompanied by lyrical music. Their physical love is consummated with the mutual passion of two adults. Morris' depiction of love is gentle and familiar. Dido's passion is understandable and even noble, considering that she takes her life for this love.

The Sorceress' masturbation scene is quite different, explicit, ignoble, and even perverted. Instead of sensuality, it depicts demonic urges. It takes place in public, with no emotional or personal involvement. The character is surrounded by dancing people, but no one cares what she is doing. While Dido confirms her love, the Sorceress only attains physical satisfaction. Dido hugs Aeneas after their love-making, but the Sorceress wipes her hands on her skirt. Differentiating between Dido's and the Sorceress' attitudes toward their sexuality, Morris distinguishes between love and sex, and emotion and pleasure.⁸⁴

Gender Performance and Performative Gender

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler disagrees with the common assumption that behaviors associated with gender and sexual identity are expressions of an essence located in the individual psyche. Instead, she suggests that gender is inherently "performative." She sees "essential" identity as a fiction, and argues that gender identity is contrived via a "stylized repetition of acts." Also, according to Butler, binary gender categories act as a means of enforcing compulsory heterosexuality (p.22-24).

⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Acocella suggests that Sorceress' masturbation scene represents the connection of sex and death that is at the heart of Dido's story (1994, p.100)

In performing two female roles, Morris uses his body as a site of gender instability (Gay Morris, 1996, p.141). He never hides his masculinity, wearing simple, black attire that reveals his big, strong, male body when portraying the two female characters. However, Morris frequently emphasizes the characters' femininity. By imitating traditional feminine behaviors and gestures, Morris reminds us that there are stylized bodily movements and characteristics that signify a woman. Representing the noble and proud queen, Dido overtly tilts her pelvis or shrugs her shoulders. When she sits on the ground watching Aeneas dance her posture is elegant; she faces Aeneas, bends her legs together and lets her skirt cover her thighs slightly; she puts one arm on one leg and the other on the ground as she supports herself. Interestingly, her movements are different when she is dancing with Aeneas instead of other court ladies. With her courtiers, her dance is calm and stylized, representing the queen's noble character. When she dances with Aeneas, she obviously tilts her pelvis, and exaggerates her shoulder and head gestures, as if wishing to reveal her feminine charms. Morris' emphasis on femininity is even more explicit in the Sorceress' dancing. The Sorceress interweaves her powerful charisma with seductive feminine charms. She exaggerates her femininity, often to mock Dido, but mostly to illustrate her femme fatale character.

According to Moe Meyer (1994), "posture, gesture, costume and dress, and speech acts become the elements that constitute both the identity and the identity performance" (p.4). In creating two female roles, Morris refused to use external props that would easily aid his performance of two female identities. Morris consistently wears tunic-like tops and sarongs, only changing his hair to depict the different characters; he

ties back his long, curly hair for Dido, but lets it hang loose for the Sorceress, as if his hair represents the Sorceress' freer perspective and soul. He differentiates their characters through movement quality. Macaulay (2000, June) explains how Morris juxtaposes Dido and the Sorceress through their movements:

On first viewing, what you cannot miss is how unlike Morris' Dido and Sorceress are. His Dido and her court move in two dimensions, like antique bas-reliefs. The style is ancient, Eastern, tragic, and noble. His Sorceress and her retinue are three-dimensional, modern. Their style is Western, funny, rude. (p.816)

In explaining the "drag" Butler (1990) claims that there are three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomical sex of the performer is distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance between sex and performance, and sex and gender, and gender and performance (p. 75). Although Butler does not discuss dance, Gay Morris and Sarah Cohen argue that Morris' choreography offers wide-ranging possibilities for attacking rigid gender categories. Gay Morris, in her article "Styles of the Flesh (1984)" describes how Morris theatricalizes and even enlarges upon Butler's theory in *Dido and Aeneas*.

By playing both Dido and the Sorceress, Morris not only mocks rigid gender categories, but also ambivalently juxtaposes gender performance and his performative gender. Butler differentiates between "performativity and "performance." She asserts that performativity consists of a reiteration of norms; therefore, a performer cannot control gender performativity, whereas "performance" permits choices, and active agency. While Morris performs a character of a different gender, he does not conceal his own gender

performativity. In other words, Morris performs “femininity” with movements and gestures that are traditionally feminine, but at the same time, does not hide his own gender or his masculinity.

Acocella (1994) claims that Morris performs ambivalent gender qualities. Morris’ portly (for a dancer) figure, curly hair, and delicate movements make it easier for him to represent female characters while his big, hairy body and charisma present his masculine side (p.101). She explains, “To Dido his big male body gives the quality of monumentality that is so essential to her pathos. As for the Sorceress, here he uses his masculine qualities—his size and his truculence—to make her truly bawd-like: coarse, violent, and hilarious” (p.101).

Morris played Dido and the Sorceress for twenty years following the première of the work in 1989. He staged this production almost every year until 2000 and then did not stage it for six years. When he restaged the production in 2006 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Morris split his roles between two dancers for that season. He cast a female dancer, Amber Darragh, for Dido and a male dancer, Bradon McDonald, for the Sorceress (Reiter, 2006, August, p. 75). By doing so, he weakened the gender-bending aspects of the roles and the expressions of ambivalent human nature. “It’s obviously different. I don’t have to approach it from wanting people to believe I’m a woman,” Darragh, the new Dido, said (2006, August, p.75). Morris split these two roles for one set of performances at BAM but later gave the two roles to one dancer. Interestingly, this illustrates Morris’ openness; he consistently seeks new ideas and interpretations. Thanks to his willingness to change, his characters consistently try on

new identities. Such decision sometimes represent artistic experimentation rather than a political statement, since Morris has not been eager to make political statements in recent years. During one of our interviews Morris said,⁸⁵

It's meant to be one person. When we first did it, there were two different singers. Different singers and the Sorceress and Dido. But I'd like it to be one person. I wasn't sure when we brought it back if either one of the dancers could pull it off frankly, and of course they did it great. But I was concerned about that. Just to see because no one had done it but me. I was just being careful.

Gay Morris (2006, Spring) claims that Morris' absence in the roles of Dido and the Sorceress has changed the meanings of the dance. She wrote in *DanceView* :

Morris' absence in the two female roles took the work out of the realm of gender ambiguity, which had originally marked it. Consequently details such as the male chorus' nail polish and earrings became less notable. And a male dancer in the role of the Sorceress seemed less about gender bending than about the need for a large, powerfully built figure and a tradition of male character dancers in travesty roles (p.32).

The Hard Nut

Marius Petipa's *The Nutcracker*, in spite of its grand scale and lavish style, has been frequently criticized for its lack of dramatic coherence. However, *The Nutcracker* and its numerous adaptations have spread throughout the world and the ballet stands as a symbolic piece of classicism. Mark Morris, in his 1991 version of *The Nutcracker*, transforms Petipa's imperialist ballet into a postmodern piece set in an American suburban home in the 1960s. Morris was not the only person to adapt the Russian ballet to his own time and place. Jennifer Fisher (2004), in *Nutcracker Nations: How an old world ballet became a Christmas tradition in the new world* explains that many of *The*

⁸⁵ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Nutcracker producers, while maintaining the traditional elements, actively incorporated local and ethnic elements (p.82).

Fisher (2004) illustrates several interesting adaptations that include a specific nationality or ethnicity. In 1988 the *Royal Winnipeg Ballet* in Canada premiered a production set in pre-World War I Winnipeg, featuring children playing street hockey before the party (p.86-87). Most American productions maintain a strong alliance with children and the Christmas spirit, but some discard the Victorian nostalgia and Christmas tradition. In *The Harlem Nutcracker*, premiered in 1996, Donald Byrd created Marie as a beloved grandmother who is experiencing a heart attack on Christmas night instead of an attack from the Mouse King. Grandma Marie, instead of visiting a fun-filled Sugarland, travels back to her past with sweet memories of her husband and their struggles as African-Americans (Fisher, 2004, p. 90-92). In the mid 1990's, Vigi Prakash, a teacher of classical Indian dance in Southern California, choreographed an Indian style *The Nutcracker* with Bharata Natyam. This production features Marie dancing Indian folk dances before her Christmas tree (Fisher, 2004, p.93-95).

The Nutcracker also has been through alterations related to gender and sexuality. While Balanchine's 1950s version features Marie as a pre-adolescent girl and Drosselmeier as an old uncle who has a fatherly love for her, some producers in the 1960s and 1970s started to include romance and subtle eroticism between them; Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov infused the Christmas classic with the sexual preoccupation of their era. They presented Marie as a young woman with awakening heterosexual desire and Drosselmeier as her "controlling influence" (Cohen, 1998, p.

489). In Nureyev's ballet first set on the Swedish Ballet in 1967, *The Nutcracker* transforms into a juvenile Drosselmeier when the spell is broken. The scenes where Drosselmeier appears as Marie's dream date, and the mice rip her skirt off provoked much Freudian analysis from critics (Fisher, 2004, p.145). Meanwhile, in his 1995 production for the *National Ballet of Canada* James Kudelka expanded the role of Fritz. He had Fritz participating in Marie's journey, for "equal opportunity of gender" and "political correctness" (Fisher, 2004, p.88). Morris choreographed *The Hard Nut* in 1991 when he had an avid interest in gender issues. Defying binary gender categories in dance, *The Hard Nut* shows the diversity of gender and sexuality. Presenting a unisex ensemble, gender role inversions, and same sex pas de deux, *The Hard Nut* questions the rigid gender divide and the compulsive heterosexual order both in classic ballet and in the ordinary world.

Postmodern Fairytale

While discussing *The Nutcracker's* beauty and complex meanings, Fisher points out its ambivalence: "It was elite but accessible, serious but fun, decorative but meaningful." *The Hard Nut* also presents ambivalence, interlacing tradition with a satirical twist. Morris' versions of the Waltz of the Snowflakes and the Waltz of the Flowers have their unique beauty, but Morris excludes the sweetness and nostalgia that the classic ballet highlights. He uses elements of the classic ballet's frame work, such as pas de deux and divertissements, but changes their traditional casting with gender role inversions. Macaulay (1991) wrote in *The Dancing Times*, "Irreverence and tradition are strangely and wonderfully compounded" in *The Hard Nut* (p.658).

Most of all, Morris ambivalently uses classic ballet's heritage. Sally Banes (1987), in "Happily Ever After? The Postmodern Fairytale and the New dance" talks about postmodern choreographers who embrace the aspects of balletic convention to generate other, potentially destabilizing meanings (p.280-281). As Banes explains, while Petipa's fairy tale ballet was despised by twentieth century artists, seemingly because of its rigidity of form, extravagant mise-en-scène and hierarchical politics, it did not disappear. Some avant-garde dancers returned to the fairy tale but changed their approach to the story. Banes explains that Petipa's fairy tale is univocal, meaning that all the elements such as music, scenery, costume, dance, and mime contribute to tell the same narrative. But a postmodern fairy tale is ambivalent, following the traditional elements but destabilizing their old meanings (Banes, 1987, p. 283).

Such ambivalent appropriation is evident in the way Morris takes on both *The Nutcracker's* characters and its guiding assumptions. Morris represents sexuality, gender, and identity in contrast to traditional concepts. Using the classic ballet's choreographic structure, Morris inverts the gender roles illustrating, as Butlers argues, that 'real gender' is illusory. Male dancers also wear tutus, pointe shoes, and midriff tops. Interestingly, although Morris gives the dancers identical steps and costumes regardless of their sex, he does not conceal the difference among the sexes. In the ballet, in spite of the feminine costume, male dancers do not perform "femininity" as Mrs. Stahlbaum or the Housemaid does. In the interview with me, Morris said, "I have a relatively small company and man and woman can all do the same something. It's not to neutralize them. It's to give both sexes more power and versatility. It's expansion of gender roles." He adds, "Oh, I hate to

use the word ‘gender’. I use it about language, not about the people.” He argues that he is against all kinds of gender stereotypes.⁸⁶ The Waltz of the Snowflakes and the Waltz of the Flowers, the epitome of female group dancing in the classic ballet, are performed by both men and women, because Morris thinks that flower means nature, and nature includes everyone—men and women.

Gender Roles and Stereotypes

Traditionally, *The Nutcracker* is all about binary gender and fixing identities. In her analysis of *The Nutcracker*, Cohen (1998) points out that from the bourgeois home to the magical realm, the ballet presents a host of social and theatrical types (p.485). As a production of nineteenth-century society, the ballet upholds solid bourgeois values including rigid binary gender categories. All the characters are carefully designed and distinguished through their gestures, costumes, movement styles and music (Cohen,1998, p.486). This is a ballet that focuses on the display of the characters’ dances, rather than their drama. In Act One, from the old man to the children, the dancers are clearly divided into two groups depending on their genders and compulsive heterosexuality is seen everywhere. All the party guests are heterosexual couples, most accompanied by children.

The heterosexual order and gender differentiation are apparent both in the adults and children. Gentlemen greet each other by shaking hands, sharing drinks and speaking with big gestures, whereas the ladies hug, kiss, and praise each other’s new dresses. Boys and girls are segregated and do not mix together in their playtime. Balanchine emphasizes how the genders are different from childhood. While the boys shout and run,

⁸⁶ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

ride toy horses, and play drums, the girls whisper in each other's ears, brush their dolls' hair, and cuddle them as if motherhood were second nature for them. Their gender education is clearly depicted in their social dance. Divided into two genders, the children perform a social dance following their gender role models. Mr. Stahlbaum, the handsome, dignified gentleman, guides the boys; the graceful, slim and tender Mrs. Stahlbaum leads the girls.

While *The Nutcracker* emphasizes children and their fantasy, Morris insists that *The Hard Nut* is intended both for children and adults. Regarding the ballet's reputation for a children-centered setting, Morris argues, "*The Nutcracker* is actually a ballet about adults and what they think children will like" in an interview with Jennifer Dunning (1992). Including sexuality explicit scenes and grotesque expressions, Morris believes that his version does not shock today's child audiences who are exposed to sex and violence in everyday life and through the media. While incorporating the ballet's traditional cast of characters and choreographic structure, Morris displays gender in a myriad of shapes and identity as an ongoing experimental process. He shuffles male and female roles subverting the dichotomous gender roles of the classic ballet. Morris opens the possibility of gender differences for other characters, presenting the performative aspect of gender.

In the party scene, several of the major characters juxtapose discrepancies of dress and physical behavior in gender role travesty. They are not all in drag, but they do have

multiple layers.⁸⁷ A female plays Fritz, the naughty boy, but his movements and gestures are those of a “typical” boy, full of “abrupt aggressiveness and athleticism.” In her article “Styles of the Flesh (1996)” Gay Morris points out the ambivalent gender performance of Fritz. She says, “We see a ‘girl’ who looks like a ‘boy,’ but still looks like a ‘girl,’ moving like a ‘boy,’ and are struck by a series of jolts that constantly refocus our attention on the instability and performative aspect of gender” (p.151). In other words, Fritz both shows the performativity of gender : the play of signs of gender .

A man, portraying a chubby, middle-aged woman, performs Mrs. Stahlbaum, the elegant role model for girls in Balanchine’s version. The dancer who plays Mrs. Stahlbaum is one of the most versatile characters, triple-cast for all the female roles. In Act two, she/he plays the neurotic Queen of the Kingdom, who takes care of the cursed Princess Pirlipat. Later, she/he replaces the Sugarplum Fairy and leads the Waltz of Flowers, which consists of both male and female dancers in flower shaped costumes. Cohen (1998) points out that Mrs. Stahlbaum in Morris’ work represents Marie’s budding womanhood, and performs a miniature history of “womanhood” in costume and movement (p.493). In Act One, she displays balletic movements and picturesque gestures in Victorian style puffy skirts and décolletage, but in the Waltz of the Flowers, she wears high heels and has loose and natural movements reminiscent of early modern dance. In many classic ballets, roles such as the Mother or the Queen are passive and stereotypical characters, whose parts are largely mimed rather than danced , emphasizing their elegance and warmth towards the children. However, Mrs. Stahlbaum in Morris’ work

⁸⁷ In the first interview with me, Morris emphasized that he has never been interested in drag performance, and never presented it in his dance.

acts and dances aggressively. As a mother and hostess of the party, she cares for (and yells at) her kids, mingles with guests, and leads group dancing.

Dunning (1992) points out that there is a long Christmas pantomime tradition of travesty roles, such as the one that appears in Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* with a man playing Mother Ginger. However, Morris' staging of gender is different from the typical drag performance in ballet such as Frederick Ashton's performance of the Ugly Sister in *Cinderella*, in which he merely looks funny through exaggeration. According to Acocella, while most drag acts, through imperfect imitation of one sex by the other, reaffirm the separation between sexes, Morris is not interested in highlighting or concealing the differences between sexes but instead shows their instability and duality (Acocella, 1994, p.94). Mrs. Stahlbaum, as played by a male dancer, often exaggerates her femininity, but does not entirely jeopardize her identity by intentional, imperfect imitations of the female gender. She delicately portrays her female identity, a middle-age woman at the turn of life, while revealing her different sides in the same way a woman in real world does: a busy mother of three children, a hysterical wife, a demanding mistress, an elegant hostess, and, when she is alone in the magical world, a sensitive woman who wants to indulge her feminine fantasy in the Waltz of the Flowers. Gay Morris (1996) claims that Morris' staging pushes her roles beyond drag performance into a virtuosic artistry in order to call gender into question (p.151).

Morris' ambivalence is also apparent in his presentation of gender travesty. While Mrs. Stahlbaum emphasizes the performativity of gender, the Housemaid shows the gender difference that cannot be concealed. The role of Housemaid is another gender

role inversion, but one closer to a character in drag, presented as a parody. Gay Morris (1996) sees her as “a drag queen who has ‘become’ a woman and savors every moment of it” (p.151). She emphasizes the movements which signify her femininity, but her tall, big body and exaggerated gestures cannot conceal that he is a man. The Housemaid is the only dancer in the party scene who wears pointe shoes. In classic ballet, dancing on pointe has been regarded as an expression of the noble and enduring character of female or feminine creatures, but Morris demystifies its conventional meanings. Played by an African American male, the Housemaid dances on pointe when serving the guests with her food cart or expressing her irritation.

In the article "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance," Joann Kealiinohomoku (1983) claims that classical ballet reflects the aesthetics, values and cultural traditions of Europe as much as "ethnic" dances from other cultures reflect their respective traditions. Morris agrees with this perspective and his use of ballet movement is free from its classical context. Morris freely refers to classic ballet's traditions, such as the structure of the pas de deux and the use of pointe shoes, however he does not use them to present a feminized spectacle or a display of virtuosity. Calling *The Hard Nut* a “postmodern fairytale” Sara Cohen (1998) argues that Morris, in using ballet vocabulary, dismisses its original codification (p.486).

Morris explains that the use of pointes shoes, especially by male dancers, highlights ballet's light, bright effect. In an interview with Lynn Garafola, Morris said, “The Hard Nut is a ballet, it's not a classical ballet, but I wanted the effect of pointe dancing. I like the artifice of it, the special effect it gives of being extra light and high and

strong and strait. That's why I used it" (Garafola, 36-37). Interestingly, Morris acknowledges the rigid gender differences in ballet movement, but explores the expressivity of ballet in his work. He claims,

I completely believed in the sexual distinctions of ballet. I think they're appropriate and should be taught well. Male ballet dancing is a sidecar to the motorcycle of ballet, which is feminine. This relationship is legitimate. You can reject the form—that's fine—but you can't legitimately reject the separation of male roles from female roles in ballet because that's what it's about. (36)

At the end of Act One, Morris offers his own take on the Snowflake scene that is the epitome of the fairy tale-like scene of ballet, full of symmetrical formations and disciplined females dancing in white tutus. He creates a dynamic group dance where both male and female dancers run across the stage, sprinkling artificial snowflakes over their heads. Regardless of their sex, all wear white tutus with midriff tops; some of them wear pointe shoes, and some have bare feet. In spite of the unisex casting of dancers, Morris upholds the beautiful scenery of the group dance. "Having a few Snowflakes on pointe evoked and underscored for him the chill sharpness of snow" Dunning explains (, 1992). Their movements, compared to those of the classic ballet, are naturalistic, spontaneous, and playful. Although Morris upholds the spectacle and beauty of the scene, his Snowflakes are free from ballet's difficult technical demands on female dancers, notably the perfect lines and formations, fully stretched legs, and stubbornly pointed toes. Siegel (1991) argues that this is the best scene of the production because it presents a beauty that departs from "the exploitation of the female body" that is seen in traditional ballet (p. 60). In an interview with Lynn Garafola (2007,), Morris claims that dancing on pointe is not a "dehumanization," but "an elevation, literally and figuratively" (*Opera News*, p.36). In

the Waltz of the Snowflakes, male dancers in tutus wear pointe shoes and perform light, airy movements along with female dancers. According to Morris' perspective, male dancers in pointe shoes are not imitations or mockeries of female dancing, but expansions of ballet movements and expressivity.

At an interview with Jennifer Dunning, Morris insisted that his use of male dancers in female roles has nothing to do with sexual politics, and his disruption of balletic identity is not intended to produce an explicitly feminist message (1992). He explained that, because he wants "big numbers" in the group dancing, he simply deploys all of his 35 dancers regardless of their sex. Morris says, "The travesty roles are just that...The Snowflakes are just snowflakes, the Flowers just flowers" (Dunning, 1992). However, because he presents cross-dressing and diverse gender possibilities using the structure of a classic ballet, he makes audiences question the rigidity of gender stereotypes and the performative aspects of gender that have been imposed on classic ballet. Gay Morris (1996) writes,

Morris is interested in disrupting assumptions about the duality of gender, not in destroying heterosexuality. *The Hard Nut* emphasizes that gender is an extremely varied activity that includes heterosexuality. Rather than being compulsory, heterosexuality in Morris' world is simply one more gender possibility. (p.155)

Invented Identity

According to Cohen, *The Nutcracker* presents characters with fixed identities. From the bourgeois Christmas party to the magical realm, the ballet presents a host of social and theatrical stereotypes. Morris, instead, opens up the possibilities for the characters, emphasizing that identity is an "ongoing process which the characters actively

try on and learn” (Cohen, 1998, p.487). Breaking stereotypical gender roles and characterizations, Morris gives each character his or her own story and personality. Unlike characters in the traditional versions, they act and react to people and events, rather than display themselves on the stage. Marie and the Nutcracker, in particular, struggle with their identity.

