dance touring partnership
presents
Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre
The Rite of Spring
and
Petrushka
Teachers’ Notes
for students of dance including Arts Award, GCSE, A Level and BTEC students

www.fabulousbeast.co.uk
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1. TEACHERS’ NOTES AND YOUR VISIT TO THE THEATRE

This pack has been designed to support dance for GCSE, AS and A Level dance students, BTEC Performing Arts students and those studying Arts Award at both Silver and Gold levels. It can also be of benefit to young people on Centre for Advanced Training (CAT Scheme) and Gifted and Talented programmes through offering a wider knowledge of the technical, creative and performance aspects of making dance theatre and developing a deeper knowledge of how a choreographer approaches his/her work.

The range of creative tasks echo the explorative approaches that Michael Keegan-Dolan takes in making his work and compliments the different aspects of the GCSE and A Level dance syllabi. These tasks can be delivered as ‘stand alone’ activities with extension tasks guiding you through further development of the choreography or suggestions in crafting a section of a dance piece.

It provides opportunities for students to both develop and practise their critical appreciation, choreography and performance skills.

The discussion tasks are focused on the work itself and the themes that inspired the work. They give students the chance to reference other subjects they are studying and understand the broad range of inspirations that a choreographer can have when making a new production.

The research elements encourage students to be aware of the context of the historical or cultural themes relevant to the works and may be of particular interest to those studying Silver and Gold Arts Award.

You will also find additional resources, reviews and links to support further research.

The website gives up to date information about the tour, workshops, video clips, competitions and blogs by the company.

Your Visit to the Theatre

Your visit to the theatre can provide the opportunity for students to increase their knowledge, document their experience and develop independence.

You can support this through:

- Engaging students in some preliminary research of the dance company, choreographer and the works
- Leading a discussion prior to your visit to develop an awareness of live performance in a theatre. For example, the audience, the stage, proscenium arch and cyclorama, lighting, design
- Setting an assignment with key points for the students to consider during their theatre visit

You can support an increased independence through encouraging students to:

- Access the theatre’s website to establish its location, information around performance times, the length of the show and any other relevant information
- Work out the quickest way to get to the theatre
- Print a map or a list of the train/tube/bus times

With the performance fresh in everyone’s minds, you may wish to ask students to share initial responses with each other during the interval. It also gives young people the chance to share their opinions without judgement. Attending a Post Show Discussion can be very beneficial. There may be some questions that the students would like to ask the choreographer or dancers directly and it is an environment where new insight is always found.
MICHAEL KEEGAN-DOLAN
Director and Choreographer

Michael Keegan-Dolan was born in 1969 in Ireland where he still lives with his partner and two children. Over the last 25 years Michael Keegan-Dolan has worked as a dancer and choreographer in theatre, dance and opera creating work that is both controversial and entertaining, pleasing and challenging.

In 1997, Michael founded Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre. Described as “one of the most daring and highly original dance theatre companies in the world,” Fabulous Beast is an international ensemble based in County Longford, Ireland, led by Michael as artistic director.

The company is best known for several groundbreaking productions, delivered in a unique style blending the raw beauty of movement with a theatrical narrative, speech and song. These productions include two Olivier award-nominated productions: Giselle (2003) and The Bull (2005), and also James, Son of James (2007). The Rite of Spring (2009), a co-production with English National Opera was also nominated for an Olivier Award. Rian (2011), a co-production with Sadler’s Wells, won a Bessie Award in 2013 and was nominated for an Irish Times Theatre Award. Over 2012 and 2013 Rian has toured the world, visiting UK, Germany, Spain, USA, Australia, France, Hong Kong, Singapore and Austria.

In 2012, he directed and choreographed a new production of Handel’s masterpiece Julius Caesar at the London Coliseum, for English National Opera. Also in 2012, Michael was awarded the Meadows Prize by the Southern Methodist University, Dallas, which involved a residence with Irish Writer, Enda Walsh.

Keegan-Dolan’s other choreographic work includes: Ariodante, Manon and Alcina (ENO); The Rake’s Progress (La Monnaie, Royal Opera House Covent Garden); Faust and Macbeth (Royal Opera House); The Duchess of Malfi, Carousel and The Oedipus Plays (National Theatre, London); Idomeneo (De Vlaamse Opera); The Love for Three Oranges (Cologne Opera); Pique Dame and Ariodante (Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich), as well as Ariodante and Manon (Houston Grand Opera).


Michael Keegan-Dolan is an associate artist at Sadler’s Wells.
http://fabulousbeast.net/

“Dancing is the art of transformation, the integrated, rhythmic, co-ordinated movement of the limbs in space, the feet the engine and the hands the expression. The sides of the body create shape and as the shape of the body changes so does the space the dance inhabits. This alchemy evokes spontaneous and universal symbols and rhythms.”

From Dancing to be United, Michael Keegan-Dolan July 2012
A CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL KEEGAN-DOLAN

DTP’s Education Consultant Anne Colvin talks to Michael Keegan-Dolan about his work.

