

# A Linha Curva

GCSE Dance (8236)

**Video transcript for interview with Senior Rehearsal Director Mikaela Polley**

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**< Mikaela Polley, Senior Rehearsal Director >**

**Could you introduce yourself please?**

I'm Mikaela Polley and I'm the Senior Rehearsal Director at Rambert. I first met Itzik Galili the choreographer for A Linha Curva when he came to stage the work for Rambert in 2009. I was the rehearsal director for the work at that time, and I worked with Itzik and also his assistant that came from the company in Brazil, where he created the work. I worked alongside the two of them as they taught the work to the company dancers, and I continued to look after that work once the first shows were up and running, and as it toured around our venues around the UK. I have now come back to work on the restaging of A Linha Curva for the present company of dancers for our May 2016 season at Sadler's Wells.

**What was the initial stimulus for this choreography?**

A Linha Curva is essentially an abstract work. It doesn't have a particular story that it's trying to tell the audience as such. It has a large cast of 28 dancers and there are several ensemble scenes where the dancers are just dancing movement that really has a Brazilian, kind of, feel to it and they're having fun and within that, they're moving across the space in a very structured way. Then there are some scenes within the work which does have a very slight narrative to it. It's really about looking at how Brazilian men and women might interact with each other. How the men might interact with each other as a group and how they, potentially, might be showing off to each other or competing with each other.

**What would you say this dance work is about?**

A Linha Curva essentially is an abstract work. It's not telling a story to the audience as such, but what it is, is conveying a sense of fun and celebration to the audience. There are some large group sections where the dancers are in very clear formations and lines and that, I think, gives a sense of the samba parades that you might see in Brazil. Also, amongst these group sections are some more narrative scenes, and I feel they're really an observation of Brazilian society and how men and women might interact with each other. How men might interact with each other, perhaps showing off to each other or competing with each other.

**Can you tell us about how the ideas were developed?**

I think one of the really important components to A Linha Curva is the lighting grid. The lighting grid you see on the floor, and it's a coloured chequerboard, essentially. The lights are changing in formation throughout the work and the dancers, really, are being dictated where to move in the space by the change of the lights in the space. It's like the lights are pulling the dancers into their next space, in order to do their next set of movements. I think this really gives an essence of a samba parade. The other narrative scenes, I think, are really inspired by Brazilian life and Brazilian culture. The men and the women are interacting. They're using their voices. They're

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calling out to each other. The men are also interacting with each other and perhaps dancing and, sort of, initiating another dancer to come into the space and dance. I think this is really, again, inspired by Brazilian life.

### **How did Itzik approach making A Linha Curva?**

Well, as I said, the lighting grid is an essential part of A Linha Curva and really is the driving force of the ensemble group works. The movement material for the piece was really generated by the dancers in Brazil. I know that Itzik gave some tasks to the dancers and he asked them to create a short solo, perhaps just two or three sets of eight counts, and some of them, I think, used some improvisation to create their solos and these became the basis for the motifs of the work. Each of those singular movement phrases were then taught to the rest of the company of dancers. So, he had a series of movement phrases that he could then work with, to then structure the large group work. So, Itzik had a collection of movement phrases from the dancers that he was able to use to then structure the large ensemble dance sections. From these individual phrases, he was then able to work with the dancers to create some duet sections. So, the men working with the women to have small duets that are then performed in a series of canon, which is the dancers moving and starting the phrase four counts or two counts after one couple, so it has a ripple effect across the stage. You see that once in a diagonal and also once in a straight line.

There's also within the work a section for the five men, which you see, and there are also three solos as well. One of those solos is actually improvisation and each night that solo will be different, if you were to come and see the show, because the dancer isn't setting the movement to repeat it every night. They are given that freedom to use improvisation and to really live in the moment on that particular solo.

### **How did Itzik create and develop the material for A Linha Curva?**

We've talked about the individual phrases that became the basis for the work for A Linha Curva. These individual solo phrases were created by the dancers in Brazil, in the company in Brazil that he created the work on, and they were then taught to all the company dancers. So, every dancer knew a selection of motifs, really, that would become the basis of the work. It then became Itzik's decision to decide how they would interlink with each other, how many times they would be repeated, how they would go in order. So, one phrase might join to another phrase, but it might change according to how he wanted the group to develop the work. Also, as well as these, sort of, bank of movement phrases you will see that there are a number of duet phrases that also appear in the work, and you see these happen in a canon formation. So, one couple will start the duet and then another couple will start it four counts later. This creates a ripple effect down the stage. In the first group section you see this happen on a diagonal, and in the final group section you see this happen in a straight line. So different formations but still with a canon of movement happening across the stage.

You'll see in those duet phrases that sometimes the legs are swinging across the dancer's head and I think that really captures that essence of what we know about the martial art of Capoeira. If anyone's ever seen videos of how that is performed, you see the dancers, sort of, dancing opposite each other and they might swing their leg and the other person may be ducking underneath it, and I think that's apparent in the duets.