In the classic ballet, Marie, whether played by an adult or a little girl, is good at balancing her everyday life and fantasy. Whether she is in her ordinary life or in her dream place, she knows how to fit in and get along with people, except her clumsy, little brother. She is sensible and brave enough to repel evil mice and save a friend in need. As a beloved child, she gives full trust to everyone (Drosselmeier and the Nutcracker Prince), and in return, is welcomed by everyone (the Sugarplum Fairy and her friends). Because her journey is a reward that shows “your dreams can come true,” (Fisher, 1994, p.140) she is never urged to find herself or make a decision throughout this journey. Marie is guided by the Nutcracker and the Sugarplum Fairy, and returns safely to where she belongs. She has no chance to grow up, as she only indulges her “inner child” during her experience.

In Hoffmann’s story, Marie painstakingly hovers between her ordinary life and her fantasy. Crossing over from ordinary life to fantasy, Marie, instead of enjoying her experience, is confused and even frightened. The evil mice return every night to attack the Nutcracker, and she has to take action to save the vulnerable Nutcracker. Her parents think she is dreaming because of her fever, and Drosselmeier assures her parents that she

is having silly dreams. While Petipa's fantasy offers entertainment for Marie, Hoffman's fantasy demands that she grow up.

In Morris' ballet, Marie also struggles to find what she wants and where she belongs. She watches TV a lot and has difficulty relating to people. Her older sister ignores her, trying to mingle with the adults, and her little brother torments Marie, breaking her doll. Her parents try to control the children, while their guests become drunk. No one listens to her or invites her to join in, except Drosselmeier and her Nutcracker. Unlike the beloved child in traditional versions, Morris' Marie is an unstable child who would like to escape to another world. Regarding Marie's instability in traditional versions, Fisher (1994) points out that Marie/Clara is often described as a lonely and unstable teenager:

It's no wonder she's been revisioned so often as a love-starved teenager—who else would act so rashly? Who else would get a stern-faced doll with oversized teeth for Christmas, immediately and unaccountably love him devoutly, feel his pain enough to risk her life for him, and enter into what must certainly be a relationship fraught with inter-realm obstacles? (140)

Matthew Bourne, in his version of the ballet, *Nutcracker!*, presents Marie as a lonely girl in Dr. Dross' Orphanage. On Christmas night, her beloved Nutcracker doll transforms into a prince charming, but he marries the wrong girl, Princess Sugar. The ballet ends with Clara's awakening and eventual escape from the orphanage with the boy who is the real life model for the Nutcracker.

Ironically, in the traditional versions, Marie shows how well she will fit in society as a young lady. She dexterously follows the symmetrical formations, performs couple dances, and shows polite physical contact with the young boys who have just teased her

with their toys. By doing so, she shows her respect for tradition and her compliance with social etiquette. In contrast, Morris' Marie almost impedes the group dance. She continuously misses the beat of the music, loses her position, and fails to remember the next step. Marie does not have a role model, and is not encouraged to follow one.

Morris' Marie is closer to an adolescent hovering between childhood and adulthood. In her journey with Drosselmeier, Marie is not really excited until she notices her feelings for the Nutcracker. Alastair Macaulay explains that the story of Princess Pirlipat and Drosselmeier's trip around the world is not new to Marie, because the three kids were watching them on TV in Act One (1991, p.659). Although Morris does not describe Marie's inner struggle the way that Hoffman does, Morris' Marie also grows up through her journey.

The Nutcracker also experiences an identity issue. In Hoffman's tale, the Nutcracker is Drosselmeier's nephew from Nuremberg, who is a future king of the Marzipan Castle. He is a handsome and noble young man who was cursed by the evil Mouse Queen and transformed into a nutcracker. In the ballet, the Nutcracker is introduced as the Nutcracker Prince or a young Drosselmeier. It is Marie who helps him regain his identity. As soon as the Nutcracker wins the battle with the mice, he is transformed into a prince charming. He is no more a helpless, weird toy saved by a girl's slipper, but a handsome young man who promises his lady a fantasy of which she has dreamed. Many productions, after his transformation, insert the Nutcracker's dance that presents his real identity. He turns, balances, and jumps, and accomplishes miraculous techniques, as if reintroducing himself as a Prince Nutcracker. His emphasis on technical

dexterity and powerful movement implies not only his physical power, but also his authority to control the upcoming events. He then invites Marie to the magical world, passing through the Land of Snow where the extravagant dance of the Snowflakes is performed to welcome them.

Morris replaces the Nutcracker's transformative dance with a male pas de deux performed by the Nutcracker and Drosselmeier. Executing steps identical to the Nutcracker's, Drosselmeier dances behind the scrim as if gently nurturing and supporting his nephew who has just been released from his long ordeal. Their dance is delicate, soft, and lyrical, without spectacular techniques. The Nutcracker is beginning to learn his new role. Drosselmeier repeatedly lifts and supports him just as in the heterosexual pas de deux. The uncle places his hand over the nephew's heart, as if signifying love. The Nutcracker later repeats this gesture with Marie in their love duet. A pas de deux is conventionally danced by a heterosexual couple to represent their unity and love. However, through this sensitive duet, Morris attempts to show a platonic love between men that does not include desire. Here, Gay Morris believes that Morris attacks the fear of homosexuality underneath the compulsory heterosexuality (1996, p.153). Morris opens up the possibilities for the Nutcracker's love when the curse is lifted; he could love Marie, or the Princess, and Drosselmeier.

While giving a pas de deux to the uncle and the nephew, Morris makes the grand pas de deux a group dance. When Marie and the Nutcracker dances the adagio part, instead of a man lifting a woman, the couple is lifted by the ensemble, celebrating love. Morris' love duet is full of sensitive and subtle expressions of love. Rather than an

announcement to the world about their love (many grand pas de deux take place at a wedding), Marie and the Nutcracker's love duet is a conversation between two youths who want to know about each other. The Nutcracker places his hand over Marie's heart, lifts her, and touches her cheek as Drosselmeier did with him. The young couple kisses several times, but their love scene is warm and honest rather than erotic and sensual. Morris brings all the characters together in celebration regardless of their relationships in the narrative. Interestingly, while he changes its meaning and structure, he maintains the Petipa-Ivanov model. As Morris told Jennifer Dunning, "All the moves are there. They're just done by unexpected people" (1992,).

In *The Hard Nut*, Morris shuffles male and female roles to present diverse gender identities. However, because he presents the heterosexual love of two central characters, some would argue that he, in fact, reinforces the heterosexual order rather than attacks it. However, while Morris does not attack heterosexuality itself, he defies its compulsive and normative side, leaving the issue open and unresolved.

Love and the Rescue Plot

In spite of its stylized format and form as a classic ballet, *The Nutcracker* strays from classic ballet's main theme, romantic love. The ballet ends with a grand pas de deux by the Sugarplum Fairy and her Cavalier (or often Marie and the Nutcracker), but the narrative is hardly romantic, because it avoids any drama or story about how their love is consummated. Morris revives the romance of two young lovers that Petipa eliminated. The twentieth-century choreographer claims that this dance is about love, but his message is not merely a triumph of heterosexual love. It celebrates the humanitarian spirit that

encourages and celebrates all kinds of love. Further, he talks about how one can acquire love. Marie and the Nutcracker's love is accomplished, not through unconditional sacrifice like that of the other nineteenth-century couple, but through self-awareness. Morris emphasizes that one needs to grow in order to recognize love.⁸⁸ Marie's announcement of her feeling for him instantly breaks the spell and curse.

Morris focuses on the celebration of love, rather than young lovers' suffering and sacrifice as in Hoffman's story. Hoffman describes how Marie sacrifices herself to protect the Nutcracker. As the evil Mouse King comes every night to kill the Nutcracker, Marie suffers the horrible anxiety that her Nutcracker will die tonight. She sacrifices her favorite dolls and dresses to protect the Nutcracker, but still has to endure her helplessness while watching her beloved man bleeding. Drosselmeier supports Marie, but also warns her about what she will have to endure for her love. He says,

You'll have to suffer a lot if you want to take charge of the poor, deformed the Nutcracker since Mouse King persecutes him anywhere and everywhere. However, I'm not the one who can save him! Only you can rescue him. Be strong and loyal.(Hoffman, 1816, p.41)

In both Hoffman's story and the classic ballet, it is Marie who rescues the enchanted Nutcracker. I notice that in many classic ballet productions there is a certain "rescue plot." There is one who needs/wants to be rescued from suffering that was not caused by his/her own wrongdoing, but by a spell, curse, betrayal or quirk of fate. On the other hand, there is a rescuer who would face any struggle or suffering in order to save the innocent lover. Their relationship ends either as a euphoric marriage (e.g., *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppélia*) or as an eternal love that is completed by sublime self-

⁸⁸ See Mark Morris' speech in the film adaptation of *The Hard Nut*, 1993.

sacrifice (e.g., *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*). In general, the victim is female and the rescuer is male, but in *The Nutcracker*, the gender roles are inverted. In the ballet, Petipa's Marie easily saves her prince by throwing her slipper at the Mouse King. Because the evil is repelled so easily, the Mouse King is frequently described as ridiculous, rather than as frightening. Therefore, when Marie rescues the Nutcracker, her reward is a one-night ticket to Sugarland.

Morris' Marie also saves the Nutcracker, but their love is a choice rather a destiny. Before Marie declares her feelings, the whole realm of possibilities are open on the stage. Nutcracker has an emotional duet with Drosselmeier and he saves Princess Pirlipat by cracking the Hard Nut. However, Marie and the Nutcracker choose each other. Marie does not need to take her life to save the Nutcracker, but instead has to grow up through self-awareness. Therefore, by saving the Nutcracker, Marie rescues herself. When she realizes what she wants and admits it, she also is transformed from a fidgeting adolescent into a bright, sweet, and independent woman.

In presenting *The Nard Nut*, Morris shows his unique treatment of gender and sexuality which has little in common with Petipa's classic work. Petipa's characters represent the solid bourgeois values of the era to which he belonged and he reinforces the rigid, binary, gender categories inherent in his characters. In Petipa's ballet, the heterosexual order and gender differentiation are apparent both in the adults and children. However, Morris mocks the rigid stereotypes by displaying gender in a diversity of shapes and sizes. Morris uses Petipa's choreographic structure such as pas de deux, not for extravagant bravura, but to signify the place where the young people struggle and try

on their new identities. In *The Hard Nut*, Morris resists the normative heterosexuality that classic ballet upholds and shuffles male and female roles to experiment with new possibilities. Through his diverse experiments with gender role inversions, he opens up possibilities in presenting gender and sexuality.

Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare

When Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* in the 1590s, he did not make up the story. He dramatized a well-known Italian tale,⁸⁹ which had been popular for several decades, and developed the supporting characters and expanded the plot (Levenson, 1984, p.325).⁹⁰ Although *Romeo and Juliet* is regarded as a tragedy by genre, Shakespeare skillfully interweaves comedy and tragedy in its dramatic structure to intensify the tension. Drawing on the young lovers' dilemma caught between passionate love and oppressive families, Shakespeare depicts the sexually charged period of adolescence with humor and wit (Levenson, 2000, p.17).

Morris' *Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* is based on Shakespeare's love tragedy, but the trademark ending is changed to a happy ending. Morris claimed that his aim was to make a dance he had never seen before: "The most important thing for me is to make a dance I have never seen before. So, I do whatever to prepare

⁸⁹ According to Levenson (2000), this tale was translated into verse as *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke in 1562, and retold in prose in *Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter in 1582.

⁹⁰ Levenson explains how the events of the play's famous narrative perfectly suit the requirements of tragic theater and Aristotle's qualifications: "the plot ought to be constructed in such a way that anyone, by merely hearing an account of the incidents and without seeing them, will be filled with horror and pity at what occurs" (1984, p.325.)

whatever I want to do; it can be studying, stepping the music...”⁹¹ This production shows his open-ended approach to the classic and interestingly reveals his changing perspective on gender, love and sexuality. While his work in the 1980s demonstrated his political agenda of protesting rigid gender stereotypes and persecution of diverse sexual orientation, in *Romeo & Juliet* he focuses on the extension of gender roles, especially the expressivity of women’s roles.

Extension of Gender Roles

When Shakespeare first wrote the play, the roles in *Romeo & Juliet* were played by all male performers, including Juliet, following the theatrical convention of his time. The story has asymmetrical gender portions; there are far more male characters than female ones. Contrarily, Morris assigned many male roles to female dancers. To present the corps of street people and aristocrats, dancers play multiple characters and female dancers frequently take male roles. Morris had only 17 regular members in Mark Morris Dance Group so he added seven extra dancers and four former company members as the Montague and Capulet parents.

In this production both of the strongest male roles, frequently described as macho rivals, were danced by women: Amber Darragh played Mercutio, and Julie Worden played Tybalt. Gender role inversion has been Morris’ trademark, but in this production Morris’ cross-casting was not directly related to gender role inversions. There is a distinct difference between Morris’ gender role inversions and gender cross-casting. Both of them

⁹¹ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

imply discrepancies between the gender identity and sexual orientation of a character and a performer. However, as discussed in Morris' casting of Dido and the Sorceress, Morris' gender role inversions intentionally reveal the discrepancies of two genders: the gender of the character and the gender of the performer who is portraying the role. He highlights the discrepancies rather than attempting to conceal them. In the casting of Dido, the Sorceress, Mrs. Stahlbaum and the Housemaid, instead of a small, youthful male dancer who can appear and can act effeminate, Morris hired big, tall, male dancers who could not hide their masculinity and asked them to exaggerate feminine qualities. In other words, through inversion of the gender roles, Morris anticipates the discordance of the "gender performativity" of the performers and their assigned "gender performance." Further, he uses these discordances to create a dynamic character. For instance, the discordance between the exaggerated feminine gestures of Mrs. Stahlbaum (gender performance) and her big, strong figure as a male dancer (gender performativity) changes her characterization from a stereotypical mother character to a woman with personality.

Cross-casting does not necessarily imply gender inversion in Morris' work. For Mercutio and Tybalt Morris hired tall, energetic, and strong female dancers who successfully portray the noble young men without highlighting the discordance between their own femininity and the role's masculinity. In Act One at the party scene Julie Worden shows a nasty Tybalt who enjoys provoking people. He tells a sexual joke to Romeo and continuously provokes Mercutio and his friends to anger. Tybalt is depicted as an explosive young man who has a deadly rivalry with Mercutio. When the female dancers execute these energetic dances with male dancers, their cross-casting is not as

conspicuous as when a man dances a female role. Morris explains that in *Romeo and Juliet* his choice of a female dancer for a male character differs from the gender role inversions in *The Hard Nut*: “I don't give a great deal in cross dressing... And men can do those parts. It's not mandatory that they be women. A woman might be Paris when we do it again. It's not a big political statement really.”⁹² Morris explains that he wants to extend women's performances to male roles; as Morris told me, “Man always had more opportunity than woman. Man playing a woman is very common in many theatrical forms in the world.”⁹³

It is interesting to note that Morris' gender role inversions are illustrated by men playing women whereas cross-casting is related to women playing men. In this production Morris does not present any men playing women that can be compared to his cross-casting of women. One alleged reason would be that there are more “performative” characteristics in depicting a female rather than a male, especially in ballet's “feminine” characters as Desmond (2001) claimed. However, Mercutio and Tybalt are very masculine characters and there are the gendered stylizations of the body and movement that female dancers have to perform. Whereas Morris uses the discordances between the gender of the performer and the inverted, assigned gender of the character in his gender role inversions, he shuffles the gender performance and the character performance when

⁹² The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

⁹³ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

cross-casting: he hires tall, athletic female dancers for these roles, and assigns a set of gestures and dancing that dramatizes their characters.

Morris depicts Renaissance Verona not as a compulsive, patriarchal society, but as an imaginary place where adolescents can experiment with their desires and identities. While Morris shows gender role cross-casting, he does not sharply contrast the gender roles as do Shakespeare and classical ballet. Verona is a patriarchal society where a woman's role is highly limited. Illustrating the conversation between the Nurse and Juliet, Coppélia Kahn (1977) points out that women are described as "the weaker vessels" who "bears children and falls backward to conceive them" (p. 12).

Morris breaks these asymmetrical gender roles and gives females a right to act. Morris' women are as socially active as men and deeply involved in the events. In most ballet productions, the two genders are clearly distinguished in the street quarrel. In Macmillan's ballet, for example, while the men are violently engaged with their opponents, representing their masculinity, the women merely cheer their men, often crying and running away from the scene. Contrast this with Morris' women who are scrappers. At the beginning of Act One, Morris presents two females who start provoking each other. Later a woman first kicks a man and he seizes her collar, as he would if she were a man. Morris says, "I want this square to be a place where a woman could get socked in the face anytime she turned around, and a man could get killed" (Acocella, 2008, p. 42).

Because Morris does not portray the two genders as they would have appeared in Verona's hierarchy, his gender cross-casting is an attempt to expand the expressiveness

for both sexes rather than an attack against stereotypical gender categories as in *The Hard Nut*. At the time he choreographed *The Hard Nut* he had an avid interest in gender issues. But now, Morris says that he does not have many “things that need to be said” regarding homosexuality and stereotypical gender types. Morris told me, “Twenty-five, thirty years ago I was very much more politically active [in talking] about sex. It was more important to me, but time has changed a lot. [Now] It’s not such big deal, being a queer.”⁹⁴ For the past few decades many choreographers have attacked gender stereotypes in dance and compulsive heterosexuality has significantly decreased in dance as well as in ordinary life. Meanwhile, Gay Morris (2008) argues that in *Romeo and Juliet*, Morris’ assignment of a female to a male role is pointless:

Morris’ company of some two dozen is nowhere near adequate for a production of the Prokofiev ballet with necessarily large cast of characters and corps of street people and aristocrats...Morris was forced to use women for the roles of Mercutio and Tybolt. Years ago, when he was concerned with gender issues, such a tactic might have seemed a bold attack on stereotypical gender roles. Here it just looked like he didn’t have enough dancers (p. 32).

However, along with the presentation of “performativity” of gender, this cross-casting supports Morris’ constructions of the characters. They are not only progesterone-driven macho men who are easily provoked by their rivals, but have distinguishable personalities. Deborah Jowitt comments that “Julie Worden gives Tybalt an air of soul-twisted bravado. Darragh’s Mercutio is a wonderfully raunchy tease” (2008). Morris’ Mercutio is a fearless, naughty young man who might suffer from a secrete desire for his friend. His affection towards Romeo and his acting out allow an ambivalent interpretation

⁹⁴ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

of his character. Tybalt, on the other hand, is a humorless, young noble who is almost too proud of himself and his family. He is full of hatred and revenge. Their violence is supposed to represent their masculinity in patriarchal Verona, but the cross-casting dissolves the meaning of the violence.⁹⁵

Reconciliation of Love and Sex

Before Morris choreographs a piece, he spends a lot of time researching the related materials from music, paintings, and, of course, the original story. “I hadn’t read the play [Romeo & Juliet] for 30 years. It’s better than I remember it,” says Morris. “It’s also dirtier than I remember, so sexy and completely direct” (Allan Ulrich, 2008, p.20). Morris’ impressions are obvious in the production, and the young lovers’ encounter is full of erotic imaginings.

Morris talks about love all the time, but distinguishes between love and sex. In *King Arthur*, staged in 2007, Morris presents a reckless sex scene with a group of dancers portraying sexual intercourse in all forms of couplings and positions performed to Purcell’s music. Acocella describes it as shocking but not erotic, because the scene is presented as a series of steps without any emotional involvement.⁹⁶ When asked about his reason for the staging of that scene, Morris explained, “Because the music talks about

⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Morris avoids a typical gender inversion. Whereas many productions depict Juliet’s nurse as a fat middle-aged female, who is often played by a man, Morris uses a small, trim dancer, Lauren Grant.

⁹⁶ Acocella argues that when Morris presents a sex scene, he often “demystifies” it without romanticizing it ; it is “done in group, to the music, like any other step,” (p.94) she explains.

it.”⁹⁷ Morris does not hesitate to make whatever point he wants to make in dance, nor is he afraid to offend his middle-class audiences with overt sexuality.

In *Romeo & Juliet*, Morris, for the first time, Morris reconciles love and sex depicting heterosexual love animated with sexual desire. This is the first big erotic duet that Morris has choreographed (Acocella, 2008, p.44). In *Romeo and Juliet*, sex is also treated in a realistic manner in keeping with Shakespeare’s text, but the sex is warm and erotic. The bedroom scene is a one where Romeo and Juliet show their sexual awakening and their progression from adolescence to adulthood. In most ballet productions, the scene depicting their first night as lovers presents their desperation over Romeo’s departure, rather than a sweet or erotic mood. Their physical consummation is fairly symbolic.

In Morris’ work, sex is natural and direct. “They are teenagers. They love each other, so they have sex.” Morris says.⁹⁸ The newlyweds are naked when they wake up. Without hiding their excitement from the previous night, the young lovers laugh, kiss, and play with each other’s bodies, as if totally forgetting about Mercutio’s death and Romeo’s deportation. They are not desperate, but excited with the thought of sharing another night. Romeo is bold and masculine with his wife—a change from his sensitivity in public. With his back to the audience, he stretches his naked body towards Juliet’s face. Juliet jumps out of bed and wears Romeo’s shirt as if wanting to stop her husband’s departure. Interestingly, when I asked Morris about the apparent “sexuality” in his works,

⁹⁷ The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

he talked about the “performative” aspect of sexuality. “They are not having sex. There is no penetration, it’s pretend,” Morris replied.⁹⁹

Heterosexuality and Homosexuality

In *Romeo and Juliet*, love, especially heterosexual love, is the predominant value of the play. Presenting heterosexual love as a main theme, Morris includes homosexual love, but his cross-casting of gender roles complicates its meaning. As implied in Shakespeare’s novel, Morris shows that Romeo’s best friend has a crush on him (Berman, 2008). Morris vividly depicts the physical and sensual love of heterosexual couples and, at the same time, subtly implies Mercutio’s homosexual love that hovers between friendship and desire. Shakespeare presents many homoerotic innuendos in this play and some scholars have questioned the sexuality of Mercutio and Romeo. For instance, Mercutio, in friendly conversation, mentions Romeo’s phallus. Morris alludes to this scene by having drunken Mercutio grab Romeo’s phallus when they are at the ball. Van Watson (1992) in “Shakespeare, Zeffirelli, and the Homosexual Gaze in Literature/Film” mentions that Shakespeare’s procreation sonnets seem to be addressed to imply homosexual young men. Watson explains that some scholars believe Mercutio chooses to die because he is afraid of losing Romeo’s affection.