Influences and Inspiration

**Anne:** Can you give us some insight into your work and share with us your influences and inspiration?

**Michael:** I didn’t get to start dancing until pretty late. I think I was about 17 before I took my first formal class. But I do remember being interested in dance much earlier than that, and even thinking about wanting to be a professional dancer, which was an unconventional thought for a boy growing up on the North Side of Dublin in the 70’s. But I can also remember a conversation along the lines of ‘….I want to be a dancer; can I go to a dance class?’ and then the response from my mother being “Yes, of course!” but knowing that this was never going to happen for real. My parents, both intelligent people, didn’t take the idea of me wanting to be a professional dancer seriously. It was understandably beyond reason for them.

Therefore the idea of being a dancer was put away for a long time. My friends and I started going to discos, at about 14 or 15 and I used to dance a lot. I became aware as a young teenager that I could attract attention, I could command space, I could cause trouble through my dancing. Things tended to happen when I danced. And they were usually in one of two categories. One was that the local hard nuts wanted to physically attack me, and the other was that many of the girls, usually the girlfriends of the hard nuts, wanted to dance with me.

So, once I started dancing in discos my life became more complicated but much more exciting. I used to have to run home from school, go in the back way to discos, and arrange to be picked up at the back door afterwards. The longer this went on the more intense it became. It was like I had a bounty on my head. So I suppose I was learning about the power of dancing quite early on and in truth not that much has changed. The critics attack you and the audience or most of them support you or vice versa.

A couple of years on from this, we staged a show at school. We hadn’t done anything theatrical until then, we were 16. It was our transition year the show was with the girls from the school up the road. It was the way to meet girls. You see I was at an all boys school and up until that point we had little or no interaction with girls. We had to audition and I got in to the show. It became clear to me at least, that I was the best dancer, of all the boys, and I was given the main spot in the performance. It was here that I had my moment in front of 300, 400 parents where I thought, “I have power here!”. I didn’t quite know that was what I was experiencing but unconsciously I knew that there was something going on.

And then I decided that I wanted to be a dancer so I went to a dance class. It was a jazz ballet class run by the woman who had run the show with the convent girls and there were a few other boys there. I went with a friend of mine who was pretty tough. He played rugby and he was good. His mother taught ballroom dancing so he was a good dancer too. He knew about steps and choreography. He was my ticket, my protection. He is still my great friend and is now one of our leading orthopaedic surgeons. At that class I was absolutely certain that dancing was what I was going to do with my life. This was when I told people at school, careers guidance teachers and my parents. It got a bit complicated then, because they all thought I was throwing my future away!

I did my ‘A’ Levels, which we call the Leaving Certificate, and I did really well, I was smart. My dad and I had made a deal that if I got 4 A’s in my Leaving Cert. that I could do whatever I wanted, but he was sad and disappointed when I decided to leave Ireland to go to Ballet school in London. That was a difficult time.

I had got into Trinity College, Dublin to study Law. The party line was that I was going to be a barrister. I was a good debater at school and had the gift of the gab from a young age, which is odd because I chose to be a dancer, where traditionally nobody speaks. I did a foundation course in Dublin for a year while I was doing auditions in London and I got into Central School of Ballet, and into Rambert School but I decided not to go. I had the gift of the gab from a young age, which is odd because I chose to be a dancer, where traditionally nobody speaks. I did a foundation course in Dublin for a year while I was doing auditions in London and I got into Central School of Ballet, and into Rambert School but I decided not to go. I remember London Contemporary Dance School put a proviso on me because they were pretty unsure about my ability. They told me that I wouldn’t survive the training because of my ‘knees’. Central wanted me because I was a boy and wildly enthusiastic, I guess. They took me and I spent three years at the Central School of Ballet. And that’s another story.

**Anne:** And around that time were you aware that you wanted to make work as well?

**Michael:** I didn’t think about that at all until I got to Central, where all of these creative thought processes started to happen unconsciously and looking back I can see that there was an unconscious intelligence guiding me. I was young and kind of clueless. You’re not aware of things in the way you are when you are forty four. So when I was at ballet school I guess that I figured out pretty quickly that I wasn’t going to be Anthony Dowell or Rudolf Nurseyev. And although I was arguably the worst dancer technically in my class at ballet school I still thought I was great! I thought that there was something really special about me, which...
was what kept me going but also caused me a great deal of suffering. In order to avert the pain of the fact that I wasn’t going to be the greatest dancer in the world I started making work in my first year of ballet school. It was kind of odd, I had only started dancing seriously about a year before and there I was making work. And straight away the work I was making got attention.