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### **Are there any particular motifs or phrases that are essential to this work?**

There are a large number of movement phrases that really are the basis of this work, and I think they are essential to the group sections. They appear several times throughout the work, so there's a repetition of these motifs throughout A Linha Curva and I think the audience really begin to recognise these individual dance phrases. They might be linked differently and they might have different facings, but they do essentially form a very strong part to the large ensemble work.

### **What is the structure of this dance?**

I think the really striking thing about A Linha Curva is that it's a large ensemble work for 28 dancers. This really gives the piece a certain feel, seeing that many dancers performing together on stage. The large ensemble sections, the dancers are really interacting with the lights and it really is the lighting grid that is defining the structure for the dancers. It's quite regimented, the lines are very straight and the grid-like patterns are interchanging and determining where the dancers move in the space. Within that, the space then also opens out and the lighting grid disappears to open up the stage space for the dancers. Then, it becomes about how the dancers start interacting with each other, as men might interact with women, how men might interact with each other, and it opens up the space for these more narrative scenes to play out in front of the audience.

### **How would you describe the dance style of this work?**

The dance style of A Linha Curva is essentially based around the contemporary dance technique, but on top of that, there are the influences that were generated by the company of dancers he actually created the work on in Brazil. So, thinking back to the initial stimulus of Brazilian culture and samba dancing, you can see in the movement there's a real freedom within the hips in which they swing across in some of the movement motifs. Also, the torso is really able to move freely and a little bit differently, perhaps, to some of the normal techniques that people might use as they're doing their contemporary classes on a day-to-day basis. So, you've got that mixture, the contemporary language, if you like to call it that, intermixed with these influences of samba dancing, and I think, also, the company of dancers themselves in Brazil, really, their personalities perhaps are, kind of, imprinted on the movement as well.

### **Can you give us an example of Itzik's individual choreographic style?**

From working with Itzik Galili on A Linha Curva, I could really see how he wanted the particular movement phrases to be executed. Each phrase, although it moves extremely fast in time with the music, he didn't want the movement to become tense and rigid. It needed to have a fluidity and expansiveness to it, and whilst the dancers are reaching out along through their arms and through their feet, there is always a softness to the final extremities of their lines.

### **What decisions did Itzik make about the number and gender of the dancers?**

A Linha Curva has a cast of 28 dancers. Fifteen of those are men and thirteen of them are women, so it's almost split equally down the middle.

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**Can you tell us about some of the staging decisions Itzik made about the piece?**

So, Itzik, as well as being the choreographer for *A Linha Curva*, also was the designer for the lights, and the costumes. He also made the decisions about how the stage would look. He made the decision to have the four percussionists playing the music live on a raised platform behind the dancers. We've talked about the lighting and the coloured chequerboard grid that we see on stage. The costumes are also brightly coloured. They comprise of a pair of shorts for the men and for the women, that are in a different number of colours, and with that there's also a black vest top that goes with the shorts. Across the black tops is a flash of colour, which is a zip that goes in different directions for different dancers. So, essentially the men and the women's costumes do look very similar. The music is by a band called Percossa, and they're a Dutch band and the music you can really hear the, sort of, samba influences from Brazil in the percussion. There's an array of instruments used on stage and one of those instruments, I think, people will have heard of. It's called the berimbau, which is used in Capoeira when they have their classes of Capoeira in Brazil.

**How do you want the audience to feel as they watch this work?**

I think the audience should really enjoy this work. The dancers are having fun. That's really what they are setting out to do when they start *A Linha Curva* and when they're performing it to the audience. There are lots of vocal sounds coming from the dancers. It really gives that sense of a carnival atmosphere. I really think the audience will just feel that energy and vibrancy from the dancers on stage, and they really should be having fun and I'd like to think that perhaps they leave the theatre wishing they could get up and join the dancers on stage.

**Are there any particular moments the audience should look out for?**

I think there are a number of moments in *A Linha Curva* that will really stand out to the audience. I think you really need to look out for those individual phrases that we've talked about, and to look out for them being repeated throughout the work. That really sets the scene for the large group sections. I think another really clever moment in the piece is when you see one of the men carrying on one of the dancers and he says to him, sort of, through acting, you know, 'I'd like you to show me something. Will you show me one of your skills?' and the male dancer, first of all, appears a bit shy and reticent to do that, and the other dancer is pleading with him, you know, 'Please, let's see something.' Then, literally, from nowhere, he starts doing a series of these turns in second, so that's the leg lifted to the side. He's got the arms up above his head and he does these wonderful turns, and they're really from the ballet technique, I would say. The other dancer, then, just suddenly starts leaping over his leg and ducking underneath it, and it's a real showcase of skill and often the audience applaud that.