In *Queering the Renaissance* (1994), Jonathan Goldberg explains how desire frequently leans in homosocial and homosexual directions in Shakespeare’s story (pp.218-235). He argues that the exaltation of the heterosexist ethos is a construction imposed on the play by readers and performers who pursue their own heterosexual

⁹⁹ Ibid.

agendas. Morris acknowledges Mercutio's passion for Romeo and expresses his desire in a concrete way. In Morris' work, at the Capulet's ball Mercutio gets drunk and makes naughty jokes, expressing his reckless and obscene temper. He lifts the Nurse's skirt; he touches Romeo's phallus and later kisses him in public. Unlike Romeo, Mercutio is not interested in the women at the ball, who approach him several times. When a woman approaches him with a drink, he snaps her glass and throws it away after drinking it. He did not come to the ball to chase beautiful women, but to cheer up his best friend who has just been rejected by a woman, named Rosaline. Because Mercutio is actually performed by a female, this homoerotic expression is ambiguous allowing many interpretations. Morris said, "In the play, Mercutio's relationship to Romeo is very, very close. He has a crush on him, obviously. But you know, they kiss and stuff. So if two men do that, it's gay and whatever, but if it's a woman and a man doing that, it's a different thing."¹⁰⁰ Mercutio's kiss is an expression of his desperate love and secret homosexual desire for his friend. At the same time, it is a bold and erotic move by a heterosexual female who wants to compete with Juliet.

Morris emphasized during our interview that some parts of the ballet are irrelevant to homosexuality. For instance, when the two families realize that their children are alive, the two fathers kiss each other. He explained, "Everyone laughs at the kiss that the two fathers have. That's historical. You would make up feuds in public by

¹⁰⁰ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

kissing each other. The heads of the clans would embrace and kiss on the mouth to seal their contracts. I didn't even make that up, it's not a gay thing, it's historical.”¹⁰¹

A New Verona for a New Identity

While faithful in depicting the story’s historical setting and details, Morris disregards the social norms and the stiff gender roles imposed on young Romeo and Juliet. Romeo and Juliet live in Renaissance Verona as the precious children of two warring, oppressive families. This is important in the story because all the struggles and events result from their identities and their relations to the society. In Shakespeare’s story, Juliet instantly notices their problem after their first encounter at the ball. She laments at her balcony. “O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I’ll no longer be a Capulet” (2.1, 75-79). From the beginning, she understands that abandoning their identities is the only way to consummate their love; but even this would not be feasible.

Morris sets his story in Verona, but abandons its patriarchal ideology and the agenda that rules Verona’s boys and girls, oppressing the adolescents. Instead he allows the couple to experiment with their identities. Coppélia Kahn (1977-1978), in her article “Coming of Age in Verona” points out that Verona’s women have no sanctioned period of adolescence or opportunities to experiment with adult identities or activities (p.12). Juliet’s growing up is hastened for her marriage. Lady Capulet regards motherhood as the proper termination of childhood. She commands Juliet, “Younger than you, Here in Verona, Ladies of esteem are already made mothers”(1.3. 69-71). Meanwhile, men in

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Verona have to fight for their family's honor. Mercutio, Tybalt, and Romeo take their lives to honor their father's name. Kahn points out that the strict masculine code of violence and Verona's patriarchal society is imposed on Romeo and is the main force driving the tragedy to its end (pp. 5-7). In the article "'Standing to the wall': The Pressures of Masculinity in *Romeo and Juliet*," Robert Appelbaum wrote,

In the world of *Romeo and Juliet*, the regime of masculinity is constituted as a system from which there is no escape, but in keeping with which there is no experience of masculine satisfaction either, although the drama played by Romeo may seduce us into thinking that there is both one and the other (p.235).

In Morris' version, *Romeo and Juliet* have a sanctioned period in which to experiment with adult identities. Morris does not create an "oppressive and desperate" air that pressures this couple; he, instead, encourages their love. When they first encounter each other at the ball, Morris stops the whole world as they become aware of their feelings for each other. Everyone stops moving as Romeo and Juliet approach each other and kiss over and over. Morris' Romeo does not sneak to her balcony to meet Juliet. Morris excludes the clandestine balcony scene, so their first love duet takes place at the ball after the party. Morris' Verona is more democratic and generous toward the children. When the young couple survive and flee from Verona, their families are not disappointed and hunting for them. The families rejoice and celebrate Romeo and Juliet's love.

Morris also dissolves the compulsive, asymmetrical gender roles. Juliet is guided and nurtured by Renaissance norms for a young girl, but she is not entrapped by fixed gender roles. Juliet refuses to marry Paris and successfully flees from her family by deceiving them. Romeo and Juliet are adolescents trying to grow up. They have to

separate themselves from their parents in order to develop adult identities. They experiment with their adult identities through their emotional and sexual love. Instead of staying in Verona and asking for the sanction of their families, they run away and find a new place in which to live.

Deconstruction of Fixed Gender Identity

Choreographing this classic heterosexual love, Morris subtly alters the traditional gender roles of Romeo and Juliet. Morris gives Romeo feminine sensitivity and Juliet a strong, resilient, and independent character. In most ballet versions, Romeo's manliness serves the woman and his violence upholds the family's honor, while Juliet's femininity serves her man. In her review for *The San Francisco Classical Voice*, Berman (2008) wrote,

You could see the playing against sexual stereotypes that's a Morris watchword. Both of the strongest male roles were danced to perfection by women...Noah Vinson was a gentle Romeo with a strong feminine side, and Maile Okamura's outstanding Juliet was high-spirited, though quite girly."

Gay Morris explains that Morris characterizes Romeo and Juliet through their movements and this contrast helps identify their characters. She explains that Romeo's balletic movements make him appear "of the air, boyish and dreamy," while Juliet's weighted and modern dance based movements depict her as "of the earth, a figure of action" (2008, 33).

Morris ambivalently uses ballet heritage. Contrary to what he does in his previous works such as *The Hard Nut*, Morris is not eager to twist gender roles or to mock them. Often he uses the structure of ballet, filling it with modern dance vocabulary. In the Capulet's ball, dancers divide into two genders and perform a social dance that is

choreographed with modern dance movements. In Victorian-inspired attire to Prokofiev's solemn music, the aristocracies bend their torsos and stretch their legs high. In Romeo and Juliet's love duet, Morris uses many balletic movements. For example, Juliet, in soft ballet slippers, performs an elegant arabesque.

Meanwhile, Morris disregards classic ballet's hierarchy and exhibitionism. He refuses the hierarchical order of Victorian society that is apparent in the classic ballet. In Act One in Juliet's room, the servants form a couple, and the Nurse and her assistant dance with Lord Capulet and Lady Capulet. Their dances are symmetrical and do not discriminate between the classes. Romeo does not display any showy or technical movements to represent his masculinity. His movements are gentle, soft, and refined. In the love duet, they are not interested in displaying their technique or pictorial poses. Whereas ballet productions emphasize Juliet's innocent and devoted character, Morris depicts Juliet as realistic, determined, and optimistic. She is adored by her parents but also ready to be independent from her parents. Unlike Marie in *The Hard Nut*, Morris' Juliet knows what she wants. Romeo is gentle, reliable young man, but Morris' Juliet does not collapse into Romeo's arms.

Jennifer Fisher (2004), in her article, "Falling in Love, Literally: Romeo, Juliet, Ballet, and the Swoon" claims that in most ballet productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, the female dancer repetitively swoons toward her partner to dramatize their desperate love (pp. 137-138). She explains that because ballet developed in the royal court in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the verticality of the body was the rule. It was thought that "love and loyalty could be expressed perfectly well in dignity, restraint and

geometrical patterns traced on the stage” (p. 139). However, in the nineteenth century, romantic choreographers and dancers started to show gravity-defying angles to illustrate their noble, surging souls. Fisher explains that the man should stand behind the woman, ready to catch her and carry her when love and despair become overwhelming. Fisher (2004) counts the number of times that Juliet bends backward and forward, giving her weight to Romeo. In the bedroom scene, the swoon count zooms to about 32 per six-minute time span (p.141).

Instead of falling into her man’s arm, Morris’ Juliet lifts and leads him. Morris describes the adolescents as equally passionate and vulnerable. Romeo falls to the floor when he is overwhelmed with his love. Juliet supports her man as much as he does her. In their first night, although the pleasure of being together and anxiety for Romeo’s departure for Mantua are mixed, the young lovers do not despair. . They savor every moment with optimistic hope for their future. They are positive people who bring about their dreams. Morris explains, “They live forever...She wakes up, and [says, Romeo] let’s gets out here, and they do this gorgeous dance for the eternity.”^{102,}

Fatal Love versus the Fatality of Love

In staging this story that is epitome of romantic love, Morris makes his characters and scenes more realistic. Disregarding classic ballet’s grand-scale spectacles and extravagant dances, Morris pays more attention to depicting details of the characters. Gay Morris (1998) points out, “Morris has never been a grand scale choreographer. Even when directing operas, he stresses the intimate, the quixotic, the fallibly human” (p.33).

¹⁰² The first interview with Mark Morris, October 23, 2008.

In his previous works, Morris loved to create multifaceted meanings underneath the original story. He critiques the compulsive heterosexuality and fixed gender roles in *The Hard Nut*, and expresses the ambivalent human psyche in *Dido and Aeneas*. In contrast, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Morris focuses on the love story, minimizing extraneous significations. In order to save Romeo and Juliet, Morris eliminates the fatalism, patriarchal violence, and political allegory of this story. In Shakespeare's story, Romeo and Juliet's love is regarded as fateful, but fortune is purposeful, not fickle. Fate delays the friar's messenger on his trip to Mantua, rushes Romeo to depart before he receives the message, prevents the friar from arriving at the tomb on time, and rushes Romeo to drink the poison before Juliet wakes up. They are doomed and death is unavoidable.¹⁰³ Morris does not depict any of these scenes in his choreography. Juliet wakes up on time, and they soon arrive at the celestial place.

Morris also disconnects the romantic alliance of love and death, completing the lovers' love in a way that celebrates their youth and vitality. Stephen Shapiro (1964) claims that Shakespeare arranges their deaths to complete the idea of "perfect love" (pp.500-501). He explains that the desire for perfect love is fundamentally a realizable one: "They have achieved perfect communion, total absorption of self in the other. Its price is death, the extinction of the individual personality"(p.500). In fact, Romeo and Juliet's death has ambivalent meanings. It is tragic for them, but they achieve "eternal

¹⁰³ In the Universal Ballet Company's production that I viewed in 2004 at the New York State Theater, the choreographer Oleg Vinogradov actually presents a "death" figure in a skeleton suit. He (she) walks and dances around the crowd, foreshadowing the tragic ends of the two lovers.

love” on their own terms. It is also tragic for their parents, but their death eventually brings peace in Verona. Verona is apparently healed by the passionate, heterosexual love of the two main characters. Shapiro believes that “*Romeo and Juliet*, in its contraries, reversals, and transformation, furnish us with a dramatic image of the impulsive-inhibited ambivalence of the human psyche itself” (p.501).

Jerry Weinberger (2003) in his analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* argues that the play is not a simply a tragedy of impetuous, young love, but a play about politics that is conditioned by Christian morality and religion. The Prince of Verona and Friar Laurence, respectively, represent secular and priestly authorities; ultimately, the Veronese regime is transformed in ways more compatible with the friar’s interest. Weinberger argues that the friar risks the lives of this young couple, especially Juliet, to reconcile the two families and bring peace in Verona:

The friar is willing to offer the children as hostage to fortune, for the sake of possibly uniting the city by means of their love. The play’s foreordained, Providential outcome—civil peace at the cost of two lovers’ lives—merely exaggerates the principle at work in the friar’s political machinations (p.356).

However, in Morris’ version the political authorities, the Prince of Verona and Friar Laurence, have limited power. In Act One when the street fights become fierce, the friar attempts to stop them by ringing the church bell, but his effort is in vain as people do not listen to him. The Prince orders Romeo to leave Verona, but cannot stop the young lovers from being together.

Also, in Morris’ production, Romeo and Juliet develop new identities as adults apart from the feuds or whims of fortune. Morris not only changes the ending, he inverts

the society's system and its ideology. Just as their death in the original story does, their survival brings civil peace to Verona. Morris does not take the story into the realm of Christianity or politics. Morris said in our interview,

The point being, Shakespeare's point which is their love lasts forever. That's unimpeachable. And especially in the play when they die, it's much easier to say that their love lasts forever. But they're actually going on. it's a bigger claim, more serious than being in love and then tragically killed. I'm sorry, it's a terrible thing to happen for their parents, but then, of course, in the play, cynically the parents have a competition of a bigger golden statue for I like my kid better than you did. All of the adults are fools, and Romeo and Juliet go on.¹⁰⁴

Morris, who claims that his dance is about love, shows the victory of love. In order to consummate this love, he saves Romeo and Juliet, not only from misfortune and death, but also from the politics that thwart the young lovers. Describing Romeo and Juliet's youthful passion, rebellious love, and erotic imagination, Morris shows his unique treatment of love and sexuality. Morris abandons the original fateful ending thereby disconnecting the alliance of love and death. Instead, he celebrates the vitality of love.

In this chapter, I have explored Morris' ambivalent treatment of gender and sexuality. Freed from the fixed identities of the original versions, Morris avoids stereotypical gender distinctions and roles. Interestingly, he reveals his changing perspective in presenting gender issue and sexuality. While he attacked stereotypical gender categories and mocks the hierarchical order of the Victorian era in *The Hard Nut*, in *Romeo & Juliet, on the Motifs of Shakespeare* he uses cross-casting and gender role

¹⁰⁴ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010 .

inversions to expand the range of expression for both sexes. Today these practices are more artistic experiment rather than a political statement attacking compulsory heterosexuality.

As Morris has claimed, his works continuously talk about love. He is noted for his warm humanity, but I believe this is because of the utopian vision that he suggests rather than the subject matter itself. In spite of Shakespeare's characters' struggles (and even their tragic endings), Morris' characters reside in a community that encourages and guides them to fulfill their love through their own efforts. Interestingly, Morris connects love with identity issues rather than death or sexuality. To *Marie and the Nutcracker*, *Dido and the Sorceress*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, identity formation is always an ongoing process. Morris breaks prescribed asymmetrical gender roles, and presents his utopian vision of society that is open to myriad manifestations of gender. In Morris' utopia, as Butler hopes, people are free from compulsory heterosexuality, and freely experiment with their identities.

CHAPTER 5

MUSICALITY

Music and Dance

I'm a musician...and my medium is dancing," Morris said at an interview with *The Washington Post* (Kaufman, 2010, January 31). To Mark Morris, music is not only a source of inspiration, but also his choreographic method and a hobby.¹⁰⁵ Morris starts by listening to music when he choreographs, and reads scores for fun when he is not working. When I first met him at his Brooklyn office, he was heading for rehearsal, dressed in a loose bathrobe, continuously humming and singing a score. Morris never hesitates to express his love for music. "Music is what draws me to everything I do. I only do what I do because of music." he explained in an interview with *Opera News* (2007, April, p.35).

Morris was raised in a family that nurtured his love for music and dance. According to Joan Acocella, the writer of *Mark Morris*, Morris' father Bill taught him to read music, and his mother Maxine took him to dance concerts. Music and piano were young Morris' hobbies and entertainment. When his parents' house burned down in 1971, Morris bought a piano as soon as possible with his own money. Although Morris had little formal training in music, his consistent and voluntary self-education in music enabled him to expand his knowledge (Acocella, 1994, p.159).

¹⁰⁵ "When I am not listening to music to work on a dance, I'm listening to music because I like it." Morris wrote in the book *Speaking of Dance* (Morgenroth, 2004, p.175).

Morris' avid interests in and understanding of music are also deeply related to his early dance education. Morris started his dance study at age nine with Verla Flowers who taught him Spanish dancing. Spanish dance has complicated rhythms, and Flowers realized that Morris had exceptional rhythmic intelligence. Because Morris wanted to be a professional dancer Flowers encouraged him to learn ballet, Russian dance, and many character dances. At fourteen, Morris started teaching Spanish dance and choreographing for recitals under the direction of Flowers (Acocella, 1994, p.21-23). Young Morris, through these experiences of folk dance and music, was able to develop a rhythmic sense and intimate understanding of music which would be a significant asset in his career as a choreographer.

Morris' musical tastes are wide ranging. He has choreographed popular songs, contemporary classical pieces, and even some traditional music such as Bulgarian, Romanian, Tahitian, and Indian music. Acocella notes that in his early years Morris avoided music that would have easily amused dancers and audiences, such as Chopin or Mozart (1994, p.34). Instead he favored vocal music, popular music, and the West coast experimentalists such as Partch, Harrison, and Cowell. Baroque is his favorite; he calls it "perfect architecture." Morris likes the Baroque period not only because of its clear structure, but also because the music of this period is based on dance music and their rhythms are deeply related to human movement. "Dance rhymes and dance tempi—there's still minuet and gigue and bourrée and passepied...the basic thing is still human rhythms," Morris explains (Acocella, 1994, p.163). Morris choreographed three Baroque operas, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and *King Arthur*, and Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Platée*.

Music is an important part of Morris' show. He cares about the selection of music as well as the performance of it. Whereas many modern dance groups use taped music, Morris insists on live musicians for his performances. His concerts are often collaborative works with outstanding musicians. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma has played for the Morris dancers in *Falling Down Stairs*, and soprano Deborah Voigt and mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson¹⁰⁶ have sung for Morris' dancers (Acocella, 2002, March 18). For Mark Morris Dance Group, Morris formed the MMDG Music Ensemble in 1996 to accompany the live concerts at home and on tour for close to eight hundred performances. Frequently supplemented by many guest musicians, the Ensemble repertoire ranges from 17th-century works by John Wilson and Henry Purcell to more recent scores by Lou Harrison and Henry Cowell.

By 2009, Morris had choreographed more than 120 works for his company and other dance companies. Approximately half of his works were choreographed to vocal music. His avid interest in opera led him to collaborate extensively, directing and choreographing productions with The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, English National Opera, and The Royal Opera and Covent Garden. Since he first offered to choreograph "The Dance of the Seven Veils" in *Salome* (1986) for the Seattle Opera, he has choreographed for many operas including *Nixon in China* (1987), *Die Fledermaus* (1988), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1991), *Platée* (1997), *Four*

¹⁰⁶ Lorraine Hunt Lieberson was Morris' friend and collaborator for nearly 25 years. She was originally scheduled to sing the role of Orfeo, which Morris choreographed for The Metropolitan Opera's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (2007). She died in July 2006, and the performances were dedicated to her memory. "She was a brilliant genius, a great artist," Morris said (Matt Dobkin, 2007, May 2).

Saints in Three Acts (2000), *Idomeneo* (2003), and *L'isola Disabitata* (2009). Besides his collaborations with major opera companies he has transposed operas into dances for his own company, such as *Dido and Aeneas*, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1996) and *The King Arthur* (2006).

The Music Man

When Morris choreographs for his company he avoids commissioned music. Unlike many other choreographers who come up with a dance and then find the music for it, he tends to choose the music first, analyze it, and then choreograph the dance. In an interview Morris says, "I don't see dancing...I start with the music" (Teachout, 2000, p.2). Before he choreographs, he studies the music closely to gain an intimate understanding of it. His emotional engagement with music is the foundation for his work. Morris wrote in *Speaking of Dance*,

Making a dance is like building anything: First you do this, then you do this, and then it's done. It's a job. I don't start with a big theater idea. .. Before I do anything else, I choose the music. I listen to it and study it and analyze it to whatever extent is needed to get a dance going. Or if it's not working I drop it. (Morgenroth, 2004 p. 174)

Morris uses music not only as a source of choreography but also as an effective method for his choreography. Often he reflects the motif, structure, and rhythm of the music in his dance and these reflections of the scores have provoked ambivalent criticisms. In fact, Morris' attitude towards music is very interesting, considering that many modern and postmodern choreographers resisted synchronization with music. Barbara White (2006) in her article "As if they didn't hear the music," Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Mickey Mouse" points out that choreographers are often eager to distance

themselves from the music with their insistence that the movements remain independent of the sound (p.65). Instead of disengaging, Morris embraces the music as a part of his dance, lets the music in, and engages with it fully and collaboratively.

While some critics praise the excellent harmony of music and dance in his work, others accuse him of mere “music visualization.”¹⁰⁷ Morris disagrees with this criticism, arguing that music can never design dance. “People have written some pretty strange things about how I make dances to music.” Morris wrote in *Speaking of Dance*, “When I work with music, it’s certainly not a translation, or then anybody who choreographed the same music would do the same dance” (2004, p.175). Acocella (2002) explains in her article for *The New Yorker* that although Morris shows music visualization in some of his works for ballet companies, it is not an “evasion of emotion” but “an act of deference to the emotion contained in the music.” She claims that Morris interprets music in physical terms and expresses his interpretation with human bodies (p. 147). Although many scholars and critics have pointed out Morris’ direct reflections of the musical structure in the dance, it is difficult to say that this structural similarity between music and dance creates the same quality of expression. I claim that while Morris follows the musical structure and often develops a dance motif along with the musical motif, he differentiates his characters and their emotional expressions from music.

¹⁰⁷ Music visualization refers to a concept that called for movement equivalents to the timbres, rhythm, structure, and dynamics of music (Damsholt, 2006, p 4-7).

The Priority of Dance and Music

Music is essential to dance, not only to Mark Morris, but also throughout history. In western dance history, it has been taken for granted that music and dance co-exist. It was during the early nineteenth century that ballet began to detach itself from opera. However, as ballet developed its form as a theater art, music began to be composed for specific dances. In the 19th century collaborative process the dance came first, forming the structure for the music. For instance, Marius Petipa dictated complete requirements for the music for *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), and Tchaikovsky had to comply. Petipa even rearranged the composer's music for his own 1895 version of *Swan Lake* (Warrack, 1979 p.17).