**Anne:** What kind of work was it?

**Michael:** It was very theatrical. It was more theatre dance as opposed to dance theatre. And with stories, characters, not altogether different from the work I make now. So, this was my ticket to survive ballet school because I was pretty miserable there – being stiff and being pronounced and uncoordinated, paranoid and aggressive. So the creative thing really got me through it. Christopher Gable [co-founder of Central School of Ballet] was my mentor at Central. He got interested in me as a choreographer and encouraged me to make work so I think from really early on, that was the way I was going to go. My limitations became a blessing, they guided me to my path. I started choreographing very early in my formation as a dancer and that was good because it can take a long time to learn how to do it [choreograph] well. There are so many skills that you need, other than just making the steps, in my opinion.

**Anne:** Did these beginnings help to make things more visible for you in terms of your focus and your journey?

**Michael:** Yes, with a lot of resistance you can see things more clearly. In my case there was a lot of resistance, many obstacles that I had to overcome and I still feel that I’m somehow working through the remnants of that resistance.

**The Seed of the Idea**

**Anne:** That makes sense, given the two pieces that you’re touring! How does the seed of the idea start?

**Michael:** It’s connected with how your unconscious intelligence guides you. It starts in a deep place. I don’t sit down and plan. I don’t plan at all, but I try to pay attention. And there’s usually a period where I’ve finished a piece of work; a quiet period, it’s like a newly ploughed field, empty but full of potential. It’s a bit like now, where I’ve made the double bill and I’m waiting. And then something comes. Usually more than one thing surfaces. It’s like fishing, where lots of small ideas surface but it’s necessary to wait for the big idea. Once this idea gets rooted in my mind it won’t go away, that’s how it works for me. I don’t call it my work much, sometimes I honestly don’t recognise what I have made or feel that I’ve even made it. That sounds self-effacing, but it’s not meant like that. I just don’t plan it too much and it kind of drives itself once the process starts.

**Anne:** Where do you think that drive comes from?

**Michael:** It depends. I do think that there’s a universal intelligence that you can tune into that creates things. So, as an artist I believe it’s important to do whatever is necessary to connect with that intelligence. The clearer you are the better the connection and then the manifestation will be more clear, more moving, more beautiful.

There are all sorts of forces that influence the way you see, influences from people, from your parents, from your ancestors, from your cultural imprint, the school you went to, who you meet, they’re all in there in the mix. And you can make work from those places. You can make work driven by your intellect, from bad experiences, from anger, from wherever but in my view, the most important work comes from somewhere deeper than all of these places.

**Anne:** So, how do you make sure you don’t lose the clarity of portrayal?

**Michael:** Then you need technique. You need to learn all these technical tools. But when you make work about anger, over a period of time, you start to wonder why you’re angry. Then you get into another realm. And this is when your work can change. My work has changed a lot. Your perspective shifts. It can change very suddenly, which is very exciting if you’re prepared to go with it.

**Anne:** Can you give an example of that kind of change?

**Michael:** Yes, well you can see it in my work. For example, The Rite of Spring (2009) and Rian (2011), they’re extremely different pieces of work. If you compare Rian to Giselle (2003), Giselle is full of characters, full of grief, The Bull (2005) is full of anger and frustration, Rian is an extreme counterpoint, a celebration of where I’ve come from. It focuses on a whole other aspect of being. Rian is about the same place as Giselle and The Bull but it’s a big shift in how I choose to see things.

Being a dancer is so important. It’s an amazing profession, an amazing path, because it encourages transformation, you can completely change how you perceive reality, as you adapt your practice to meet the obstacles along the path. It can be very profound or it can be superficial where we just make pretty shapes to impress people. If you can get on the right track it can be a life path where you can carry on until you are very old. You can learn to see all the different elements and aspects of life through this practice but only if you’re committed to work at it. I would be very happy to walk this path until I die. I will dance until I die.
The Rite of Spring and Petrushka

Anne: When you talk about all of this it makes me think of The Rite of Spring and Petrushka, where they’ve come from and what you’re doing with them now. They have similarities with the original work yet they seem very personal.

Michael: And your question about the shift in perspective, I couldn’t have answered it better because it’s in the double bill. The Rite of Spring (2009), Petrushka (2013), they’re alike but they’re very different.

Anne: So, what’s the difference?

Michael: It’s hard to answer that but I think that one of the differences, very simply is that there’s no violence in Petrushka. The older I’ve got and the more I’ve worked, I’ve become very suspicious of what initially can present itself as a good idea. I try to have the courage to follow my intuition more and my intellect less. The intellect is the maker of what appears to be a good or a clever idea. Beware of good ideas!

In this case, we also have the music. I follow the music, I let the music speak to me, which can get you into all sorts of trouble and it doesn’t always result in the making of a great work. But it’s a curious guide and can take you to places you would never have planned to go.

But with The Rite I think, most simply, it’s much more violent than Petrushka. I guess the music is much more violent. But I don’t know whether I would want to do a piece now where people brandish knives or have sex with the ground or run around with dogs heads on or beat up an old man. I would be cautious about that, maybe I’d just be adding to the violence, adding to a pile of violent imagery that’s already out there, growing, rapidly.

Devising Process and Rehearsals

Anne: And do you work with the ideas in your head and bring dancers in part way through? Do you have a dance about yourself first? How do you work?

Michael: It’s changing all the time. I would dance. With a project like Stravinsky’s the music would be of primary importance and I would listen to that very carefully. There are two ways of listening to it. One would be purely technical – the technical analysis of the rhythms, of the meter, of the tempo. This is necessary to allow the creative process be easier and more fluid. And the other way of listening would be pure running with the imagination, listening to the music as it’s coming through your ears, and into your consciousness, and then allowing yourself to express it in your own ways, allowing it to become movement expressed through your body, through your arms and legs.

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Anne: And do you do this yourself?

Michael: Yes, I do a lot of that. But then, I don’t like to impose the movement on other people. Say there’s a section of Petrushka that I’ve listened to a lot – I’ve done my homework, technically, so there’s nothing rhythmically or musically that’s going to create a problem in the room. Time is really the enemy, when you’ve got a limited amount of time you don’t want to get bogged down with analyzing the structure, so I’ve done my technical work and I go in to the room having listened to the music myself so that we can jump in, in a very free way.

I would ask the pianist to play the section and I would start moving around. Some of the dancers would be interested and some of them wouldn’t. From the ones who are interested, one of them would come forward, take the lead and start moving around too. What I’ve brought to the rehearsal, they would take on and it would change and become kind of mine, kind of theirs, and it would then become something of its own. Another dancer would learn it, then another one, then another one, and it would keep shifting its identity. This can cause some consternation because some people would get confused or insecure with how the movement is evolving. But eventually it would find its own way and would become the choreography of the piece. It would be monitored through rehearsals to ensure that it wasn’t changing too much from its genesis, and if it was changing that the changes were good changes. I’d say the process is very organic and fluid.

The creative process in itself is like a dance. It goes from me to them, then back to me. I have no interest in watching people doing movements that aren’t theirs. It’s important that they feel that the movements are theirs. And that creates a very different atmosphere for the spectator, because you’re watching people who are moving naturally, and this can make the viewer feel good.

Anne: Do you continually work on the pieces?

Michael: Yes. For economic reasons I can only do that at certain times. With the co-producers we try to tie in re-rehearsal periods wherever we can. I keep at it, and I prepare myself to make the changes so little time is wasted. It’s always slowly getting better.

Collaboration

Anne: At what point do you bring in your co-collaborators?

Michael: I suppose that they would come in some way after the genesis of the idea. A lot would have gone on in my mind before I would talk to a designer, it varies from project to project. There are a few people who I have worked with consistently over a long period of time. Someone like Adam Silverman, our lighting designer. We would have
some casual conversations about the ideas that I would like and so forth. The designer would come in at some point, but it’s hard to exactly evaluate when. And there are probably other people who I don’t necessarily work with creatively in a professional sense, who I would just ask, “Oh, I’m thinking about this, what do you think?” And then carefully monitor their response. I find this to be a good way for me to learn about how good I feel about the idea.

The Audience

Anne: How do you like to connect with your audiences?

Michael: I like to connect with my audiences, for sure. I don’t like to think about it too much initially, in the early stages of creation. I need to focus on what’s going on, what’s happening. And then there’s the moment where the audience sees the work for the first time and something happens. And that needs to be very carefully observed. You learn so much about the work in that first exchange. Unfortunately, in the dance world, that first exchange can often be in a very high profile venue with thousands of people watching, which is difficult. But I train myself to be thick in my skin and keep working on the pieces after that first performance so that I resolve some of the issues that I only learn when the audience is present. For sure it’s so much about the audience.

Anne: Do you ever show a piece in preview in a bit more of a private way, and respond from an audience through that?

Michael: I think it’s a really good idea but it is all about time and money and how much you have of each. For example, with the creation and the premiere of the double bill in London (Spring 2013), the timing was really a consequence of a whole lot of other stuff going on with the company — and it was the centenary of The Rite. Sometimes there’s a bigger picture that is out of your control and you have to commit to a schedule that you can’t always change.

Anne: I guess then, you have to close your eyes and jump.

Michael: Yes, sometimes you do have to close your eyes and jump, but I do think that previews are a good idea and, based on the experience that I’ve just had, it would be a very smart idea to build a preview or several into any schedule, whatever the financial cost. But I suppose you can do as many previews as you want, but ultimately you have to jump in there. And do it for real.

Anne: The audience, do you get a response from them that tells you something? How do you read that?

Michael: Well, I usually sit in the middle of the audience and a lot of people think I’m crazy to put myself through that experience. More recently I’ve started sitting at the front because then I don’t see the audience so much but I can feel them the same. Well, you see, people often walk out of my shows and I still find that quite difficult but less so as I grow older.

Anne: That’s what happened with The Rite of Spring the very first time too!