Music and dance were popularly referred to as "sister arts" which had different expressive functions. However when one discusses the relationship between music and dance in a dance work, there is debate about which form has the priority. Music without dance is not an issue, but a dance without music is a different matter. Sparshott (1988) in *Off the Ground: First Step to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* criticizes Western society for its belief that the character of dance is determined by the music chosen (p.173). Illustrating Wagner's argument for music and Kant's comparison of dance and music, Sparshott maintains that the old philosophical tradition supported the priority of music over dance. Sparshott (1995) claims in *A Measured Pace; Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance* that both Wagner and Kant implied the priority of music. Wagner saw the independent nature of dance as the expression of violent feeling through body movement. He claimed dance without music is inartistic

because it was organized by the spasmodic movements of passion, the dynamics of muscular contraction (Sparshott, 1995, p.220-222).

Sally Banes (1994), in her article “Dancing [with/ to/ before/ on/ in/ over/ after/against/away from/ without] the music: Vicissitudes of Collaboration in American Postmodern Choreography” points out that there is a presumed idea that music supports dancing in several ways. Music provides a clear rhythmic basis for the dancers’ timing, and a melody for modulating the flow of energy and expression (p.311). However, Banes (1994) points out that in the era of postmodern dance the relation of dance music has been changed. Whereas the early modern dancers like Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis attempted dance visualization of symphonic music, the next generation avoided this preoccupation with music (p.312). In the 1960s and 1970s, many modern dancers saw dance as an “autonomous practice,” and attempted to “eliminate references to anything but itself” (Damsholt, p.4).

Notably, Merce Cunningham avoided intended structural correspondence between the dance and the music. The choreographer and the musician work independently after discussing the basic ideas for the show. Cunningham once mentioned about his work with the musician John Cage. “The independence allowed for a sense of freedom. The dancers weren’t dependent on the music. John [Cage] didn’t want the music to dictate the dance or the dance to dictate the music, which was the situation that had existed before. The separation was his idea” (Morgenroth, 2004, p.16). Cunningham certainly provided a new viewpoint to see the relation of dance and music. He separated dance from music, through collaboration with a musician. Mark Morris, on the other hand, is often compared

to Gorge Balanchine due to his intense musicality and enthusiastic correspondence to music in choreography. Morris chooses music first before he makes a dance, and often uses the score for his choreography. For Morris the partnership of music and dance is significant and his choreography demonstrates a clear recognition of the music. Many of Morris' works show the intimate interplay of rhythm, phrasing, and dynamics between music and dance.

Sparshott's Four Ways to See Dance and Music

In *Off the ground* (1988), Sparshott claims that there are several different ways to see the relationship between music and dance (p.173). The first viewpoint is based on the similarity of music and dance. Because both dance and music proceed by the articulation of time, one may consider whether they divide time in the same way or different ways. It is a very common way to choreograph and see dance and music, as music and dance are both rhythmic, and divided by time. In fact, dance and music have many other comparable qualities. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, in his study *Rhythm, Music and Education* (1921) introduced the correspondence of the basic elements in music and their counterparts in three-dimensional space, what Jaques-Dalcroze called "moving plastic") which can be applied to the relationship between dance and music. According to his list, music and moving plastic commonly share several concepts such as duration, time, rhythm, and phasing. "Rests" in music is compared to "pauses" in moving plastic, "pitch" in music to "position" or "direction of gesture in space", "intensity of sound" to "muscular dynamic", "timbre" and "orchestration" to "diversity in corporal forms (or the

sexes).” Jaques-Dalcroze developed a system of training music students to understand rhythm by translating sounds into physical movements.

The parallel parameters of music and space influenced many choreographers. Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn developed their methodology of music visualization by means of similar explicit parameters (Damsholt, 2006, Winter p.18). Many critics and scholars define music visualization by detecting the synchronization of these parameters. Explaining music visualization as “the structure of the dance mimics the structure of the music, whether dancers are representing specific instruments or dance phrases correspond with musical phrases,” Elisabeth Williams (2007) counts Morris’ *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* as the representative work for music visualization (pp.92-93). *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* is Morris’ dance based on a pastoral ode by Handel. *The New York Times* critic John Rockwell (2005, August 20) wrote, “Mr. Morris’ choreography is mimetic without falling into the clichés of 19th-century ballet mime...He mimics the musical gestures and the verbal images and even his own choreography, with recurrent groupings and steps and lifts.” However, the structural correspondence of dance and music does not fully illuminate the interrelatedness of dance and music. Even though a dance is faithful to a musical source and its structure, a choreographer has to make numerous artistic choices. Further, because these two arts have distinct sensibilities and expressiveness the synchronization of structure does not guarantee the synchronization of meanings and expressions in a dance.

According to Sparshott (1988) the second way to view dance and music is to look at how they are connected (p.173). This perspective implies a rivalry between the two arts.

Sparshott suggests that one may consider whether the music generates the dance, the dance generates the music, or whether they are independent. In fact, many critics analyze a dance illuminating a relationship between the dance and the music. In the 1980s, when Morris was a controversial figure, a number of critics complained about his close attachment to the music. Regarding his choreography's direct reflection of music, such as in the motif, structure, and rhythm, some critics have accused Morris of "visualizing" the pieces he choreographs, just as "a Disney animator" (Teachout, 2000, January 9, p.2). Damsholt, in his analysis of Morris' *Gloria*, points out that Morris' work does not merely reinforce the aesthetics of music visualization. Instead, illustrating Morris' exaggeration and simultaneous choreomusical counterpoint, Damsholt (2007) argues that Morris exaggerates and ridicules common notions of visualization and counterpoints, "playing both with and against the parallel parameters" mentioned above (p.8).

Third, Sparshott suggests that one must consider how a dance is related to the music/sound which the dancers produced or to the observer's own music/sound. Interestingly enough, this viewpoint highlights the musical aspect of dance and embraces musicality as a part of dance. In 1990 (and also 2010), Morris presented a production called *Behemoth*, the one work he has made without any musical collaboration. However, dance without music does not indicate dance with silence. Leigh Witchel (2010, February 25), in the review of *Behemoth* for *The New York Post* wrote, "a dance to silence is never in silence: It's to a soundtrack of coughs, people shifting, cell phones going off and, on opening night, an argument in the mezzanine" (para.4). In *Behemoth*, there is no musical accompaniment, but dancers frequently move with slow, heavy steps, making a rhythmic

sound. Besides the physical sounds of dancers' breathing or stamping feet, dancers present the rhythmic patterns through movements and transposition of their formations. "The good part isn't the steps, but the fascinating layers on the stage that Morris creates as groups magically form inside other groups," Witchel (2010, February 25) explains. In this work, Morris illustrates how dance can generate musical elements without being accompanied by music.

The last way to see dance and music is more comprehensive and productive, especially when exploring the aesthetic meanings. Sparshott suggests that "one might illuminate dance qualities by comparing them with music, exploring the relation between being dancelike and being musical" (1988, p.173). He emphasizes that this would not be the same as exploring the relation between dance as an art and music as an art. This perspective reminds us that music and dance are complicatedly and delicately interrelated rather than rivals. White (2006) mentions that it is popularly claimed that "music erases the sounds of the dance while allowing us to see the movement more clearly, and the dance, while drawing our eyes away from the orchestra pit toward the stage, highlights the sounds for us" (p. 82). However, this perspective provides a more comprehensive way to interrelate dance and music without attempting to determine which one is more important. Whereas other viewpoints juxtapose dance and music as independent arts which merely co-exist in a work, this view presumes that dance includes musicality as part of its form and that music has dancelike qualities.

Sparshott's perspective on dance and music illuminates my examination of Morris' musicality and its ambivalence. Rather than comparing Morris' work with its

music with parameters, or comparing dance and music to emphasize dance's authority, I will focus on illuminating the dance qualities of his three works as related to music. By doing so, I hope to reveal the dynamic interplay of dance and music, confirming that dance is meaningfully related to music.

In this chapter, I examine Morris' musicality, especially the manner in which he corresponds to or disengages from music, creating ambivalence in his works. I will focus on how the interplay of music and dance generates emotional and aesthetic expressions. Interestingly, the three works selected, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* have unique relationships to the music. *Dido and Aeneas* is based on a Baroque opera in which the narrative is led by Tate's script. Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* was composed for a 19th century classic ballet which targeted at the Russian aristocracies. *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* is based on newly discovered music that was originally created for the Kirov Ballet but ignored for a hundred years. Morris revived the abandoned dance parts and simplified the orchestration according to Prokofiev's original score. Focusing on the three works mentioned above, I look at how Morris creates ambivalence by both engaging and disengaging the structural and metaphoric relationship between music and dance.

Dido and Aeneas

Mark Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* is a danced adaptation of a Baroque opera written by the English composer Henry Purcell. Purcell, during his short life of thirty-six years, wrote five operas: *Dido and Aeneas*, *King Arthur*, *The Fairy Queen*, *Diocletian*, and *The Indian Queen*. *Dido and Aeneas* is an hour-long production, which, although written for a

private girls' school in Chelsea, not for the public theater, has strong drama with an exquisite blend of words and music. Purcell chose a dramatic subject which was able to express human passion, and had a talented librettist, Nahum Tate. Tate describes the tedious and complicated legend in a succinct way, and his libretto was beautifully suited to a musical setting (Harris, 1987, p.3).¹⁰⁸

Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* is an anomalous piece of English Baroque given that 1) composers rarely used tragedy as subject matter, and 2) that England had no real opera (Price, 1986, xii). Although Purcell incorporated Italian and French influences, he wrote his operas in English and left a vast legacy of English Baroque music. However, after his death *Dido and Aeneas* was forgotten and unperformed for almost a hundred years until its revival in 1900. Later, as its musical integration and overwhelming tragedy attracted audiences, it was placed in the popular, modern repertoire.

Mark Morris had an avid interest in vocal music, especially opera and Baroque music. Preserving the full vocal and musical score of Purcell's compositions, Morris created a unique form of dance which interwove song, dance, text, and mime. In his book on Purcell, *Dido and Aeneas, an Opera* (1986), musicologist Curtis A. Price (1986) points out that *Dido and Aeneas* had a strong alliance with dance from its birth. Purcell was strongly influenced by John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (1682), a masque for the private entertainment of King Charles II, when he wrote *Dido and Aeneas* (Price, 1986, viii). Developed in Italy, masques flourished in Europe during the sixteenth and early

¹⁰⁸ Before Wagnerian opera, the singer's role and libretto were very important as the singer led the story. Wagner wrote his own libretto and developed the orchestra's role as equal to that of the singers (Millington, 1992, p.264).

seventeenth centuries as court entertainment. Masques involved music, dancing, singing and acting, with an elaborate stage design, and highly influenced the emergence of French ballet.¹⁰⁹ *Venus and Adonis* is a story of gods, not a tragedy, but has much in common with *Dido and Aeneas*, as it is a three-act miniature opera with dramatic structure, and the roles of the chorus and corps de ballet are essential to the action (Price, 1986, viii). *Dido and Aeneas* is often called a “miniature opera” or “dramatic opera” as it appeared before the emergence of English opera and lacks the format of a full-length opera. In the study on the dances in Restoration plays, Price (1978) explains that dramatic opera is on a much smaller scale than opera, and lacks the extravagant concatenations of opera, ballet, and tragicomedy. It is a hybrid that never developed into true opera or ballet (p.1).

Purcell’s 1689 libretto for *Dido and Aeneas* contains eleven dances (Harris, 1987, p.64). Price argues that *Dido and Aeneas* is the best illustration that dance was derived from vocal pieces. In Act I the chorus to “Fear no danger to ensue” is a dance, and the last piece in the opera is the dance done to the tragic chorus “with drooping wings” (1978, p.3-5).¹¹⁰ Price explains that in dramatic opera, “dance is typically introduced to foreshadow death in tragedy and final dance in comedies. Especially in tragedy, dance is

¹⁰⁹ According to Price (1978), during the Restoration, dance proliferated in English plays and the lavish court masque was the main forum for professional dancing on a grand scale (p.2-3).

¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, whereas many hundreds of songs and orchestral compositions survived in manuscripts and contemporary printed edition, dance did not. In many cases neither the score for the dance music nor the dance remains. Playwrights occasionally wrote a description of the dance but pictorial evidence is extremely scarce. Therefore, information such as the number of dancers, costumes and length of dances is hard to come by (Price, 1978, p.5).

an allegorical acting out of the inevitable tragedy, shown in a court masque, for example, or in a dream” (p.2). Morris also uses allegorical movements in the dance to foreshadow upcoming events. For instance at the end of Scene One of Act One, the chorus finishes “The Triumphant Dance,” blessing the new couple. But as soon as the music ends, the dancers begin stamping their feet; this drum-like beating foresees the tragedy the couple will suffer.

Transposition of Opera

In transposing mystical tragedy into a contemporary psychodrama, Morris reveals his ambivalence. Morris’ regard for Baroque music is apparent in his collaborative engagement with Purcell’s music. He carefully analyzes the music and frames his dances to fit the music structurally, and even uses musical techniques. As musicians sing, dancers perform their assigned roles accordingly. At the same time, Morris revealed his self-reflective nature in this production. He cast himself in the two female roles, Dido and the Sorceress, who are in conflict throughout the story, and continued dancing these roles until 2000. Alastair Macaulay (2000), in her article “Dido’s Wounds” for *The Dancing Times*, claims, “What’s strange about Morris’ version is that though it contains elements that are obviously modern, personal to Morris, and far from Purcell, these elements coalesce to show how integrated, how unified, how perfect Purcell’s score is” (June 2000, p.815). Sophia Preston (1998), in her study of *Dido and Aeneas*, “Iconography and Intertextuality: The Discreet Charm of Meaning” claims that Morris’ meaning making is self-reflexive and postmodern. She points out that Morris borrowed movement motifs from classical dance of India, Indonesia and Europe, from the musical films and cartoons

of Morris' childhood and life he sees around him (p.246). She explains that Morris' anachronistic juxtaposition of these historical periods creates an ahistoricity making his production both self-reflective and sophisticated in meaning making.

Another aspect of Morris' ambivalence is apparent in his attention to Purcell's musical structure and his freedom from its expected alliance with dance. Calling it "a perfect architecture," Morris has been attracted by Baroque music mainly because he favors its clear structure. He thinks Baroque music is ideal for dancing as it was deeply related to dance music and based on human rhythm (Acocella, 1994, p.163). Acocella (1994) explains that the structural clarity is important to Morris because it is a principle of order in making movement, similar to ballet's academic technique or the rhythmic music used in Indian and African dance. Morris believes it aids communication with audiences, providing an auditory framework for the variations and individual interpretations of the dance (Acocella, 1994, pp. 163-164). Morris chose Purcell's opera for its clear structure, and Morris' choreographic structure corresponds with Purcell's baroque format. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* is three acts, and consists of six major scenes: 1) Dido and her attendants, 2) Aeneas's entrance, 3) The Witches' plotting, 4) The hunting scene, 5) The sailor's departure, and 6) Dido's death. Morris retains this structure, arranging the dances according to the layout of music.¹¹¹ Each solo dancer is

¹¹¹ Ellen Harris(1987), in her book *Henri Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*, mentions the claims that in the Tenbury manuscript, two parts are musically symmetrical to illustrate the conflicts of the plot According to this claim, scene 1 and 4, scene 2 and 5, and scene 3 and 6 are symmetrical in their structure (p.76-81).

paired with a vocal soloist who takes the same character, and the group dancers correspond to the chorus.

Within the structure, Morris focuses on portraying the characters and their emotions through detailed variations of movement quality, freely referencing diverse sources. Acocella (1994) claims that Morris loves to juxtapose opposites, citing his treatment of musical structure as the clearest demonstration of his ambivalence. She wrote in *Mark Morris*,

The only thing more remarkable than his dependence on his scores is his independence of them, his free play within the rules they set down. Cadences he mirrors only when this is useful to him; otherwise, the dance does its own way, up or down, depending on its own needs. He also likes to play with time values, for dramatic ends. In the “Destruction’s our delight” chorus in *Dido*, the Sorceress and the witches all do the same movement, but the witches do two to every one of the Sorceress’s. This sets her off and at the same time gives the dance a hot, febrile quality that accords well with the sentiment under discussion, the love of evil. (p.166)

Purcell’s music provided the structure for the dance, but never defined the dance. As discussed in an earlier chapter, Morris’ setting is ahistorical, departing from the ancient Greek; only *Dido*’s scene references the original mood. According to Price, in a dramatic opera the actor spins the plot with words while the musician is seldom related to the story and dance served as entertainment or a subsidiary tool. In Morris’ version, dance leads the story. Far from its Baroque style, Morris’ dance is a hybrid that touches a wide range of motifs, including Martha Graham, Indonesian dance, South Indian dance, American movies, and even American Sign Language. Morris said,

It refers a little bit, not directly, to Martha Graham's early dancers where everything was in these shifts and just had white, black and red makeup, and that's it. The makeup was just black eyes and nails were colored, and very pale skin and red lips for everybody that I wanted to be uniform.

When we first did it that was in the film too, everybody dyed their hair black... And I wanted to do that also because it's a tribute to Indonesian dancing also, and South Indian dancing a little bit.¹¹²

Morris began work on *Dido and Aeneas* during his stay in Brussels where he was able to obtain full support for live music. Because Morris did not want someone's interpretation of Purcell,¹¹³ he worked with conductor Craig Smith who was a permanent guest conductor at La Monnaie, a Baroque-era opera house and theater in Brussels.¹¹⁴ In Morris' production, musicians and singers are located in the orchestra pit, and accompany the dancers. Music and dance are in time with each other, and their dynamic structures are compatible and parallel. This collaboration was possible since Morris also worked with live music during rehearsals. Morris talked about his process with the musicians during the production of *Dido and Aeneas*:¹¹⁵

I always work with conductors very closely. So when I choreograph something in the studio, I don't use the recording so I'm not basing it on anyone else's interpretation... Going from the studio to the theater, I work with the people who are gonna do it. So by the time you get to the theater, it's not a problem. It's been worked out already.

¹¹²The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010 .

¹¹³ Morris distinguishes between music intended to be presented live and that designed to be heard in a recorded format: "When he can't count on live music, he would prefer to choreograph to a record-that is, not just a recording, but a piece of music that was made, and intended to be heard, as a recording" (Acocella, 1994, p. 176). You need to keep this on the previous page as one note.

¹¹⁴ Craig Smith was a collaborator of Morris.' He also conducted the premiere of Morris' adaptation of Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* in 1988.

¹¹⁵ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Approach to Musical Structure

Using the musical structure of Baroque music, Morris also adapts musical techniques, particularly the canon. The canon is Morris' favorite structural device, as it is the clearest and "the strictest form of contrapuntal imitation" (Acocella, 1994, p.165). Acocella (1994) believes that the canon is an apt expression of Morris' ambivalence; "When there is a canon in the score, there is almost always canon in the dance... it does two things that he wants to do—clarify (by repeating) and complicate (by repeating at different intervals)—at the same time" (p.165). Morris frequently uses canon, especially in the dance of Dido and the courtiers where he plays with time value and spatial dimensions. When the chorus changes their formation, they are traveling in a fixed floor pattern but with a different time interval. They repeat the movement facing different directions or on different timing. To play with timing, Morris calculated the measure and divided it into equal units of time. He clarifies his theme movement by repeating the same movement, and at the same time, makes his dance dynamic by changing the timing and overlapping the movement.

To clarify his choreographic structure, Morris frequently uses "stillness," contrasting it with dancing. Dido/dancer leads a dance while Dido/singer expresses her feelings and thoughts. Dido/dancer remains still or passive when other characters sing. In Scene I of Act I, after Dido and Aeneas first confirm their love, these two main roles remain in one position, like a bronze statue, with palms touching while the chorus

celebrates their love to “To the hills and the vales...Let the triumphs of love and of beauty be shown. Go revel ye/Cupids, the day is your own.”¹¹⁶

Harris (1987) explains that dramatic opera in baroque era has two different kinds of dances. The dance may be pantomime or formal with patterned steps depends on the music. For instance, “*The Baske*” a chorus by Dido’s courtiers, has rhythmic and metric patterns and a constant tempo, thus is a formal dance. Meanwhile, “Jack of the Lanthorn dance,” a dance by Witches, is a freer style dance consisting of three different sections with irregular tempi and an inconsistent rhythms (Harris, 1987, p.66-67)

Similarly, Morris highlights this difference of movement quality to juxtapose Dido’s nobleness and the Sorceress’ wickedness, implying the ambivalence of human nature. Morris minimizes the number of dancers, and twelve dancers are double cast with minimal changes in appearance for their portrayals of the different characters. Accordingly, their dancing and movement quality are essential to express the appropriate character and narrative. Dido is a proud queen, thus her movements are made with delicacy and clear timing with a beat. Dido’s movements are related to Belinda, Aeneas, and the chorus as implying Dido’s lovable character as a woman, as well as her vulnerability and dependence on the relationship with a man. In contrast the Sorceress’ dance is free and chaotic. While Dido is still when the chorus is dancing, the Sorceress directs the chorus’s dancing. Preston (1998) points out that, “When the witches get carried away (in Act II scene I) the Sorceress is clearly bored by the endless repetition of

¹¹⁶ Tate’s libretto from Mark Morris Dance Group Homepage.
<http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/works/24>

her scheme and begins to look like a member of the audience who wonders whether we really need another repetition of the phrase and drive them back to court” (p.247). The Sorceress’ impatient direction of the Witches’ dance and her upside-down poses represent her vicious, twisted and cruel character.

Although Morris has been often accused of creating “predictable” relationships to music, some scholars claim that Morris’ musicality is more complicated and ambivalent. Inger Damsholt, in his study of Morris’ *Gloria*, proposes that Morris’ choreography exhibits “the coexistence of both a musical sensibility and a critical reflection on the latter” (2007, p. 7). Damsholt explains that Morris’ choreomusical aesthetics are “polemical” rather than reactionary. In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris is sensitive to the musical structure, but he often disregards the rhythm or rhythmic pattern of music. Especially in the dance of the Witches where he wants dynamic disarray, Morris sets the time frame and allows dancers to improvise movements without regard to the musical pattern thereby creating a chaotic mood. Morris talks about the contrast of Dido’s dance and the Sorceress’ dance,¹¹⁷

Dido [Dido’s dance] is very flat, formal and archaic. And the Sorceress’ material is 3 dimensional and sort of barely in control... I want that always to be different and to really not be rhythmic. The Sorceress is set, but the group dancers, I don’t want them to do the same thing twice. The group of witches is very, very improvised...it’s harder, because I don’t want it to have any relationship to the music except length. So you go, for this amount of time you have to make up something, whenever they’re about to do something, I yell “change it, whatever you’re gonna do, do something else.” Every time it’s difficult to do that fresh every night. It’s

¹¹⁷ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

much easier to be in rhythm and to do something you've memorized. It makes it more dangerous. It doesn't always work, sometimes it's going to work, sometimes it won't, but that's how it goes.