Michael: Yes, I guess so. But what I’m trying to say is that I love to watch the audience but I can only watch them so much because you can feel pretty raw and exposed when you are responsible for what is being proposed on stage. But, say I’m in a good place and the show is going relatively well, then I would sit and try to sense their reactions. You can sense an audience getting bored; a thousand people getting bored together, you can really sense that. So I would look at that and ask myself why. And then I would bring in the technical tools. It’s often to do with the simple things. Maybe there’s unfocused lighting, it could just be too dark, or the movement isn’t clear, or it’s too slow or too fast. And when you look at those kinds of things you slowly resolve things. But really you only learn about your work when there are lots of people’s eyes on it.

Anne: Then that makes it different for the dancers and how they perform?

Michael: Yes. It’s very interesting with the dancers as well. When you meet a new dancer, you never really know about that dancer until you see them stand up in front of, in our case, a big audience. You don’t know them until you’ve seen them in that situation. And I love watching that moment. When you’re watching a skillful artist handle themselves in that situation with that intensity, you really become very fond of them. I admire them so much. When you see a dancer create a connection between themselves and a large group of people through their movement, that’s a great thing to behold. I find that inspiring.

Anne: And does that mean that at this point you’re letting go of the creative process?

Michael: You’ve hit the nail on the head. That’s the great stress though, because there’s nothing I can do in that moment. Only be there.

When working with this kind of communal creative process and something goes wrong, the sense of community serves us very well. Because there’s a real process there that’s genuinely made and not imposed, there’s a mutual respect. When something goes wrong, we can refer back to the process so it’s easy to resolve and get past any obstacles. And that’s good.
Inspiration for The Rite of Spring and Petrushka

Anne: The Rite of Spring and Petrushka are famous ballets, both composed by Stravinsky. What influenced you in creating these works?

Michael: Like all choreographers I can remember when I first heard The Rite of Spring and for me I can also remember very vividly when I first heard Petrushka. They were at a time when I was trying to negotiate that move into dance that we talked about earlier. So they became really important. And then when I began reading around them, I started to learn about the creators involved. They became important and I started to admire them, to mythologise them. So, to go to these pieces and to work on them now they feel like the completion of that story and this is really interesting for me. Because I’m working in the same realm as these characters, Nijinsky, Roerich and Stravinsky and with the music that he wrote, and am probably negotiating musical challenges that Nijinsky had to negotiate when he was trying to choreograph the first production, I have become really close to these characters. I was also aware that these pieces, not Petrushka so much, but The Rite of Spring is so over choreographed. So many people have ownership of it and have such strong views. But it didn’t put me off.

The seed of the idea to choreograph The Rite of Spring came from watching a Donizetti opera at the Coliseum in London. I’d worked at the Coliseum as a choreographer for operas and when I was there watching this opera with its big orchestra, the idea just popped into my head, “I should do The Rite of Spring at the Coliseum, with their orchestra.” And I went up to the Artistic Director and told him at the interval, but I assumed that nothing would ever happen. And then he rang me about a year later, saying that their Musical Director wanted to conduct The Rite of Spring, and did I want to do it with a full orchestra. It doesn’t get a whole lot better than this! So we worked with a full orchestra and 23 dancers.

You recall we talked about the idea of unconscious intelligence, and when you submit to this you don’t have to do a whole lot other than connect with the right idea at the right time. It was kind of like that. I just got the idea and said it to one person and a huge project unfolded.

The Rite of Spring was in a double bill with Bartok’s Duke Bluebeard’s Castle [performed at the London Coliseum in partnership with ENO in 2009]. In order for me to revive it I had to find another piece to pair it with and Petrushka seemed like a really good idea and so this double bill became a homage to Stravinsky who is probably the greatest classical composers for dance of the 20th Century. That’s the story of how those pieces came to be alongside each other.

The Rite of Spring, 2013

Anne: It’s interesting that earlier you talked about anger and violence and your wish to move away from that. I understand that one of the reasons for changing the cast and have a more even presence of men and women was that you wanted to take the focus away from that angry, sexual power.

Michael: Yes, I did, but it was a consequence of other events as well. After 2010 I had pretty much formed a new ensemble. I’d moved away from the idea of having an ongoing ensemble a little earlier because it can create a lot of problems. I had a very strong and very nice group of dancers that I had worked with on Rian, who weren’t, in some ways, cut out to do The Rite of Spring. They were all so kind and gentle! But I felt connected with them and had enjoyed working with them. I was also interested to see how they would handle that piece. There were economic and practical reasons too. I had to reduce the cast from 23 dancers we had at the Coliseum, so there was no point in trying to do a compromised version. So, I thought, “Let’s do something completely radical and equalize the sexes.” And I suppose that working with these kinds of people was also reflecting the fact that I had shifted, I had moved through my angry phase and had no more patience for working with angry people. But, nonetheless, Stravinsky was writing a piece about a pagan, ancient and savage ritualistic world and what I have learned now through working with this more balanced group is that I do need to shift it back into the dark again. And I have already started that shifting. I’ve brought in two more men, and by the time it’s on tour in the UK there will probably be another man and one less woman, so I would concede that the first attempted shift into this new version didn’t entirely work. But Petrushka is working and will work even better for this tour. There’s an interesting dynamic that’s going on between these two pieces.

Petrushka, 2013

Anne: And Petrushka is more ethereal and subtle than The Rite of Spring.

Michael: Yes. I was trying to make it a double bill that were halves of something. And in some ways I thought of The Rite of Spring in elemental terms being earth and Petrushka being more like air. We talked about that a lot. The heavy dirty brownness of The Rite of Spring and the airy bright, light, white space, the silkiness of Petrushka.

Anne: And you’ve got the Shamanic Queen who appears in both.

Michael: I was trying to find ways to connect the two pieces and I used her to help with that. We have a new Shamanic Woman who started life
as a dancer, not an actress and she’s working really well. In Ireland this character is called The Cailleach, a post-menopausal woman, connected with the winter and she is here to teach us that the true nature of things is not always expressed through their superficial appearance.

**Musical and Cultural Influences**

**Anne:** You’ve talked a bit about Stravinsky’s music and its connection with your choreography. You also have a strong connection to your culture which dominates your work. Is that also true of your draw towards Celtic music?

**Michael:** Yes! I made a piece called *Rian* [2011] which is the Irish word for imprint, and we’re touring it a lot. It’s mostly Irish traditional music with a little bit of Malian. It was really interesting to move from classical music to traditional Irish and back to classical. I had directed a Handel opera around the same time, so to move from Handel to traditional Irish music to Stravinsky was interesting. There are such parallels. The way classical musicians behave and the way they are trained influences so much how their music is. *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* are complicated, but they’re inspired by folk tunes. Stravinsky was such a rip off merchant, using Slavic folk tunes from all over the former Soviet Union and, in *Petrushka*, even some French folk music, developed for a huge orchestra and woven together in an ultra-complicated fabric. Russian folk music is not that different from an Irish jig or a reel. We just tend to stick with the one bar time whereas the Slavs like to jump around from threes to fives to sevens. I love all that music, they’re not so different from one another.

The idea of the union of the music and the movement is really important to me, and what happens when this union is made skilfully. Something happens between the player and the dancer, something extraordinary evolves. And then the viewer participates. And somehow when they get it right. I don’t have the words to explain it, but it’s nothing to do with the character or the emotion, it’s just this lovely sensation that emanates. We succeeded in getting that feeling a lot in *Rian*. I was trying to find that feeling with *Petrushka*, but it was so difficult to hunt it down amidst all the musical-technical complexities one has to overcome first. *The Rite of Spring* is different, with it’s sequence of tableaux it’s kind of an assault. Stravinsky’s is a terrible man for tricking the dancers but unless they engage with his music deeply, they can’t enter that special space I’m talking about. With *Petrushka* you have to pay attention to the music in so many different ways.

**Anne:** What other music do you enjoy listening to?

**Michael:** At the moment I’m listening to some Malian music, to Toumani Diabate. He had inspired the man I had worked with on *Rian*. And I just came across him one night driving home. I heard him on a radio. You know when you hear something that just hits you and you feel suddenly connected? That’s what it was like. I’m very interested in Fela Kuti the Nigerian musician. And I was going to make a piece to his music but he’s so angry! Fela is all about confrontation, exposing corruption; And then you’ve Toumani who is so gentle. I think I’ll end up working with Toumani’s music.

I love folk music. I listen to a lot of Irish music as well, pretty much every day there’s something I listen to.

**Anne:** Do you play a musical instrument?

**Michael:** Yes. Toumani makes me dance. Irish music gets me dancing. Lots of Baroque music makes me dance, although since directing Julius Caesar with the ENO I haven’t really listened to as much Baroque music as I used to. It was a physically annihilating experience. The overall experience was fantastic, but I just got completely annihilated physically. So I need a bit of time to recover and to lick my wounds.

**Anne:** How do you think the double bill will appeal to a younger audience? How do you hope they might engage with the work?

**Michael:** There are so many aspects of the pieces that are exciting. There are so many things to look at. The work I make is in no way conceptual. It’s very direct and human. It’s full of colour and imagery and has vast changes of energy. *The Rite* is full of sex and violence. and *Petrushka*, when it’s working at its best, is very beautiful. And the dancing is exciting.

I don’t think age is an issue with my work. It can appeal to anyone if they come to it from an open place. It’s down to the individual if they decide to like it or not. Young and old, artistically educated, first timers. Some of the best audiences I’ve ever performed in front of have known nothing about the artform. And they ask the most extraordinary questions afterwards! Some think that because these ballets already exist, I have made an exact recreation of the originals. The work isn’t trying to be anything more than it is, there’s a directness to it.
Some Thoughts from the Dancers

We asked two of Fabulous Beast’s dancers, Mani (Emmanuel) Obeya and Louise Mochia to answer some questions about being part of the choreographic process and touring the works.