The most intriguing contrast between Purcell's music and Morris' dance is the ending part of scene II, where the chorus sings, "In our deep vaulted cell/The charm we'll prepare/Too dreadful a practice/for this open air." It is a transitional part from the Sorceress' chaotic coven to Dido's hunting party. There is an obvious contrast between the previous part, full of lively melody and irregular rhythmic patterns, and this song, a refined chorus with a strong sense of meter in a slow tempo. However, following the direction of the Sorceress, the Witches continue sporadic, zombie-like movements reminiscent of electric shock, and unrelated to the musical pattern. The Sorceress uses Dido's couch (also her soon-to-be tomb) as a podium, controlling the Witches' dance in a businesslike manner, as if this vicious plot is an everyday task. This contrast of music and dance highlight the demonic character of the Sorceress, a psychopath who plots against innocent people for her own pleasure.¹¹⁸ As soon as the lively music for Echo's dance begins, the Sorceress jumps off the podium and walks through the downstage, as if leaving her job on a Friday afternoon.

Contrast of Repetition and Variation

To uphold the clear structure and express human passion, Morris uses the opposing concepts of repetition and variation. *Dido and Aeneas* has many repetitious segments of song. Morris repeats a movement motif according to the repetition of music,

¹¹⁸ The Sorceress loves her job. She is not a cursed creature who wants to usurp the throne or avenge Dido.

but adds variations to the motif movement, amplifying its meaning. In Act One, Belinda encourages Dido to declare her hidden passion for Aeneas, but Dido is sitting on the couch, calm and determined, as if she foresees her misery. The music has a constant tempo with much repetition. Morris connects each word with a specific movement in the song, “Ah! Belinda, I am press’d/With torment not to be confess’d.” On “Ah!” Dido dramatically lifts her open arms toward the air as she laments. To “Belinda,” Dido stretches her arms and torso towards Belinda as if Belinda is the only person who understands her inner pain.¹¹⁹ On “Press’d,” Dido slowly moves into a grande plié position, with her one hand on her breast and the other under her navel. When Dido first performs the phrase, she is sitting on the couch and raises her open arms to shoulder level on “Ah!” As she repeats the phrase, she enlarges the scale of movement; she starts the same motion from ground level and raises her arms to the air as if she wishes her lamentation to reach the heavens. Through the repetition with crescendo, Dido reveals her deep agony as she is torn between her passion and her status as a queen. Soon, she is led by Belinda to center stage, as she begins to explain her hesitation and her fate to “Peace and I are strangers grown.” Dido resists her feeling and Aeneas’s wooing because she fears that her downfall will cause the fall of Carthage. Through the repetitions and variations, the agitation of the miserable queen is dramatically illustrated.

Later Belinda and Second Woman dance together to comfort the depressed Dido and encourage a jubilant mood. They dance in unison to “Fear no danger to ensue/The hero loves as well as you.” On the second repetition, the chorus joins the dance, and the

¹¹⁹ Although Belinda contributes to her sister’s death by instigating this union. Belinda is the one who accompanies Dido at her death.

dance becomes more vigorous. Morris shows the queen gradually changing her mind.

Dido, sitting on the couch facing backwards (towards the chorus), shifts her body weight from side to side as if listening to the chorus' encouragement, and even follows their arm gestures, implying that she is quickly burying her grief and ready for new love.

Music Visualization

Dramatic opera has a strong emphasis on the singers rather than the orchestra, and the song and the text are inseparable. Morris paid detailed attention to the text and embodies his understanding of it in the dance. Morris uses one-to-one relationships between the text and movements as his choreographic strategy and creates a lexicon of movements which are identified with specific words in the songs.¹²⁰ Preston (1998), in her analysis of *Dido and Aeneas*, claims that over fifty words are directly connected to a specific movement, notably “fate”, “smiles”, “banish”, “sorrow”, “press’d”, “torment,” and “Carthage” (pp.246-247). She also points out that a series of delicate hand positions, finger movements taken from Indian Classical dance, are related to the word “fate.” The gestures assigned to words such as “fair”, “flame”, and “sorrow” are similar to those in classical ballet (pp. 246-247). During our interview Morris talked about the idea of connecting words to movements,¹²¹

¹²⁰ Morris talks about the text, “In Dido, which is just the straight text, it's not rearranged or anything, it's just straight through. That'd really be just expressive ideas. That's all that really matters, and of course we want it to sound great. I'm working from the text of the music, so it's not like there's anything that's bizarre. It's just there's a certain range of speeds that work, and relationships from one piece to another. But that's true with everything, and I do it all the time, so it's a natural progression.” The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

¹²¹ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Because that's how people communicate. And I wanted it to... the text is extremely important of course, because it's an opera. There are elements of American Sign Language in it. A little bit, not very much. And gestures that I made up that mean what they mean in the text. So whenever you hear that words and you see that action you learn it that way, and you identify it. So you understand it without necessarily reading it. You're not reading it, but you get it because of the way things recur. And the grammar and you know it's entirely communicative. That was the point of it. So it's not just acting out what is being said, but it's saying what's being said at the same time.

Although Morris intended to be communicative and his alliance of a word and a movement was a fresh idea, some criticized his method. In *The New York Times* Macaulay (2008, March 12) criticized the manner in which Morris sets dances to music, claiming that it was almost a mere visualization of music ((para.4-7). A number of critics have complained about Morris' direct reflection of music, stating that he was just "Mickey-Mousing" the music (Acocella, 1994, p 176-177). In early Disney cartoons, Mickey would dance atop a line of music notation, stopping and starting, going high and low to reflect the score. Rockwell (2006) wrote in *The New York Times*, "He is frequently praised and castigated for his sometimes slavish mimesis to music" (March 10, 2006).

Barbara White (2006), in "'As if they didn't hear the music,' Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Mickey Mouse", criticizes the idea of music visualization, dismantling the prevalent assumptions on choreomusical relationship. She states that choreographers strive to distance themselves from a close coordination with a kinetic element, in their insistence that movement remain independent of sound (p.66). She claims that there is still a fair amount of opposition to the notation that "music and dance might relate to each other rather than simply agreeing to coexist" (p.66). Morris

embraces music as a part of his dance, engaging with it fully and collaboratively.

However, although one can see that the movement and rhythm might be symmetrical it is hard to conclude that, for Morris, music generates or defines a dance.

Here, I examine several points in relation to Morris' connection of movements and the words. First, the alliance of a word and a specific gesture creates meaning, related to, or regardless of its literal meaning. Notably, Dido has many words like "press'd" and "torment" that describe her inner struggles as implied by their literal meanings. The motif of "press'd" is related to a grand-plié with hand gestures, and "torment" is the collapse of her body. In the "press'd" motif, Dido places her hands on breast and abdomen with her fingers down towards her lower body. Acocella(1994) says, "she tells us where it hurts—not just in the heart" (p.98). This movement, beyond its literal meaning "pressed," connotes complicated meanings, Dido's unspoken desire, her pain, and her doomed love that leads to her downfall.

Second, a word in a text must be interpreted in its context, not only by its literal meaning. In the same way the word-gesture alliance must also be interpreted in its context. In the process of signification, there is an emotional connotation that the movement and music evoke which must be interpreted within its context. For instance, the word "sorrow" is used both in Scene I by the courtiers and in Scene IV by the Witches. Interestingly, they both indicate the "sorrow" of Dido. In the song "Banish sorrow, banish care, Grief should ne'er approach the fair," the courtiers talk about the depressed Dido in the hope of comforting their queen. In contrast, the Witches rejoice over the upcoming fall of Dido to "Destruction's our delight, Delight our greatest sorrow."

The gesture related to the word “sorrow” is similar in its appearance, but presents significantly different meanings in each case. The courtiers portray the word “sorrow” by gently covering their faces with their hands, implying the grief their queen suffers. The Witches and the Sorceress exaggerate the weeping gesture, mocking and rejoicing over Dido’s sorrow. Although Morris connects specific gestures and words, their meanings change according to the context.

Third, although Morris strives to create a lexicon of movement and expand its expressivity of movements, it is hard to understand the language of movement without preliminary knowledge and close attention. Anna Kisselgoff (1989, June 09) wrote about Morris’ reference in *The New York Times*,

Mr. Morris has ingeniously incorporated a few Indian classical dance gestures and some that he says are from American Sign Language for the deaf. The sign language looks largely abstracted to a layman but the broad emotional connotations can easily be related to the lyrics sung by the singers. (para. 13).

Preston (1998) finds more than fifty words that are directly connected to a specific movement, but Morris’ libretto includes 1555 words. While American Sign Language is an economized gesture that engages a minimum of body parts to communicate, Morris’ dancing includes the whole body, developing motif movements with the freedom of modern dance. Except for some words that appear continuously throughout the story, the majority of the audience will probably not be able to recognize the movements and connect them to specific words. If Morris’ attempt to connect a word and movement were a mere visualization or direct translation of a word, it would be an uneconomical

way to communicate. Rather than translating music into dance, dance and music are complementary in Morris' *Dido and Aeneas*.

The Hard Nut

In 1987 Mark Morris was offered the position of director of *The Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie* in Brussels, the national opera house of Belgium. It was the former home of Maurice Béjart and his *20th Century Ballet Company* which had achieved worldwide success for twenty-seven years. This offer was a huge opportunity for Morris not only to expand his company but also to take on projects of which he had been dreaming. At that time Morris was a young, innovative choreographer who was drawing attention in New York, but could not mount a large-scale production due to limited financial resources. He had only twelve dancers with no studio reserved for his company. Many of the productions Morris created during this time had minimalist settings and recycled costumes. Morris never gave up using live music for his concert, because he thought it was essential to his dances. Arlene Croce (1984, January 2) wrote in *The New Yorker*, "Much of his [Morris'] choreography is plainly set out, and all of it is musical. The sharp musical timing gives the dancers another standard to aim at" (p.6).

According to Acocella, Gérard Mortier, the director of *The Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie*, offered the position to young Morris mainly because he was moved by Morris' exceptional musicality. Maurice Béjart had recently left the position with sixty dancers from the company after an argument with Mortier so he was looking for a choreographer who could replace Béjart. After Mortier saw Morris' work for the first time, he invited Morris to dinner and offered him the position. Mortier was a music lover, and highly

respected Morris' musicality. Mortier later discussed the difference between Béjart's and Morris' approaches to music, "I would say Béjart uses music for his spectacle. Mark Morris serves the music. That's a big difference" (as cited in Acocella, 1994, p.73).

In Brussels, Morris could work in a supportive environment. Morris had exclusive studios, musicians, costume and set designers, his own masseuses, and most importantly, a live orchestra. During his three years of residency there, he staged big, evening-length dances every year, with full scores of music. With an orchestra and chorus providing music for his company, Morris choreographed *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1988) set to Handel's oratorio, and *Dido and Aeneas* to Purcell's opera. He later decided to choreograph a big ballet based on one of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's ballet scores. Morris decided to produce *The Nutcracker*, mainly because he liked the music best. "Nutcracker was so overly familiar to me and my dancer friends. I wanted to go back and find out why it is so beautiful and so moving." Morris recalls.¹²²

Morris highly valued the beauty of Tchaikovsky's music but thought that the popular ballet version did not successfully depict this musical beauty. Morris told me during our second interview that,

My mission was to restore the score to its complete edition, so its every piece of music was basically Tchaikovsky's...I wanted to put the story back where it came from instead of being this sort of shopping mall. It's not so interesting.¹²³

¹²²"The Hard Nut: A Look Back" A filmed documentary on the creation of Mark Morris' *Nutcracker* in Belgium, Brussels. Mark Morris Dance Group Homepage

¹²³ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Morris premiered *The Hard Nut*, his rendition of *The Nutcracker*, on January 12, 1991, after the Christmas season had ended. Morris insisted on a whole orchestra for this production and *The Hard Nut* became a massive project requiring seventy-seven musicians including twelve singers. *The Hard Nut* is a good illustration of Morris' ambivalent approach to music. Morris uses the original score but rejects the lavish and decorative style of nineteenth century ballet for which it was written. Although he is very attentive to the music he disregards the hierarchal system and decorative style of dance and mimes from the traditional production. Critic Alastair Macaulay (2010, December 12) wrote for *The New York Times*,

Every "Nutcracker" choreographer at some point imposes a scenario different from the one Tchaikovsky was illustrating, but Mr. Morris goes much further than most, and there are incidental sequences in which his scenario grows overambitious and perplexing. (para.3)

In fact, the close relationship between music and dance in *The Nutcracker* has been emphasized from its birth. In spite of his growing reputation, when Tchaikovsky composed the music in 1891-1892 he had to comply with instructions of the choreographer (Banes, 1994, p. 311). In the nineteen-century convention, the ballet master had full control over the scores and composers. Petipa demanded many changes and alterations to the music and sometimes the revisions had little in common with the original score. In Petipa's time, the purpose for music in ballet was to support and guide the movements without attracting attention to itself. The only exception was during mimed scenes when the music was used to clarify the feelings and emotions of the dancers (Wiley, 1991, p.8).

Tchaikovsky's Ballet Music

Tchaikovsky was the first composer who wrote a symphony for ballet. He composed three ballet symphonies, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*, full of rich characterization and emotional expressions. Tchaikovsky, however, was not a popular ballet music composer and only wrote a few pieces of ballet music in his later years. It was Cesare Pugni, Yuly Gerver, and Ludwig Minkus who established a tradition of official ballet music in the nineteenth century. The representative ballet masters, Jules Perrot, Arthur Saint-Léon and Marius Petipa, worked closely with these musicians, offering them “a ballet composer” position at St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres (Warrack, 1979, p. 5).¹²⁴

Marius Petipa, a ballet master of the St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres, wanted to extend the expressiveness of ballet and realized the need for a more substantial musical contribution. Petipa first hired Tchaikovsky for the production of *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890). When *The Sleeping Beauty* was a huge success with St. Petersburg critics and balletomanes it was natural that Tchaikovsky and Petipa should continue to work together. Tchaikovsky recognized the musicality in dance, and understood dance as a stimulus to

¹²⁴ Cesare Pugni, Yuly Gerver, and Ludwig Minkus, in spite of their devotion to ballet music, were not appreciated as musicians and they had little influence in music history. During their time ballet music focused on cheerful and dance-like tunes. Music critic John Warrack, in his book *Tchaikovsky Ballet Music* (1979), claims that many choreographers did not recognize the significance of music and were mainly interested in decorative music. For instance, Ludwig Minkus always composed bright and lively rhythms using double or triple time. His Austrian love for the waltz usually resulted in good dance quality, but sometimes was inappropriate to the subject matter. Minkus was favored by choreographers as he was very cooperative with any requests from choreographers.

music.¹²⁵ Musicologist Roland Wiley(1991) points out that Tchaikovsky rescued ballet music “from the most serious problem it faced under Pugni and Minkus—that of being frozen in the stylistic clichés of the 1830s and 1840s” (p. 9).

After the success of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the director of the imperial theater, Ivan Alexandrovich Vsevolozhsky, came up with the idea to adapt Hoffman’s tale. Hoffman enjoyed great popularity in Russia at that time, and Tchaikovsky liked the original story. However, Petipa oversimplified Hoffman’s story and the libretto was nothing more than a fairy tale with obvious structural defects. Tchaikovsky wanted to be released from the project, but Vsevolozhsky and Petipa had already ordered sets and costumes and the project had to be completed (Wiley, 1984, p.12). It is not clear how Tchaikovsky overcame his dislike, but he fulfilled his duty with a brilliant outcome. Tchaikovsky gave a point to the fairy tale and enlivened the characters for dances. Warrack (1979) wrote,

He [Tchaikovsky] was careful to keep stylistically within the bounds appropriate for magic and fairy tale, sensing that a major part of the music’s role was to justify the connection between a children’s story and the sophisticated artistic technique in which it was expressed. (p.13)

In *The Nutcracker*, the refinement, concentration and sweetness of the music are dramatically important to the dance. Morris recognized the importance of this music, and had plans for the dramatic engagement of dance, music and narrative in his own way.

¹²⁵ Tchaikovsky thought that his contemporaries’ music consisted of feeble and meaningless musical elements. He disparaged ballet music and was humiliated to be compared to other ballet music composers (Warrack, 1979, p.5).

Morris' Dual Attitudes Towards The Nutcracker

In *The Hard Nut*, Morris reveals contrasting attitudes towards the original producers, Petipa and Tchaikovsky. As illustrated in chapter 3, Morris abandoned Petipa's lavish and decorative style, while retaining not only Tchaikovsky's original score, but also its original order. Since even classic ballet producers tend to alter the original scores to fit their choreography, Morris' use of the full score is worthy of mention. *The New York Times* critic Macaulay (2010, December 12) wrote that, "remarkably few other 'Nutcrackers' even use the whole Tchaikovsky score without cuts or interpolations, but in my experience only Mr. Morris also sets every item of the score in its original order" (para.10).

Based on Petipa's revised libretto, *The Nutcracker* focuses on supernatural events and a display of characteristic dances. The ballet consists of fifteen scenes with specific characters and their dances; this combination of dance and music is the heart of the ballet. *The Nutcracker* is much shorter in length than *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty* with little room to develop a strong story or lyrical episode. The famous dance parts, such as the Waltz of the Flowers and the Waltz of the Snowflakes, and divertissements that highlight diverse nationalities, have nothing to do with Hoffman's story and do not contribute to the narrative coherence.

Instead, the musical structure is delicately arranged to fit the choreographic structure and each scene of music is designed for a specific dance. For instance, Tchaikovsky first introduced a new instrument, the celesta, to depict the Sugar Plum Fairy's elegant and sweet character. Meaning "heavenly" in French, the celesta is similar

to an upright piano with a subtle timbre. The soft sound of the celesta and the delicate steps of the Sugar Plum Fairy perfectly described the prettiness and delicacy of the fairy (Wiley, 1991, p.230).

In *The Nutcracker*, Tchaikovsky's ballet music not only highlights the crystallized style of nineteenth century ballet, but also supports the original story's values, the social hierarchy,¹²⁶ prettiness, and elegant charm which were the facet of the ordinary life of the Russian Imperial family and aristocracy. In Act One, Tchaikovsky wrote a march with a miniature fanfare on clarinets and brass and a formal minuet for the elegant party guests. While *The Nutcracker* shows the elegant and arrayed order of middle class family and social network through the group dance, *Morris* shows the free, chaotic, and untamed temper of humanity with the same music.

Sarah Kaufman in *The Washington Post*, discusses Morris' use of Tchaikovsky, "In Morris' sure hands, the sweeping emotionalism of this 19th-century score is an uncanny fit for the Stahlbaums' white vinyl living room, where disarray reigns" (2010, December 12). Tchaikovsky's delicate dance music is background for the giggling, flattering, and drinking of Morris' boisterous guests. Instead of a neatly arranged group dance where the guests perform the same or similar steps, Morris' guests dance the twist, disco, whatever style they want to dance. Although their dances do not include any stylized form or technique, each dancer reacts to the music sensitively, dancing enthusiastically and spontaneously. Morris lets the dancers act and react to each other,

¹²⁶ In Act II, the Sugar Plum Fairy plays a strong leader of the Kingdom of Sweets. She orders the people in the kingdom to bow to Marie, and arranges a parade of sweets for her.

using their own dance sense to create a musical and natural party scene. Morris explained this during his second interview with me,¹²⁷

“The Party scenes...we made them up through improvising entirely. The first thing I did in rehearsal was I assigned people partners. You're Mary, you're David, whatever, and you're breaking up. And then we just put on the music and had a Christmas party everyday for probably a month, which was very difficult because it's not fun. And so then we kept things that I liked, so at this point I staged it. But the behavior and people's relationships are completely open and they're gonna change all the time, when people come in or... Or things are musicalized where whatever you're doing has to be on the beat or not. Everyone has infinite variations on it.”

This explains how, without any neatly constructed dance, the actions and dance contain adequate musicalities which do not conflict with the flow of music. Because the dancers' gestures and movements were formed and accumulated through numerous rehearsals with music, even some pedestrian movements are naturally timed to the music. In Morris' Act One, when Mrs. Stalbaum is waiting for the arrival of the party guests, Tchaikovsky's cheerful allegro vivace on chattering woodwinds humorously represents Mrs. Stalbaum's nervous mind. She pops a pill while awaiting her guests as if her headache is a foreshadowing of the upcoming events.

Differentiation of Physical Rhythm and Musical Implication

Morris, while following the cheerful and celebratory mood of Tchaikovsky's music, does not reflect its sweetness and nostalgia. Gerald Abraham (1940) claims that the main concept of music for Tchaikovsky was “spontaneous, lyrical idea” (p.113). Tchaikovsky focused on writing refined and entertaining music and the sweetness of his music is ideal for describing the Kingdom of Sweets. Warrack (1979) wrote,

¹²⁷ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010

Out of the association of a particular tone color and its ideal melody, indulging the novel sound of the celesta, he (Tchaikovsky) devises moments of exquisite charm, limited in expressive range but enduringly memorable. It is by intention chocolate-box music, the music of *Confiturenburg*, the kingdom of sweets... (p.60)

According to musicologists, Tchaikovsky discriminated between ballet, opera and symphonic music (Wiley, 1984, p. 17-19, Warrack 1979, p.13). Opera and symphony, for Tchaikovsky, were expressions of life which included the frustrations and bitterness of his own life. On the contrary, ballet was full of a grace and prettiness, a relief from life. Ballet offered an elegant, graceful escape to Tchaikovsky who was often experiencing unhappiness and torment in his personal life. The plot of *The Nutcracker* offered Tchaikovsky a chance to indulge his taste for beauty and joy as well as nostalgia.