Mani (Emmanuel) Obeya
Nigerian born dancer and singer-songwriter Mani grew up in England. He trained at Arts Educational School, Rambert and at Dance Theatre of Harlem. He began working with Michael Keegan-Dolan in 2003 and has performed in Rian, Julius Caesar, Giselle, The Bull and James, Son of James. He performed as a soloist in Heidelberg and Mannheim State Theatres, before working with TanzTheater Wien and Volkoper Wien for a bit. He is also a guest performer with The Forsyth Company and Unterwegs Theatre and is currently the vocalist with the Austrian band Sofa Surfers.

Louise Mochia
Half Danish and half Ghanaian, Louise was born and raised in Denmark where she started dancing at the age of seven. She has been London-based since 2006 and is a BA graduate of London Contemporary Dance School. After her degree, Louise was awarded the danceWEB Scholarship Programme, a five-week residency at Vienna International Dance Festival. Louise has performed with Fabulous Beast in Rian and English National Opera’s production of Julius Caesar. Aside from her work as a dancer, Louise is the founder of BELLYFLOP Magazine, an artist-led online contemporary dance publication based in London.

What was your draw towards Fabulous Beast and Michael’s choreography?

Mani: I have been working with Michael for 10 years and still find his work and his approach to dance, theatre and choreography unique. There is a realisation that there are none of the boundaries that other choreographers have when they make work, and that can be very freeing.

Louise: I really like how Michael works with and brings together the different elements. His work is very musical and holistic, in the sense that the dance and the music are deeply interconnected and always existing as part of the whole.

The Rite of Spring and Petrushka have a long history in both dance and music. They have been explored and developed for classical and contemporary ballet companies and in contemporary dance. How significant is it for you to contribute to the legacy of these works?

Mani: I feel Michael’s Rite of Spring and Petrushka succeeded in being absolutely true to the sometimes incredibly difficult music without being overshadowed by it. At the same time he managed to stay inventive and expressive. I think the audience leaves feeling differently to when they come into the theatre to see the works. That’s an important and significant contribution to theatre in general; work that is a communication, a dialogue rather than a speech.

Louise: I am grateful to work so closely with a piece of music so celebrated and important, to get to know it absolutely inside out. The Rite of Spring is breathtaking and the speed in Petrushka is just extraordinary. I feel very inspired and lucky to get to dance to such exciting music.

What are your favourite parts of the pieces? Why is that?

Mani: In Rite, one of my favourite parts of the piece is the metamorphosis into the dog men. I have no idea what the audience sees but it feels like one of the big bits in the piece. I think my favourite part is the dance after we put on the dresses that leads to the climax of the piece. My favourite part of Petrushka is the solo danced by Rachel. It’s incredibly dextrous and technically really difficult but that’s not what you are thinking about when you watch it. You just see the music.

Louise: I find the beginning of The Rite of Spring very astonishing and at the same time frightening. As the curtain is brought up, we are all seated upstage in a line, facing out towards the many faces of the audience and it is all quiet, sort of like the calm before the storm. The feeling of this moment is always very present with me. In Petrushka we get to really watch each other, and there are many strange and beautiful dances and relationships happening. Rachel Poirier’s part as Petrushka is strong and intense and then eventually free, and Saku Koistinen has a wonderfully mysterious solo as the Moor. There is a dance that is more or less only danced by the women, which feels like a fun and unifying moment between us.

How different were the rehearsal processes for The Rite of Spring and Petrushka?

Mani: Personally, the rehearsal process for Rite was a lot easier than with Petrushka. The music was so challenging in Petrushka that for a long time I had to count constantly. It made it very difficult to create space in my head for everything else I needed to think about when dancing it. Over time this has changed but it was quite daunting initially.
Louise: Very different, as *Petrushka* was made from scratch in Kanjiza, Serbia, while it was still winter. And then we learnt *The Rite of Spring* during the second creation process which took place in Galway. This piece was made and performed already four years ago but with a bigger cast, so it was approached at a different stage from *Petrushka* and had to be adapted to fit a smaller group.

The *Rite of Spring* uses lots of changes in set and costume. How do they add to the piece for you?

Mani: I think there are reasons for every change of set and costume in *Rite*. There are psychological and emotional turns for the community in *Rite* that are marked or go hand in hand with what we wear or don’t wear. The most important one perhaps being the donning of dresses, the acceptance of the female in a male dominated society.

Louise: The costume changes are to do with the transformation we undergo in the work, expressing the letting go of restraining traditions by performing these sacred rituals. The stripping and changing of clothes demonstrates this for me.

What was it like working with the hare/hounds heads?

Mani: It took some getting used to. There can be a breathing issue if you don’t put them on just right. Apart from that purely technical side, the dog heads are an expression of the darkest parts of the men in the community, a part that has otherwise been repressed but yet ever present. That’s how I see it anyway.

Louise: I am working on it, but I actually really don’t like those muscular athletic fight dogs. I am quite scared of them, so it has been interesting working theatrically with this fear, as the dogs heads in *The Rite of Spring* represent exactly this aggressive masculine quality that I react to so strongly in real life.