Morris was not interested in highlighting the prettiness and sweetness of *The Nutcracker*. He hired a horror comic book writer, Charles Burns, to recreate the humorous yet horrifying mood of the original Hoffman story. In Morris' work there is no Sugar Plum Fairy dancing to the delicate sound of celesta or a parade of sweets that welcomes young Marie. At the end of ballet, Tchaikovsky gives a happy ending score, based on the theme that opened Act Two with Marie's arrival at the Kingdom of Sweets. For the finale waltz, Tchaikovsky developed the theme with shimmering strings and arpeggios on harps and celesta. Tchaikovsky's theme portrays both the richness of the Kingdom of Sweet, and at the ending scene, celebrates Marie's safe return to her ordinary life. However, Morris' Marie never returns to the safe and warm home represented by the music. She leaves home with her man in the pursuit of happiness and her sister and brother watch Marie kissing her boyfriend on television. If Petipa celebrates Marie's

adventure in the Kingdom of Sweets and her safe return to home, Morris implies that Marie's real adventure has just begun. With Tchaikovsky's ending music, Morris celebrates Marie's departure and her upcoming adventure.

Tchaikovsky, following Petipa's detailed instructions, wrote the Waltz of the Flowers in a pattern similar to *The Sleeping Beauty*.¹²⁸ Using woodwind, French horn, and strings, Tchaikovsky presented a warm melody for an extravagant and joyful dance. Focusing on the bright and lively melody played by the orchestra, the Waltz of the Flowers highlights female dancers' airy, delicate dance which represent a garden of blossoms. A group of female dancers in identical flowery costumes with synchronized movements highlight classic ballet's feminine beauty and elegant harmony with the music. If the traditional *Nutcracker* depicts the airy, delicate, fragile image of flowers, Morris shows the strong, dynamic power of a living creature. At their entrance and departure, the dancers bend their upper bodies towards the ground and swing them vigorously as if they are growing out of the ground full of energy. To Morris, a flower is nature and, thus, gender neutral. Both male and female dancers participate in the Waltz of the Flowers wearing colorful dresses and green caps. Morris' flowers jump, turn, and lift each other.

Interestingly, in spite of his departure from Tchaikovsky's musical images, Morris' choreography reflects Tchaikovsky's musical methods. For example, Tchaikovsky

¹²⁸ The Waltz of the Flowers is the same length as the Valse Villageoise, a grouping dancing with garlands in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Wiley(1991) points out that the Waltz of the Flowers and the Valse Villageoise have choreographic likeness in their use of garlands to enliven the vertical space with shape and color, and the cross formation of the corridors (p.218).

frequently uses an arpeggio technique, where notes in a chord are played in sequence, one after the other, rather than ringing out simultaneously, for the harp in *The Nutcracker* (Warrack, 1979, p.71). Morris' dancers execute the same movement phrase consecutively instead of simultaneously. In the Waltz of the Flowers, the dancers change their formation with a different time interval. A dancer starts a jump and turn; the next dancer performs the same motion as soon as the first dancer finishes. The movement phrase is identical and repetitious, but the differentiation of timing in executing the movement makes the group dancing more energetic and organized.

Morris does not stick to Tchaikovsky's setting for the storytelling. He removes the distinction between dance and mime by intertwining them and allowing his characters to explain themselves through their dancing. Tchaikovsky uses traditional military sounds, such as rataplan rhythms and arpeggio trumpet calls, to portray the vicious Mouse King and the tension form a battle between the good and the evil. Morris' humorous approaches to the scene include the Mouse King wearing an Elvis Presley costume with point shoes, and G.I. Joe dolls fighting against leggy mice. While Tchaikovsky creates a frightening yet comic atmosphere to illustrate Drosselmeier's "sinister, comic old man" character during his first entrance to the party, Morris presents a young handsome man who attracts all the women at the party.

Approach to the Divertissement

In Act Two, Petipa designed luxurious parades of sweets which include diverse ethnicities, bringing an exquisite and exotic mood to the production. Petipa connects "chocolate" with Spanish dance, and gave Tchaikovsky specific instructions, "Spanish

dance, $\frac{3}{4}$, for 64 to 80 bars. Allegro brillante, $\frac{3}{4}$, seventy-eight bars: a vigorous dance with an athletic trumpet solo and the inescapable castanets... ” Petipa connected “coffee” with Arabian dance and requested, “Arabia, Kingdom of Yemen. cafe mocca. oriental dance. 24-32bars, sweet and charming music.”¹²⁹ Because both Petipa and Tchaikovsky thought of these dances as a pure *divertissement* they had no interest in authenticity or cultural identity. For the Arabian dance, Tchaikovsky referenced an old Russian lullaby and used many old French tunes for the other dances.¹³⁰ While Tchaikovsky demonstrates the sense of ethnic dances through these *divertissements*, Morris uses them to illustrate the public notions of ethnicity, exaggerating prevalent stereotypes. Through a witty twist of the *divertissement*, Morris mocks the exploitation of cultural sources rather than simply modernizing them. In many classic ballet versions, “Coffee” was performed by a ballerina in a transparent Arabic costume, reminiscent of an odalisque. In the sensitive *adagio*, the movement is filled with ballet’s *adagio* techniques with an emphasis on poses. Often a dancer shows stylized hand and arm gestures in an imitation of Arabian dance. Morris, in the 1989 version, danced this female part with four other male dancers, twisting the display of female sexuality. Wearing sunglasses and an opaque costume that covers his entire body, Morris depicts a lady who tries to show off her feminine charm, forcing four male dancers to worship her.

¹²⁹ As cited in Warrack, 1979, p.67

¹³⁰ Abraham(1940) in “Tchaikovsky: Some centennial reflection,” mentions that an intriguing difference between Tchaikovsky and other Russian ballet musicians was the influence of French ballet music, a consequence of his French heritage. Also in Warrack,1979, p.67).

Tchaikovsky's Characterization

Roland Wiley (1984), in his article “One Meaning in Nutcracker,” suggests that Tchaikovsky’s grief over the death of his sister inspired the character of the Sugar Plum Fairy who is warm, kind, and sweet (p.12-14). When Tchaikovsky was composing *The Nutcracker*, he heard of Sasha’s death. Sasha was his beloved sister who had supported Tchaikovsky when he decided to study music. Her death filled him with suffering and grief. The day after he received this horrible message, he had to start a long ocean voyage to America. This travel offered him a chance to meditate on her death and his childhood with her. Wiley believes that Tchaikovsky might have reflected the difference between the everyday reality of his outer life and his troubled spirit within through *The Nutcracker* score.¹³¹

In Tchaikovsky’s ballet, the Sugar Plum Fairy has two significant roles; she takes the main dance part instead of young Marie; as a leader of the Kingdom of Sweets, she presides over the characters in Act Two. Because Morris does not want a dreamy and magical story he removes the Sugar Plum Fairy from his story and focuses instead on the inner growth of Marie. Morris gives the Sugar Plum Fairy’s dance parts to Marie and the Nutcracker, and stages the divertissements as Drosselmeier’s journey in a search of the hard nut. In the grand pas de deux, with the celesta’s soft and delicate melody, Marie and

¹³¹ Wiley argues that Tchaikovsky left a personal message for his dead sister in the score (1984, p.19-20). The rhythm of the conspicuously repeated theme for the Sugar Plum Fairy is the same as the prosody of a phrase in Russian, ‘I so svyatymi upokoi’ meaning, “And the saints give rest.” It is an important line of the funeral service in the Russian Orthodox Church. Also in Act II, in the music of the pas de deux for the Sugar Plum Fairy and Prince Orgeart, Tchaikovsky wrote a powerful, full orchestral climax played by oboe and clarinet which was his favorite “death theme” (Warrack, 1979, p.72).

the nutcracker dance with all the characters, removing the boundary between reality and fantasy.

Wiley argues that Tchaikovsky projects himself into Drosselmeier's character, perhaps because he was intrigued by the similarity between his situation and Drosselmeier's. They both were old, lonely, and childless, a godfather and uncle who bestowed their affections on a niece, Marie for Drosselmeier and Sasha's children for Tchaikovsky. Most of all, they had special powers; Drosselmeier manipulates time and Tchaikovsky writes music (Wiley, 1984, p.15-16).

In Tchaikovsky's music, Drosselmeier and the Sugar Plum Fairy introduce Marie and the audience to the magical world, Drosselmeier serving as the guide from the world of reality to fantasy and the Sugar Plum fairy as a guide in the world of fantasy. Morris chooses to break the boundary between reality and fantasy by providing a unique role for Mrs. Stalbaum. Mrs. Stalbaum, a middle aged character danced by a man, plays an ambivalent role in Morris' production. In Act One, she is a strong mother of three children and tired hostess of the party. In Act Two, she transforms into the Queen of *Confiturenburg*, and a heroine of the Waltz of the Flowers replacing the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy. Relieved from the fatigue caused by the annoying party guests and three children, she dances with the flowers in the Waltz of the Flowers.

Mrs. Stalbaum is a unique soloist. As the nutcracker breaks the hard nut and the spell on the Princess disappears, only Mrs. Stalbaum stays on the stage and initiates a dance. As a mother and the Queen of the Kingdom of Sweets, her dance brings a mood of reconciliation, celebrating the growth of Marie and the Nutcracker. With small and gentle

hand gestures she invites flowers to the stage and dances among them rather than presiding over them. While the flowers' movements are dynamic and change formations, her movements remain simple but sensitive to the flow of the music. Immersed fully in the music, Mrs. Stalbaum continuously swivels her shoulders and hands to the rhythm of the waltz.

Mrs. Stalbaum expresses her delicate and complex inner feelings: desire, satisfaction, sorrow, and even depression. During a strong melody on violas and cellos, she dramatically stretches her arms in the air expressing agony and depression. As soon as the tune changes, she recovers from the downcast position and walks forward opening both arms widely as if depicting the resilience of her feminine nature. Mrs. Stalbaum faithfully expresses her emotions inspired by music, but she is being immersed in her emotions, not being overwhelmed by music. Interestingly, Mrs. Stalbaum's musicality recalls Morris' ability to portray music in his dance. Acocella (1994) claims that Morris' choreography is not a translation of music, because he reflects his emotional idea or the emotion generated in his mind by the musical structure. She wrote,

He [Morris] is listening to the music very hard, analytically...but as he does so, an emotion is on in his mind, an emotion that gradually eats the music, makes it his. That emotion, and not the music, is what he then mirrors in the dance. (p.171)

Romeo & Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare

Since the 1950s, when the Soviet production to Prokofiev's music was first introduced to the West, *Romeo and Juliet* has been almost ubiquitous in the ballet repertory. There have been many different versions; John Cranko's luxurious and lyrical version that *The New York Times* critic Kisselgoff called, "arguably the best dance

treatment of Prokofiev's celebrated ballet score" (1984, December 14); Kenneth MacMillan's version that cast the legendary Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev in the leading roles; Jean-Christophe Maillot's contemporary version that highlights the ambiguity of adolescent love rather than a social-political conflict; and Matthew Bourne's *Romeo, Romeo* that features the homosexual love of Romeo and "Julian" (Langton, *The Independent*, 2007, March 19). In spite of their different approaches, these *Romeo and Juliet* productions fulfill the two requirements: Prokofiev's music and "the tragic, cathartic end, with its terrible sense of waste and loss" (Sulcas, 2008, June 29).

Morris departs from the original story and presents a happy-ending where Romeo and Juliet flee from their oppressive families and live happily ever after. The happy ending is based on Prokofiev's original 1935 composition, which was recently discovered by archival research conducted in Moscow by musicologist Simon Morrison.¹³² Critic Gay Morris believes that *Romeo and Juliet* is an unusual choice for Mark Morris, citing many examples that contradict his previous work. Gay Morris (2008, Autumn) noted in her article for *DanceView*, "Morris has never been a grand scale choreographer. Even when directing operas, he stresses the intimate, the quixotic, and the fallibly human" (p.32). Whereas Morris has been interested in intimate group dancing, *Romeo and Juliet* was a star vehicle with a grandiose setting. Morris rarely staged Romantic, heterosexual duets, the main focus of this ballet. Most importantly, Morris favored vocal music, Baroque, popular music, and the West Coast experimentalists that had clear structure

¹³² The official home page for *the Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* <http://lovelives.net/home.shtml>

(Acocella, 1994, p.164) while Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* is dramatic music with strong orchestration.

Morris, in fact, did not like the way *Romeo and Juliet* was choreographed. When he accepted the challenge of a newly discovered score he wanted to create a new, fresh production that was different from the prevalent *Romeo and Juliet*. He said, "I had never seen a non-ballet version, so the idea of making a large-scale work like this on my own company was an exciting one" (Sulcas, 2008, June 29). During our interview, Morris explained more,¹³³

I don't like the scores of the ballets I see. Of course I haven't seen them for years. I didn't see any ballets preparing for this. But I like the music much, much better, and that's why I set to do it. Cause I wouldn't have unless it were a different project which turned out to be. I like the new ideas that have been discovered about the music, being smaller and faster and brighter. And the ending adjustment which is not a huge overhaul, but the music it's very differently arranged in this production and that's why I did it. I did it specifically because of the surprise music inclination.

Prokofiev's Happy Ending

Although Prokofiev is well known to audiences as the composer of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, he worked closely with Diaghilev and Ballets Russes early in his career. Some of his best works for the Ballets Russes include *Chout* (1921), *Le Pas D'acier* (1927), and *L'Enfant Prodigue* (1929) (Press, 2006, P.1). Prokofiev's understanding of ballet was influenced by Diaghilev who encouraged Prokofiev to develop his own musical narrative in ballet music. Prokofiev supported Ballets Russes' aesthetic, notably "Russian modernism, topicality and the brief return of high drama" in

¹³³ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

his ballet music. Stephen Press (2006), in his book *Prokofiev's Ballet for Diaghilev* notes, "Prokofiev's ballet music is not indebted to any person or style—It lived and died with the composer himself" (p.10). However, when Prokofiev came to work for the classic ballet company, his modern and unique style was not well appreciated.

The production history of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* is very complicated, almost legendary. Today Prokofiev's work is celebrated as beloved ballet music, but it took six stressful years for Prokofiev to see his masterpiece on stage, during which time he suffered insults and humiliation. Nelly Kravetz (2004), in "The first Soviet Production of Romeo and Juliet," states that Prokofiev was interested in a lyrical subject for a ballet and first decided to write *Romeo and Juliet* after a discussion with the Kirov Ballet management in 1934. Prokofiev took great care to consult the choreographer on all matters of technique and worked closely with Sergey Radlov, a dramatist and the artistic director of the Kirov. Radlov suggested changing the familiar tragedy "as a struggle for the right to love by young, progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family."¹³⁴ Prokofiev wrote the final scene with Juliet waking up on time, and the two lovers leaving their old lives and entering a new world.

But this final act was never staged. The Kirov management did not go ahead with the production. When Prokofiev contracted with the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow, the conductor did not approve of the music. Some other ballet companies and ballet schools signed a contract to stage the production, but canceled for unknown reasons.

¹³⁴ "Chronology of Sergey Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*," The official home page for *the Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*.

Choreographers and producers did not understand Prokofiev's music, especially the happy ending. Prokofiev at first defended his ending, arguing that, "Shakespeare was himself said to be uncertain about the endings of his plays" and "living people can dance, the dying cannot."¹³⁵

However, due to extremely critical reviews and his desire to see the production on the stage, Prokofiev gave up his happy ending in 1938 and rewrote the score with the familiar tragic ending. The Kirov Ballet again expressed interest, but there were continuous arguments between the choreographer and composer over changes to the ballet.¹³⁶ Choreographer Lavrosky claimed that most of the ballet episodes were "undanceable" and forced Prokofiev to revise the score extensively.¹³⁷ Lavrosky reportedly asked Prokofiev, "Why deprive the dancers of the opportunity to display their dancing?" He insisted on "loud, emotional music" with thickening of the orchestration for dramatic effect. (Kravetz, 2004, p.17, 20) Moreover, the main dancers, Ulanova (Juliet) and Sergey (Romeo) started complaining about the difficulty of the rhythms. Ulanova was perplexed when she heard the unfamiliar, abstract music and complained to Prokofiev;

¹³⁵ "About Prokofiev's music for *Romeo and Juliet*," The official homepage of *Mark Morris Dance Group*.

¹³⁶ The world premier of *Romeo and Juliet* was not the Kirov Ballet. It took place at the Brno Opera House (Národní divadlo v Brně) in 1948(Kravetz, 2004, p.18).

¹³⁷ Prokofiev replaced the entire fourth act with an epilogue, but he was also forced to insert large-scale solo dances for the Ball and Balcony Scenes, which resulted in a breakdown of the dramatic flow. "About Prokofiev's music for *Romeo and Juliet*" The official homepage of *Mark Morris Dance Group*. Also, Morrison, 2009, p.106-108.

“To tell the truth we were not accustomed to such music, in fact we were a little afraid of it. It seemed to us that in rehearsing the Adagio from Act I, for example, we were following some melodic pattern of our own, something nearer to our own concept of how the love of Romeo and Juliet should be expressed than that contained in Prokofiev’s “Strange” music.”(Simon Morrison, 2009, p.108)

The Kirov was not happy with Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*. They upheld traditional ballet aesthetics that were based on the Italian and French schools. Prokofiev’s music seemed “incomprehensible and barbaric to many of the dancers” (Kravetz, 2004, p.19). Prokofiev reluctantly inserted new solos in the ball and balcony scenes and thickened the orchestration before its Russian premiere at the Kirov Ballet in 1940 (Sulcas, June 29, 2008). Although the premier was successful, Prokofiev was outraged when he had a hard time recognizing sections of his own music. Lavrovsky had changed the orchestration, amplifying dynamics and inserting passages without consulting Prokofiev. Prokofiev begged the Kirov to undo the unauthorized changes but the Kirov Ballet refused to honor his request (Kravetz, 2004, p.20). Soon the Kirov Ballet excluded *Romeo and Juliet* from their repertoire and Prokofiev’s score was set to premiere at Moscow’s Bolshoi Theater.

Gesture and Meanings

Although Simon Morris, who unearthed the original 1935 Prokofiev score, knew that Prokofiev had worked on a different treatment of Shakespeare’s play, he was surprised when he saw the difference in the original music. In an interview with *The New York Times* Morrison said,

The lore surrounding the ballet was that he had been dissuaded from that idea. I was shocked to find that another ending had been composed and was annotated for orchestration and that the score was quite different in terms of plot as well as far more musically complicated in places. (Sulcas, 2008, June 29)

Whereas Prokofiev's revised version has strong orchestration and dramatic dynamics, the original score contains less dramatic orchestration but diverse, delicate, rhythmic patterns. Morris explained that it has different texture and rhythm from the prevalent version, and is much smaller in sound, even though it is a rearrangement of a score with little new material.¹³⁸ Morris' ambivalent approach is found in *Romeo and Juliet*. Morris, as always, follows Prokofiev's musical structure and the detailed libretto with 56 scenes and meticulous descriptions of the characters' actions. At the same time, Morris disregards the original choreographic style, especially the elegant and courtly depictions of the aristocracy. Morris thinks that the repetitive, decorative, courtly gestures and mime are irrelevant to the theme subject, and thus meaningless. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Morris stated that,

“I hate that vague courtly stuff you get in ballet productions...And when everyone keeps raising their goblet of wine into the air — how many times can you see that? I think that American dancers, like American singers, are often underprepared for stage work. The process of finding deep characters and relationships, which is so normal for actors, is a luxury that dance companies don't often get or make time for.” (Sulcas, 2008, June 29).

When depicting the Verona nobles, Morris reduces the pretentious, airy gestures.

Prokofiev highlights the melody of the ballroom scene in Act One, calling for “uplifting Apollonian passion” and “the triumph of the spirit” (Morrison, 2009, p.107). In the classic ballet, the entrance of the nobles to the ball is a parade; the noble couples enter in

¹³⁸ “The interview with Mark Morris,” The New York Times building's Times Talk series, Videotaped archive from Mark Morris Dance Group, <http://markmorrisdancegroup.org/resources/media/5-r-j/>

luxurious, heavy costumes spending considerable measures of music on formal gestures. The loud music and extravagant parade represent the hierarchy and wealth of Verona. In the “ponderous dance for the knights,” a music for the nobles’ dance, the strong orchestration of strings and trumpets overwhelm the ball, as if “the power of fate governs the phobic ostinato patterns” (Ibid). It also effectively describes the oppressive, patriarchal families that never allow their children to cross the strict social and political boundaries.

Compared to the guests in the classic ballet, Morris’ guests are humble, ready to dance and mingle at the party. At the ball, where the Renaissance nobles display their heavy, luxurious costumes and social network through group dancing, Morris’ guests wear lighter costumes (e.g., obviously no petticoat for the ladies) and are free from the protocol of classical ballet. People start and finish their dances naturally without any specific gestures or leaders. They do not bow to each other when they dance. As a new piece of music starts, people spontaneously partner with a neighbor, rather than being divided into gender based lines. They move in and out to the dance whenever music ends. Morris embodied the diverse styles of dance music from Prokofiev’s score, using movements from ballet, folk dances, games and modern dance.

Instead of using ballet’s typical mime, Morris makes his own symbolic gestures, referring to historical sources, notably *Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity* (2000).¹³⁹ This book illustrates the abundant gestural vocabulary of early modern Italians. David Leventhal, the dancer who played Romeo, talks about Morris’

¹³⁹ Morris compiled *Gesture in Naples and Gesture in Classical Antiquity* in the list of source materials on the official website.

references and the expressivity of his dance. In the interview with Voice of Dance, Leventhal said,

It's a combination of different iconographies, uses of gesture as symbol and gesture as meaning...One of the wonderful things from studying the gesture book is realizing the past is so much more colorful than we often think of it onstage... This book expanded the vocabulary that we could use. Early modern Italians used much more gestural vocabulary than I ever assumed. I think the movement is recognizably Mark in its eclecticism. It borrows from many different sources but makes sense within the whole. (Hite, 2008, September 25)

With historical reference, Morris creates symbolic gestures, and develops gestures from a word into a spatial motif that happens throughout the dance. For instance, when Mercutio breaks into the ballroom, he humorously throws the entire dance into chaos with a playful rhyme uttered at a fast tempo. On the high pitch of strings, Mercutio points his fingers towards the ceiling. He repeats the same gestures while crossing the stage with multiple jumps, giving an accent to his dance that represents his jokester, free-spirited character.

Prokofiev and Morris

Prokofiev wrote a detailed libretto describing everything from the characters' entrances and exits to the color of the costumes. In Scene II, when Juliet visits Laurence, Prokofiev wrote, "Romeo enters; Laurence opens the inner doors and admits Juliet. Dressed in pure white, she embodies virginity. 2 minutes and 10 seconds." In the next scene Prokofiev noted, "Romeo and Juliet look each other in the eye; Laurence departs. Romeo and Juliet embrace but scamper back to their places upon Laurence's return. They kneel before him; he conducts the wedding ceremony...2 minutes" (Morrison, 2006, p.398). Although many famous productions, including that of MacMillan, Cranko, and even Bourne, use Prokofiev's music, others reject it as "too programmatic" for the

intimate treatment of the story (Reynolds, 1995, p.261). Morris experienced some difficulties when working with Prokofiev's musical structure. Morris said,¹⁴⁰

I did some stuff and didn't do other stuff. He wasn't a choreographer. Usual people who write music for dancing have no idea what they're doing. So there are four bars to get a huge amount of story done and then like two pages of music to do nothing. It's like she opens the window 10 minutes later, it's like, is it open yet?...Also there's just 1.5 minute for set change, and it's like, I don't need a set change, or you know, 8 bars for everybody to exit and other people to come on. It was funny because it was so thought out, but not very logical the way it's thought out. And then of course the ending says there's nothing there. Unscripted. They go away.

Because the musical narrations of episodes and illustrations of the characters differ significantly from the dances' physical embodiment of them, Morris had to adjust his narrative. He often created a scene to accommodate the musical shape and structure. In Prokofiev's script Juliet is fourteen years old, still playing "girlish jokes and pranks, unwilling to dress for the ball." At her father's decree that she marry Paris, she becomes hysterical because she is "small, powerless, and despondent" (as cited in Morrison, 2009, p.396, 400). Prokofiev uses the delicate and warm sound of the woodwinds to describe Juliet's slender and delicate beauty.

Morris retains Prokofiev's musical structure but portrays his characters free from the musical descriptions. Morris represents a Juliet who matures into a confident young lady, and takes risks to get what she wants. Juliet acts and dances in a calm manner, and understands how to present herself to the public. In Act I in Juliet's room, Prokofiev depicts Juliet with a soft and playful exploration of melody as she prepares for the

¹⁴⁰ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

masquerade ball. Morris' Juliet seems indifferent to the ball; instead she is occupied with thinking about herself, typical adolescent behavior. When she is with her nurse who checks her nails and underskirt, she is childlike, dashing on and off the stage with playful gestures. When she is alone, she is a young lady. On the lyrical melody, she calmly walks around the stage in meditation, slowly lifts her arm and touches her palm as if questioning herself. When Juliet is with Romeo, they dance in symmetry depicting their relationship rather than her beauty and femininity.

While Prokofiev's music highlights the discord between the Montagues and the Capulets, Morris uses the music to juxtapose the elders and the youth; the male authority, notably, the Prince or Montague /Capulet is represented with strong brass and a steady marching beat. The Prince barely dances, but his vertical posture and swift, strong-arm gestures imply his determined character; the magnificent orchestration and march-like walking of Montague or Capulet represent their power and strictness of the patriarchal society. Meanwhile, the youth' movements are passionate, light and dynamic. The street fight between young people is set to the high pitch of violins with repetitive hand gesture and jumps. In the ball, Mecurio' s lively and brisk movements contrast to that of the nobles while illustrating his dangerously vigorous character. Of course, *Romeo and Juliet* celebrates the victory of youth. Morris said that,

the best thing for them was to have sex in full love and then they're dead instead of getting older and irritate each other with the sound you make when you eat. That never happened. That's the miracle of the play, and that's what it's about. The young versus the old thing. The adults already know that it's gonna be so boring and worthless, and everybody just turns into the same people. The kids don't know that.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

The adults, in spite of their authority over their children, fail to prevent Romeo and Juliet's escape. Morris relaxes the oppressive air that pressures the couple, so they can avoid the sad ending. When the Montagues and Capulets realize that their children are alive, they instantly forget their old feud and celebrate their love. Prokofiev spent three Acts to illustrate the discord of two families, but gave only two minutes to reconcile them. Morris reveals how liberal their society was, especially in love, with his depiction of the adult's ball. One person has a cushion and, while the rest dance in a circle, he or she picks a partner and they kiss in the center of the circle. This liberal, joyous mood encourages Romeo and Juliet to pursue their love. Their love affair is not a heinous betrayal of their families that deserves death, but a process of maturing.

The Contrast of Richness and Subtlety

In *Romeo and Juliet*, there are two great dances where the couple explosively expresses their emotions, the balcony and the bedroom duet. The balcony scene is the first, secret meeting of Romeo and Juliet. The bedroom scene is the last night for the desperate, passionate lovers, as Romeo must soon leave for Mantua. Nancy Reynolds (1995) wrote, "Prokofiev's full throttle lyricism, of symphonic proportions, lead many choreographers to soaring, Bolshoi-style overhead lifts, ecstatic runs across the stage, large, exultant lunges, and yearning arabesques. The Lovers are reckless, headstrong, extroverted, and immediate" (p.265). In presenting Romeo and Juliet's love in these two scenes, whereas Prokofiev focused on their passionate and inevitable love with dramatic melody Morris contrasts the music with dance juxtaposing richness and subtlety. Morris

matches the rich lyricism of the balcony scene with the hesitant human emotions of two adolescents. Meanwhile, with the subtle, clean, and bright music of the bedroom duet, he presents the passionate, physical love of young lovers with a strong sense of sexuality.

In the balcony scene, Romeo and Juliet are not passionate adolescents who instantly fall in love, but two properly educated youths who gradually open their minds to learn about each other. Morris moves the scene from the balcony to the dark ballroom after the guests have left. Morris takes a quieter approach, using less orchestration. The music is less dramatic, but more sweet, better representing the fragile sensibility of adolescents; when Romeo and Juliet meet in the dark ballroom, they instantly notice each other but approach carefully. They slowly draw closer reaching towards each other with only one hand, but their hands never touch. The first physical contact is Juliet's lift of Romeo. Whereas ballet version contrasts the young couple's feminine beauty and masculine charms through almost acrobatic techniques, Morris' couple is not interested in displaying themselves. They carefully watch and respond to each other with ambiguous feelings that they are experiencing for the first time. On the music for "amorous dance" they dance symmetrically, in unison and often repeat each others' movement. Little jumps and turns express their excitement, but Juliet often reveals an ambiguous feeling towards this new love. On the highlight of the Prokofiev's lyrical melody, Romeo kisses Juliet, but she instantly turns her back on him, and walks to the front of the stage with a strange look, as if she is not sure of her feelings. When the nurse comes and splits them up, they leave each other without "thousand times of good night."

In contrast to the balcony scene, the music in the bedroom scene is subtle and bright and Morris depicts passion and sexuality. As the curtain opens, Romeo and Juliet are still in bed, their naked bodies partially covered with a red blanket. They do not leave the bed easily; they kiss, hug, and pet each other. Juliet takes Romeo's shirt and wears it, as if that could prevent his departure. Their dance is, rather than a dramatic pas de deux, the sweet, playful moments of young lovers who cannot take their hands off of each other. Although Prokofiev inserted a threatening melody to recall the Prince's power over Romeo's destiny (Morrison, 2009, p.399) Morris simply disregards this motif. According to Prokofiev's script, the dramatic pas de deux occurs on the morning after their first night together, showing a tearful farewell before their parting. However, instead of a desperate goodbye that foresees the upcoming tragedy, Morris' couple is full of happiness and hope.

In this chapter, I have focused on Morris' ambivalent musicality illustrated in three of his works. Morris is widely noted for his sensitive musicality, but others, because of his detailed attention to musical structure and use of musical technique, often criticize his dance as having a literal or predictable relationship to music. The examples I discussed here focus on the means by which Morris introduces his new ideas and concepts, freeing them from the music while upholding the musical structure. Morris sculpts his own story and characters from the music, and presents different insights and extended meanings from it. To the critiques that question a dance's subordinate relationship to music, Morris' ambivalence suggests a clear answer.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Mark Morris, whose company celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2010, has gained the respect of critics as well as the affection of the public. In fact, appealing to and satisfying both groups, critics and audiences, is not an easy task. Morris has been an avid, productive choreographer who has presented new productions every year while traveling with his repertoires all around the world. In *The Dance Magazine*, Allan Ulrich (2010, November) wrote that Morris successfully communicates with the general audience, who often equate modern dance with obscurity (p.26). He explains that Morris' employment of dancers with diverse body types, an incomparable sense of ensemble and humanity attracted the audience (p.26). Michelle Kamhi (2005, December) also claims that Morris appealed to the critics and audiences, thanks to his engagement with familiar traditions and musicality (para.1).

As both a dance researcher and audience member, I have been fascinated by Mark Morris who continuously challenges through diverse experiments while maintaining his stylistic insight. I also was attracted to his free play within the overarching frame of the classic he uses as subject matter. In the postmodern era, Morris is a unique choreographer who is deeply engaged with the traditions and the classics, but at the same time, he transforms them into a modern piece in an eclectic manner. While he projects warm humanity in his dance, he refuses to mystify human nature. He avoids the rigid distinction of gender in dance, and presents multifaceted expressions of gender and sexuality. While attentive to musical structure, he disregards the original choreographic style.

This study explores Morris' ambivalence as it appears in *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*. The term "ambivalence" implies the coexistence of opposing attitudes or feelings, such as love and hate, toward a person, object, or idea. The Cambridge Dictionary describes "ambivalence" as "having two opposite feelings at the same time" (Landau, Sidney, p. 24). Although the dictionary defines ambivalence as having "two opposite" feelings, in dance, which is a multipurpose and amorphous text, the relations of different concepts or feelings are more complicated. Explaining Morris' ambivalent approaches, I tried to indicate the dynamic structure and complexity of meaning in his works, not to identify two polar extremes in his work. Morris' ambivalence is distinguishable from vagueness of meaning or indecisiveness of intent. In fact, Morris has a very clear idea about his works. Once he said, "I can defend every single measure of my choreography" (Acocella, 1994, p. 137).

In examining ambivalence in Morris' works, I start with the idea that art is a production of society rather than an isolated act of one genius. I reference Barthes (1977)' claim, "A text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination" and "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (p. 148). Barthes claims that a text is not a single, theological message of "the Author-God," but "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (p. 148). From this argument, I do not presume that Morris intends ambivalence as illustrated in this study. The ambivalence I illustrated here is observed in the process of analysis and interpretation rather than as an intrinsic or inherent part of his works. To interpret Morris' ambivalence and the double meaning in his works, I took a multi-dimensional approach

including the analysis of narrative, gender and sexuality, and musicality. I traced the context of his production and referred to Morris' references, including the original story, the original score, materials on musicians, and compared his production with other dance versions. The ambivalence I illustrated in this study was derived from the analysis of selected Morris' productions and juxtaposition with the related materials, by negotiation of the meanings in the works, not by the choreographer's claim or sanction.

Narrative and Characterization

In the body of this study, I explored three aspects of Morris' works, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*: 1) narratives and characterization, 2) sexuality and gender, and 4) use of musicality. In chapter 3, through the analysis of the narrative and characterization of Morris' productions, I examined Morris' ambivalent approach to classical works. The three works I focused on have a strong theme framework, and the portrayal of the narrative and characters are the primary structures of the production. The most intriguing ambivalence is Morris' dual attitude towards the classics on which these works are based. When presenting his "versions" of the classical work, Morris both embraces and distorts the predominant style of the works.

Notably, following the structural framework of the story, Morris inserts a new episode or restores a deleted part in the original text. In *The Hard Nut*, Morris returns to Hoffmann's narrative and revives main episodes that were disregarded in Petipa's ballet. Morris alters setting and modernized the characters, but is faithful to the original narrative and its message. In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, Morris follows

Prokofiev's happy ending, one that was never performed before. Prokofiev was known as a Christian Scientist who did not believe in the idea of "death" and changed the music to have a happy ending. Morris, free from both Shakespeare's patriarchal and oppressive Verona, and Prokofiev's religious heaven, presents a new place where the two adolescences learn and experiment with their identities.

Second, in referencing the traditions, Morris is not restricted by their historical context or performance traditions. Morris is often linked to George Balanchine because of his musicality and abstract classicism, and to Paul Taylor with his linkage to modern dance tradition. Morris picks sources from wherever he wants, regardless of their context or original codification, and skillfully weaves them into his own contexts. In *The Hard Nut*, Morris frequently uses the classic ballet's system and steps, from the structure of the pas de deux to the use of pointe shoes. The grand pas de deux as big group dancing completes the celebrative, happy ending with the emphasis of reconciliation.

Morris' use of classical dance is distinguishable from mere appropriation of the classics. Even though he takes these movements out of their indigenous settings, he never presents them as "authentic." Rather, he intentionally mixes them with movements from a wide variety of other sources, removed from their indigenous context and meaning. For instance in *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris freely uses diverse sources from Martha Graham to Indonesian dances. In *The Hard Nut*, Morris presents the Arabian, Chinese, Spanish and Russian dances with emphasis on their lack of authenticity.

Morris often juxtaposes the characters or concepts for dramatic effect, while, at the same time, dissolving the contrast and reconciling the antagonism. In the stories of

Dido and Aeneas, *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, there are strong antagonists who must be confronted by the main characters. While conventionally the antagonism is depicted as the contrast between good and the evil,

Morris dissolves this distinction. The contrasts are: the Nutcracker vs. the mice troop in *The Hard Nut*, Dido vs. the Sorceress in *Dido and Aeneas*, the young couple vs. the oppressive families (often represented by Tybalt) in *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*. In Morris' stories, the distinction between good and evil is ambiguous. For instance he presents the mice troop in *The Hard Nut* as malicious yet with humorous identities, instead of grotesque, demonic creatures full of hate who need to be eliminated to attain happiness. At the end of the ballet, the mice soldiers celebrate Marie and the Nutcracker's love. From Morris' perspective, they are not evil, but neighbors whom you can embrace. Good and evil are more ambiguous in the opera *Dido and Aeneas*. The Sorceress is the evil one who plots Dido's death; however, since Morris double casts himself as both characters, it becomes a psychodrama highlighting the ambivalence of human nature. Similarly, Morris' ambivalence is apparent in the way he juxtaposes reality and fantasy. In *The Hard Nut*, the boundary between reality and fantasy is not clear. Morris freely mixes Marie's everyday and fantastic worlds.

In spite of his ambivalence in approaching the subject, Morris is very clear in presenting his simple and universal message. In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris talks about the universality of humanity, love, hatred, betrayal, and fidelity. *The Hard Nut*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *On Motifs of Shakespeare*, although retrieved from very different sources, one

from a Christmas ballet for children and one from the Shakespeare tragedy, emphasize the same strong message: one needs to grow up to find what he/she wants.

Gender and Sexuality

The second aspect of ambivalence I focus on is Morris' presentations of gender and sexuality. Avoiding gender stereotypes, Morris violates the general notions of masculine and feminine. In retrieving the female characters from the old classics, Morris never romanticizes woman's passivity through her femininity. Morris' women, Marie, Dido, the Sorceress, and Juliet, regardless of their situations and personalities, are strong, independent women who pursue their own good. They acquire their value by themselves, not through a man. When dancing with their men, they are equally as strong as men ; they lift, assist, and dance together with a man.

Morris understands the concept "beauty" not just a physical, pleasing, harmonious presentation but also something meaningful. Morris claims that beauty should have meaning as related to something else. He said in the interview with Roseman (2001),

Some people go to the ballet because it's pretty, and that's sad because the ballet is just pretty. It shouldn't even exist because it should be in relation to something else...Beauty doesn't exist separately. It exists in the world of everything else and it is also subjective. (p.70)

From this perspective, when he retrieves the classic ballet's tradition, he adds his insight and opinion on it. Morris is not interested in exploiting the female dancing to depict the airy, magical effect. Instead, he urges his dancers articulate both sexes. The Waltz of Snowflakes and the Waltz of Flowers, the epitome of female group dancing in the classic ballet are performed by both men and women. In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris presents a unisex group of Chorus, and assigns them the characters of both sexes depending on the

situations. They incorporate traditionally male and female steps, illustrating gender differences, rather than neutralizing them.

Morris' gender performance through gender role inversion, not only expand the expressivity, but also expands the meanings in the works. Through his performance of Dido, Morris shows the instability of gender, and presents the doubleness of meanings (Acocella, 1994, p.94). The male casting of Mrs. Stahlbaum and the female casting of Tybalt and Mercutio aid Morris' constitution of the characters. Highlighted by her gender role inversion, Mrs. Stahlbaum expands her roles from a benevolent mother to a sensitive middle age woman who wants to savor her feminine side. Meanwhile, Mercutio acquires distinguishable personalities from macho rivals to a young man with clandestine desire.

Morris differentiates love and sex. The differentiation is best illustrated in Dido's love scene with Aeneas, and the Sorceress' masturbation scene. While Dido's and Aeneas' love scene is sensual, private, and implicit the Sorceress' scene is described as explicit, ignoble, and even perverted. Differentiating Dido's and the Sorceress' sex, Morris distinguishes between love and sex, and emotion and pleasure. As Morris claimed his works are always about love, Morris illustrates diverse aspects of love. In case of Marie and the Nutcracker, through their warm, gentle pas de deux, Morris highlights the eye-opening, exciting moment of young lovers. In Romeo and Juliet's love scene, it is more sensual and explicit.

Morris' openness is also seen in his projection of identity. Although Morris decides the details of his characters and gives them a story, he avoids the usual social and theatrical stereotypes. On the contrary, Morris opens up possibilities for the characters,

and emphasizes that identity is an “ongoing process,” something the characters actively learn (Cohen, 1998, p.450). Interestingly, Morris continues his trademark gender role inversion in his recent works, but the meaning of his inversion has been changing. In earlier works such as *The Hard Nut* and *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris included political, social message that attacks the rigid stereotypes of gender, but now his attempt is to be understood in an aesthetical context as to expand the expressivity for both sexes.

Musicality

In chapter 5, I examined Morris’ musicality, the manner in which he corresponds to or disengages from music, creating ambivalence in his works. Morris is often compared to George Balanchine due to his intense musicality and enthusiastic correspondence to music in choreography. Based on Francis Sparshott’s theory to see the relationships of dance and music, I approached Morris’ works illustrating how the interplay of music and dance generates emotional and aesthetic expressions.

In the analysis of musicality, I mainly focused on how Morris sticks to an overarching structure of music, and at the same time introduces his new ideas and concepts free from the music. Because of his direct reflection of musical elements, Morris has been often accused of creating “predictable” relationships to music. Rachel Duerden (2009), in her analysis of Morris’ “Falling Down Stairs” presents the same questions, and concludes that Morris’ musicality is inevitable rather than predictable (p.246). Duerden explains that when the relationship between choreography and music seems natural and satisfying it is dismissed as “predictable.” However, she claims that there is a distinction between “predictable” and “inevitable.” While “predictable” implies

“a trivial response that adds nothing to the music,” “inevitable” embodies a balance of risk, offering new insights into the musical work by leading us a new perspective (p.246). As illustrated in the previous chapter, Morris frequently risks the predictability of musical structure by offering new insights and interpretations of the music.

Dido and Aeneas, The Hard Nut, and Romeo and Juliet, on the Motifs of Shakespeare have strong association with the music, and the music itself contains the complete interpretations of the narratives and characterizations. However, without breaking their musical structure, Morris sculpts his own story and characters from them, projecting his new perspective and interpretations on them. In *Dido and Aeneas*, Morris chose Purcell’s opera for its clear structure, and arranged the dance according to the musical structure. However, within the structure, he disregards the political allegory and didactic message of the original opera. Instead, he focuses on portraying the characters and their emotions through detailed variations of movement quality, freely referencing diverse sources.

In *The Hard Nut*, Morris removed Petipa’s lavish and decorative style, while retaining Tchaikovsky’s original score and its original order. Morris was interested in neither the sweetness of the ballet, nor the social hierarchy and elegant charm that Tchaikovsky’s ballet music supports. Morris removes the distinction between dance and mime and interweaves them, allowing his characters to explain themselves through their dancing.

In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, Morris departs from the original story and presents a happy-ending where Romeo and Juliet flee from their oppressive

families. The happy ending is based on Prokofiev's original 1935 composition, which was recently discovered by archival research conducted in Moscow by musicologist Simon Morrison. While following Prokofiev's musical structure and his original libretto, Morris, at the same time, disregards the original choreographic style set to music, especially the depiction of elegant and courtly expression of the aristocracy. Morris retains Prokofiev's musical structure but portrays his characters free from the musical descriptions. Morris represents a Juliet who matures into a confident young lady, and takes risks to get what she wants. While Prokofiev's music highlights the discord between the Montagues and the Capulets, Morris uses the music to juxtapose the elders and the youth.

In presenting Romeo and Juliet's love in the balcony scene, whereas Prokofiev focused on their passionate and inevitable love with dramatic melody, Morris juxtaposes the richness of music with the subtlety of movement that is gentle, soft, and symmetrical. Instead of dramatic jumps or lifts, they carefully reveal their feeling of love; they watch each other's dancing, and follow each other's steps, without concealing their hesitation and excitement.

Meanwhile, Morris' one-to-one relationships between the text and movements in *Dido and Aeneas* brought up a critique that it is mere "visualization of music." Purcell's music has many repetitious segments of song and Morris accordingly repeats a movement motif. However, I claim that the word-gesture alliance is a choreographic choice among myriads of them, and the alliance of a word and a specific gesture creates meaning, often regardless of its literal meaning. In the process of signification, there is an emotional

connotation that the movement and music evoke which must be interpreted within its context.

Morris' Ambivalence

When Morris approaches a subject, just like a researcher, he finds as much related material as he possibly can. When he choreographed *Romeo and Juliet*, he referred to Shakespeare's novel, musicologist Morrison's research for Prokofiev's work, Giotto's painting book, old Hollywood movies of *Romeo and Juliet* and even a book on gestural communication in the Renaissance era. When I visited his office for the second interview, he was reading a thick book regarding Beethoven's folk songs which is related to his next piece.¹⁴² Interestingly, Morris' references to diverse materials do not extend to other dance productions of the same work. He said, "I do a lot of research because it's interesting. It can only help. But, I didn't watch other people's ballets, because I'm not interested in that. They did that, and I'm doing something else."¹⁴³

In spite of his ambivalent approach, Morris does not polarize the meaning of his dance, like black and white. He often juxtaposes different ideas, but does not impose polarized meaning. When I asked him about the coexistence of contradictory concepts (e.g., the contrast of pure beauty and grotesqueness, brightness and darkness) in his dances, he did not describe his dance as a fixed text consisting of antithetical pairs. Morris said,

¹⁴² "The book from Oxford press costs \$150 because it was university printed. The library would only lend it as a reference book" he explained.

¹⁴³ The second interview with Mark Morris, April 29, 2010.

Beauty and grotesqueness, comedy and tragedy...I am interested in everything in a whole spectrum of them. I am not interested in comedy and tragedy [only]. Those are extreme points of something. Everything else is in between them. That's what drama is. Stillness and hyperactivity. What about between them? What happened between this and this? That's what dancing is. ¹⁴⁴

Later he said, "If you say I am not giving a clear signal, (like) this is evil or this is good, that's fine, that's ambivalence." ¹⁴⁵

I think Morris' ambivalence is related to his perspective, the way he sees the world. In his dances, Morris often dissolves the distinctions between reality and fantasy, and good and evil. Morris emphasizes reconciliation and love, without imposing moral lessons. Morris claims that his dance is always about love of people who are vulnerable, fallible, and in trouble. In spite of dark humor and irreverence, his dances never lose their warm humanity. His message is simple yet, reveals his perspective— how he perceives others and how he influences others. David Leventhal, a dancer who worked a long time in Mark Morris Dance Group, once wrote in *Art Journal*, "The dynamic expression of humanity that we hope you enjoy watching on stage in a delicate and precarious state. Dance and creator negotiate and renegotiate their feelings of trust, control, and vulnerability every moment of everyday" (2004, August 22, p.45). Along with warm humanity, Morris' ambivalence is seen in the dynamics structure of his dances, which amplify the meaning and structure of dance.

Further Studies

This study is an aesthetic inquiry, a critical reflection on an artist and his works, examining the codified structure of dance as a sensitive art. In analyzing Morris'

¹⁴⁴ The first interview on October 23.2008.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

ambivalence, I refer to the aesthetic viewpoint which understands dance as a crystallized form of human intelligence. Morris' choreography was intellectually intriguing to me as a researcher as it provided a place where an audience has to negotiate multilayered meanings.

I anticipate that this study will encourage others to examine the diverse aesthetic dimensions of dance. I think Mark Morris is a rich subject of study, especially considering his influence and stand in modern dance history. Because this study takes an aesthetic approach to Morris' works, I limited the number of productions in order to analyze the detail of his dances. As Morris is a living choreographer who is continuously diversifying his approach to dance there are many untouched aspects of Morris a choreographer. Considering the massive volume of Morris' works, I know that there are many other aspects of Morris that can be explored.

I believe that there should be a study that looks at Mark Morris in the map of dance history. There are opposing views on Mark Morris; Roger Copeland states that Morris' dualism is clear evidence of postmodernism. He argues that the Judson Dance Theater was the practitioner of postmodernism, and it is Mark Morris that has the most in common with other postmodern artists (1997, p.19). Copeland said that Morris is completely open to dance-historical references from baroque to the Judson group, and represents "complexity and contradiction" just like other postmodern architects. Meanwhile, Gay Morris believes that Morris' work is close to modern dance. Comparing Morris to Paul Taylor, she explains that Morris's musicality and use of ballet and modern

dance tradition are evidence of his debt to the legacy of modern dance (2008, Spring, p.28).

I also anticipate more biographical studies on living, contemporary artists. In conducting this research, I had the privilege to interview him where he lives in Brooklyn. Attending live talks and dance performances was a great asset to understanding him. This study also owes much to Joan Acocella's biography, *Mark Morris*, which contains many primary sources. However, I am afraid there are not many studies on contemporary choreographers and dancers. For the sake of the future study of dance history, there should be more studies that record the perspectives and achievements of the choreographers and dancers in our time, while we can still hear and witness their vivid voices and dancing. These artists are the ones who are recording the time in which we live through their dancing.

In the last several decades, a group of choreographers (e.g., Matthew Bourne, Mats Ek) have eagerly challenged the classical ballet productions. Rather than merely modernization the classic versions, they deconstruct and transform the classics into fresh pieces with their own messages and styles. Some of them, as found in Morris' work, use ballet's heritage to generate new meanings, destabilizing the classics' original meanings. I believe that further studies on choreographers who juxtapose a traditional production and a new interpretation would be an interesting field as they identify the fluidity of meaning of dance and subtle differences in meaning-making. Studying the different approaches used when producing classic works (e.g., simple parody, reinterpretation, complete transformation) would give valuable insight into many aspects of dance and its

relationship to individual choreographers work as well as social and cultural implications of dance. In this study, I explained Morris' ambivalence as his choreographic characteristic however I believe that the projection of contradictory concepts or dual attitudes towards the subjects is not unique to Mark Morris. Since dance is an amorphous text, and an art work acquires its meaning through the interpretation of the viewers, examining a work or an artist from multiple perspectives will lead to a better understanding of the work. Here, I suggest ambivalence as a powerful balance that connects complicated concepts within a piece. I anticipate that a future study of ambivalence or multivalence in an artist or artwork will ultimately enhance the dynamic structure of dance.

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APPENDIX A

IRB PROTOCOL

Title of the study: Mark Morris on Dream and Nightmare: The Ambivalence of Mark Morris' Choreographic Style in *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), *The Hard Nut* (1991), and *King Arthur* (2006).¹⁴⁶

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL SUBJECTS

A. About how many subjects will you need? Please include the number of females and males you wish to recruit.

Only one male subject will be used in the research protocol. The subject is an adult who directs a professional dance company.

B. Describe the potential subjects in terms of gender, age range, ethnic group, and any other significant descriptors.

My subject is a male choreographer who is an American citizen. This subject is chosen because of his historical significance and influence in dance field, and this study focuses on his artistic characteristics. The subject is not selected based on his gender or ethnicity or nationality.

C. Indicate any special subject characteristics, such as persons with mental handicaps, physical handicaps, prisoners, pregnant women, etc.

My subject is a professional choreographer and dancer who is currently working both on stage and in studio, and he does not have physical or mental handicaps. Also, no prisoners or pregnant woman will be used in the research protocol.

D. Are you aware of any special health problems with the subject pool?

My subject is a professional choreographer and dancer who is working both on stage and in studio, and the subject is expected to be healthy. Because I will interview a subject who voluntarily participated in the interviews with advance consent, this research will not influence the subject's specific health condition.

E. Describe how you will gain access to these potential subjects.

I will contact Christy Bolingbroke, the marketing manager of *Mark Morris Dance Group* for the arrangement of the interviews. With Mark Morris' consent, I will arrange the interviews with him. The interviews will be performed with the subject's consent at a time and in a location upon which we agree in advance of the interviews.

¹⁴⁶ This is the original title of the study submitted to IRB on September, 2008. Later, the title of the study and a selected work of Mark Morris had been changed.

F. How will subjects be selected or excluded from the study?

In this study, I aim to contextualize Mark Morris' choreographic style, not only because of his unique style as a renowned artist, but also because of his significance in dance history. For this study, I will only interview the choreographer Mark Morris. Anyone else who I might meet on the interview dates will be excluded from the study.

G. If subjects are from an institution other than Temple University, please indicate the name of the officer responsible for granting access to the subjects.

My subject (Mark Morris) is the choreographer and artistic director of *Mark Morris Dance Group*. Christy Bolingbroke, the marketing manager of *Mark Morris Dance Group* is responsible for granting access to the subject. The information of Christy Bolingbroke is below.

Christy Bolingbroke, Marketing Manager
 Mark Morris Dance Group
 3 Lafayette Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11217
 Tel. 718.624.8400/ Fax. 718.624.8900
 Email. christy@mmdg.org

H. If the subjects are children, anyone suffering from a known psychiatric condition, or legally restricted, please explain why it is necessary to use these persons as subjects.

My research does not include any children, anyone suffering from a known psychiatric condition, or legally restricted.

II. EXPERIMENTAL OR RESEARCH PROCEDURE**A. Describe the objectives and/or goals of your research.**

- I aim to examine the ambivalence in Mark Morris' choreographic style by focusing on four aspects: approaches to genres and theme, expression of gender and sexuality, interest in and use of ethnicity, and musicality.
- By doing so, this study aims to provide an opportunity to rethink dance's aesthetical and cultural peculiarities as a visual and textual phenomenon.
- By examining a choreographer's artistic style from diverse perspectives in terms of gender and ethnicity, this study aims to argue about the fluidity of meaning in dance.
- As a reflective and comprehensive study on one of the significant choreographers who defines dance in our time, this study urges a fuller vision of the diverse and complex expanse of dance study.

B. Please describe the intended experimental or research procedure. This should include a description of what the subject will experience or be required to do. Please attach a copy of all questionnaires or instruments to be used.

- I will arrange the interviews with Mark Morris in advance.

- I will interview the choreographer, Mark Morris, and ask him questions about his artistic direction and perspectives in choreographing a dance, focusing on *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), *The Hard Nut* (1991), and *King Arthur* (2006).
- The statements in “non written consent form” will be announced to him before the interviews.
- Besides questions and answering, the subject will not experience any particular activity manipulated by me.
- For the clear documentation of Mark Morris’ statements, the interviews will be audiotaped with the consent of Mark Morris.

C. Will the subjects be deceived in any way? If yes, please describe below.

The subject will not be deceived in any circumstance. The interview will be performed based on the questionnaires submitted to IRB, and the questions and discussions will focus on his artistic perspectives and directions.

D. To what extent will the routine activities of the subject be interrupted during the course of the study?

The routine activities of the subject will not be interrupted during the course of the study. An interview will take place at an appointed time and space with mutual agreement in advance.

E. Indicate any compensation for the subjects.

No compensation will be given for the subject.

III. DATA CONFIDENTIALITY

A. What procedure(s) will you use to insure confidentiality of the data? How will you preserve subject anonymity?

- Because this study examines your artistic characteristics, information received will be recorded in such a way that your identity will remain disclosed.
- With the prior consent of Mark Morris, the (part of) content of interview might be used as a source for researches for a dance conference or a future publication about Mark Morris.

IV. CONSENT PROCEDURES

A. Attach copy of consent form to be used (Please note that if consent form is more than one (1) page, the title of the study must be on the signature page.

OR

If non-written consent is to be used, attach a statement describing exactly what the subjects will be told.

A non-written consent is attached.

B. Describe how you will handle consent procedure for minors, mentally challenged persons, and persons with significant emotional disturbances.

This research only target one adult choreographer, and will not include any minors, mentally challenged persons, or persons with significant emotional disturbances.

V. BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

A. How will any one subject benefit from participation in this study?

As a comprehensive study on Mark Morris, this research will be a valuable academic and historical archive for Mark Morris and *Mark Morris Dance Group*. A copy of my dissertation will be donated to the company for their documentation.

B. How will society, in general, benefit from the conduct of this study?

- This research is expected to promote dance scholars and audiences' interest in Mark Morris by offering them an opportunity to interpret Mark Morris' choreographic style from academic and comprehensive perspectives.
- By providing an opportunity to rethink dance's aesthetical and cultural peculiarities, this study is expected to urge the diverse and complex expanse of dance study.

VI. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS TO SUBJECTS

A. Describe any aspects of the research project that might cause discomfort, inconvenience, or physical danger to the subjects.

This research project will not cause any discomfort, inconvenience, or physical danger to the subject. The interviews will be performed with the subject's consent at a time and in a location upon which we agree in advance of the interviews. Also, as a renowned choreographer who had numerous interview experiences with critics, reporters, and writers, the subject is expected to be accustomed to the interview protocol.

B. Describe any long range risks to the subjects.

This research project is not expected to pose any long range risks to the subject. The subject will participate in the interviews voluntarily and will not experience any verbal or physical harm by this research. Also, the subject is free to refuse or withdraw the participation at any time. The subject will be notified about this right before the interviews.

C. What is the rationale for exposing subjects to these risks?

This research project is not expected to pose any risks to the subject.

Non-Written Consent form

Title of the Study: Mark Morris on Dream and Nightmare: The Ambivalence of Mark Morris' Choreographic Style in *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), *The Hard Nut* (1991), and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* (2008).

Doctoral Adviser Committee Chair: Dr. Luke Kahlich

Investigator Name: Hwan Jung Jae

Phone Number: 718-530-4986 Email: hwan@temple.edu

Dance department, Temple University, Philadelphia

We are currently engaged in a study of your (Mark Morris) choreographic style, in particular Morris' choreographic style that appears in three works: *Dido and Aeneas* (1989), *The Hard Nut* (1991), and *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare* (2008). To help us gain further insights into this area we will ask you to participate in an interview examining your choreographic style and direction emerged in your works mentioned above.

1. This research will not cause any discomfort, inconvenience, or physical danger to you and your routine activities will not be interrupted during the course of the study.
2. Your participation in this project is totally voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your participation at any time.
3. Because this study examines your artistic characteristics, your identity (name) will remain disclosed.
4. For the clear documentation of your statement, this interview will be audiotaped. However, you are free to refuse it at any time during interview.
5. (The part of) this interview might be used as a source for a future study for a dance conference or a publication on Mark Morris.

We welcome questions about the experiment at any time. Questions about your rights as a research subject may be directed to Mr. Richard Throm, Office of the Vice President for Research, Institutional Review Board, Temple University, 3400 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19140, (215) 707-8757.

APPENDIX B

MARK MORRIS INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

First Interview Questionnaires (October 23, 2008)

- There are contradictory viewpoints of you as a choreographer, ranging from “the last true inheritor of the modern dance tradition (Siegel)” to “an innovator of post modern dance (Acocella),” and from “new classicism (Jowitt)” to “a crusader for the politically correct cause of our times (Siegel).” What do you think about these contradictory viewpoints, and how would you describe yourself as an artist?
- I think that ambivalence is a pivotal characteristic of your choreographic style. For instance, in your works, you show both utopian vision and its dark side, providing humor and bitterness at the same time. In terms of movement, you show the virtuosity of dancers while using many ordinary movements or folk-dance inspired movements. What do you think about the ambivalence in your works?
- *The Hard Nut, Dido and Aeneas, and King Arthur* were reinterpretations of their original versions. Did you have specific reasons to work on these so called “classics”? If so, what is the meaning of “classic” in your word?
- In recreating *The Hard Nut, Dido and Aeneas, and King Arthur*, you departed from their original narratives. When you choreographed them, how did the original narrative or style inspire you in conceiving a new story or style?
- How would you describe your integration with other genres (ballet or opera)? And what is the focal point of incorporating dance and other genre?
- You challenge and distort the public notion of gender and sexuality in your works through the presentation of androgyny, exhibitionism of sexuality, and the inversion of sexual roles. What are your notions of gender and sexuality in dance, and how did they play in your works?
- Do you think that dance is autobiographical? If so, how would you project yourself in dance? Could you give an example from among the characters and dances you have played?

- You are popular among both dance aficionados as well as mainstream audiences, but you are famous for shocking your audience. In approaching audiences, how do you position yourself as a choreographer?
- You grew up in Seattle immersed in Serbian folk dance, and never had any conventional education from a dance institution or university. Instead, you started your career as a professional dancer and choreographer early in your life. How have your past experiences (early entrance to the professional field and the lack of conventional education) influenced your style as an artist? Do you think that they have nurtured your challenges and adventures as an artist?
- In your works, you use many folk dance inspired movements without any contextual relevance. Is there any specific reason in referencing ethnic/folk dance? Also for you, what do these ethnic/folk dances mean? As you once mentioned, are they just the “fuel for choreography”?
- Some critics (Siegel) think that your use of ethnic/folk dances is a form of cultural imperialism because you appropriated them in your “modern dance” without its cultural context. What do you think about this criticism?
- *Dido and Aeneas* is based on an opera and you use its original music in your show, presenting dancers and singers together on the stage. How would you explain your incorporation of these two genres? Is a naturalistic cohesion for you or a kind of challenge? Do you think that it is a visualization of music or pure enjoyment of musical composition in dance?
- Because of your musicality and widely diverse approaches to music, you are called the “musical man.” As a dancer and choreographer, what is an ideal relationship of music and dance?

Second Interview Questionnaires (April 29, 2010)

- You created a totally different, new Marie in *The Hard Nut*. She is not a dreamy child as described in many versions, but an adolescent who is encouraged to grow up and find her love. Your Marie is closer to Hoffman's original character, but is a modern girl. Can you tell me more about her character?
- In Act One, after the Nutcracker transforms into a human, the Nutcracker and Drosselmeier have a sweet and warm duet. Drosselmeier dances the same steps behind the scrim as the Nutcracker does in front of the scrim. (Later, the Nutcracker later repeats the gestures to Marie in their love duet) What were you implying by this duet?
- You described Drosselmeier as a gentle, young, attractive man who has ambivalent sides. How do you explain the relationship between Drosselmeier and Marie/the Nutcracker?
- When you describe romance or emotion (such as the Nutcracker and Marie's relationship) it is very gentle, sensitive and subtle. Acocella believes it is because you're a romantic person who discriminates between sex and love. What do you think about this opinion?
- In *The Hard Nut*, you freely mix Marie's everyday and fantastic worlds. After the two lovers find each other all the characters are mixed and dance together to celebrate the love. Is there any specific reason you intermingle the two worlds?
- You revived part of Hoffman's original narrative (the story of the Kingdom) which is ignored in most productions of *The Nutcracker*. What made you decide to include this part?
- In the last interview you mentioned that all of your dances talk about "love." You show the diverse aspects of love according to the pieces. (e.g., *The Hard Nut* implies "one needs to grow up to recognize love." *Dido and Aeneas* shows a dramatic, tragic love.) What is your definition of "love"? And what aspect of love do you want to show in your work? (Humanitarian? Or Eros? Or do you distinguish?)
- In *Dido and Aeneas*, although the dancer and singer talk about the same story, for me, their characters and emotions are very different. In the dying scene,

whereas the singing Dido expresses feminine fragility before her death, your Dido is calm and determined. How do you make such a balance between being faithful to music and creating your own characters or emotions?

- In *Dido and Aeneas*, while the dance follows Tate's libretto for the ancient love story you erase the story's historical background. You simplify the setting and costumes to an almost extreme extent. Is there any specific reason on this?
- In *Dido and Aeneas*, you created a lexicon of movements which are identified with specific words in the songs. For instance, words like "fate," "press'd", "torment"," are connected to a specific movement. How did you create these movements and their relationships to their meanings in the narrative?
- Except for Aeneas, many of the dancers play two characters that are in conflict throughout the narrative. Dido and the Sorceress is the same person and the Sorceress is Anti-Dido. Did you intend to show the ambivalence of human nature through this double casting?
- You performed Dido and the Sorceress until 2000. You split these two roles for your dancers and now they alternate performances. (You cast Amber Darragh for Dido and Brandon McDonald for the Sorceress). How did you make the decision to split the roles and how was it? is there any specific reason you assign them to the different sexes?
- In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, your Mercutio seems to have a crush on Romeo. (Many researchers said that Shakespeare implied their erotic relationship). At the ball, he touches and kisses Romeo in public. Because Mercutio is played by a girl, this relationship shows ambivalent meanings in terms of gender and sexuality. How do you describe their relationship? (A silly joke? love which hovers between friendship and desire? Or another Juliet?)
- Verona is a patriarchal society where a woman's role is very limited. But you give the two genders equal standing. For instance, in the street, a girl first kicks a man and he seizes her collar as if she were a man. Juliet is described as an independent, determined girl When Juliet's father arranges her marriage, instead of falling into hysteria, she calmly leaves for the church. Prokofiev actually wrote a note "Juliet's hysteria" for this part). What do you think about these changes in describing women in Verona.
- In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, you hired two female dancers for Mercutio and Tybalt and they look like real men playing male roles. It was interesting because sometimes you intend to show "imperfect imitation of gender"

and emphasize the differences between genders. What are you trying to show with this gender inversion?

- In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, there is no male dancing a female role. Is there any specific reason for this?
- In *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, you show the big, warm and erotic love duet. Compared to your earlier works, such as *The Hard Nut* or *Dido and Aeneas*, your description of love is much more romantic. Is this because of a change of your perspective or is it because of the narrative itself?
- At the end of *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, as the lovers escape from Verona, the families reconcile and dance together. The deep antagonism suddenly disappears. Also in *The Hard Nut* you gave a large group of dancers involving all the characters, regardless their relationships within the story. What were you trying to convey through these “reconciliations”?
- You choreographed the happy ending scene based on the Prokofiev’s original scenario in *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*. For me because of the change of ending, the whole dance looks different. How did this new ending work for you when you directed the production?
- I reviewed your references for *Romeo and Juliet, On Motifs of Shakespeare*, (announced on the official website), and it was interesting to see some of your movement motives from these sources (e.g. young lovers’ “palm to palm” motif in Shakespeare, the circle dance motive at the ball in Zeffirelli’s film. *Romeo and Juliet*’s picturesque poses with two-dimensional angles, reminiscent of Simone Martini’s paintings). How did these cross references inspire your choreography?
- Prokofiev thoroughly describes every scene in his scenario for *Romeo and Juliet*. Did you reference his notes for your choreography? Was there any difficulty or challenge in choreographing to this new music?

APPENDIX C

IRB EXEMPTION LETTER



**Office for Human Subjects
Protections
Institutional Review Board**
Medical Intervention Committees A1 & A2
Social and Behavioral Committee B

3400 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140
Phone: 215.707.3390
Fax: 215.707.8387
e-mail: richard.throm@temple.edu

MEMORANDUM

To: **KAHLICH, LUKE**
DANCE (2232)

From: Richard C. Throm
Institutional Review Board

Date: 19-Sep-2008

Re: Exempt Request Status for IRB Protocol:
11997: Mark Morris on Dream and Nightmare: The Ambivalence of Mark Morris'
Choreographic Style in Dido and Aeneas (1989), The Hard Nut (1991) and King
Arthur (2006)

It has been determined by Expedited Review that this study qualifies for exemption status as follows:

It has been determined by review that the study qualifies for an **Exemption Status as it is an Oral History Project**. Exemption is also based on position of the Oral History Association indicating oral history of this nature is excluded from oral history review.

Nothing further is required from you at this time; however, if anything in your research design should change, you must notify the Institutional Review Board immediately.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at 215-707-8757.