The emotional content of *Petrushka* is less marked than in *The Rite of Spring*. How do you adjust and prepare for that change?

Mani: *Petrushka* is still evolving. It’s a more difficult work than *Rite* precisely because it looks simpler, because of its subtlety. The approach to performing *Petrushka* is becoming more and more relaxed which I think helps in getting closer to what Michael envisioned.

Louise: Although it is in a different way to *The Rite of Spring*, *Petrushka* is also very emotional. *Petrushka* is the reincarnation after *The Rite of Spring*, it’s a new life in a new body somehow, so it is about following this development rather than starting again.

What do you enjoy about touring?

Mani: The differences and the similarities in people. People are people are people. I enjoy seeing different parts of the world.

Louise: Touring means we get to take the work to people around the world, experiencing different cultures and theatres—each place breathing a history of its own. Touring feels like a big privilege.

How do you keep your roles in the pieces fresh?

Mani: No matter how well you performed it the time before you’re always striving to get it exactly right. Its important to try to realise that there’s always room for improvement. That in itself should help keep the pieces fresh. Michael is always working on small parts, tweaking, so there’s no chance to become complacent.

Louise: Michael tends to change little things here and there, sometimes to bring the work to another level, sometimes to keep you on your toes. I find it is also useful to be reminded of the intentions behind the actions or movements we do.

Spring is a season of emergence, newness and energy. What’s your favourite season? Why is that?

Mani: Mine is the summer. I love the sun. I love the effect it has on people in general when the sun starts to shine. For a while at least people are warmer to each other.

Louise: Yes, I love Springtime, for those qualities, but I also love Summertime for the heat and the light, the Autumn for the beautiful colours and the slowing down, and the Wintertime for the intimacy it encourages. Every season, seems to feel like it’s my favourite.
CREATIVE TEAM FOR THE RITE OF SPRING AND PETRUSHKA

Rae Smith, Designer
Rae trained at The Central St. Martins School of Art. Recent theatre work includes: Warhorse (National Theatre, West End, Broadway, USA Tour, Canada and Australia) which won Oliver and Tony Awards for best design, The Rite of Spring & Petrushka (Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre) and This House (National Theatre).
Other theatre includes: The Viel (National Theatre), The Visit, Ave Maria, Help! I’m Alive!, WiseGuy Scapino, The Street of Crocodiles (Complicite de theatre), Oliver Twist (American Repertory Theater, Obie Award) and Ideal Husband (Abbey Theatre Dublin, Irish Times Award).
Opera and dance: Wagner’s Ring Cycle (Opera du Rhin) and The Prince of the Pagodas (Birmingham Royal Ballet and New National Theatre of Japan).
Future projects include: Sweet Bird of Youth (The Old Vic), The Light Princess (National Theatre) and Benvenuto Cellini (ENO).

Adam Silverman, Lighting Designer
Adam works in opera, theatre and dance. Recent productions include: Julius Caesar and The Rite of Spring by Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre and English National Opera; Un ballo in maschera (Metropolitan Opera); Mitterman (National Theatre, London); St Ann’s Warehouse, NY; Galway Arts Festival; Daidamia and l’Ercole Amante (De Nederlandse Opera); Billy Budd, Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Peter Grimes (English National Opera); Aida (Deutsche Oper Berlin); James Son of James, The Bull and Giselle (Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre). Additionally, Adam has lit Tannhäuser (San Francisco Opera); Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, Jeux and La chûte de la maison Usher (Bregenz Festival); Das Schatzergraber (Oper Frankfurt); Pique Dame (Bayerische Staatsoper); Norma; Orfeo, and the Eight Little Greats season (Opera North); Orfeo and Imeneo (Glimmerglass Opera); La Traviata (New Israeli Opera); premiere of Five Gold Rings (Almeida Theatre); Beauty and the Beast (Royal Shakespeare Company); and A Day in the Death of Joe Egg (Broadway).

Doey Lüthi, Costume Designer, Petrushka
Doey received her MA in theatrical design at New York University. Projects with Fabulous Beast include Julius Caesar (English National Opera) and Rian (a co-production with Sadler’s Wells). Other recent projects include Torquato Tasso (Theater Bremen); Ariadne auf Naxos (Opera National de Bordeaux); Methusalem-Projekt (DeutschesNationaltheater Weimar); Phaeton (SaarländischesStaatstheater); FintaGiardiniera (Theater an der Wien); Sakontala (SaarländischesStaatstheater).
She has designed costumes for Don Pasquale (Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar); L’Orfeo (Den Norske Opera, Glimmerglass Opera and Opera North); Aida (Deutsche Opera Berlin); Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Theater Basel); Imeneo (Glimmerglass Opera); Carmen (Nationaltheater Mannheim); Otello (Staatstheater Unter den Linden Berlin); Trojan Women (The Shakespeare Theatre Washington DC); Iphigenia Cycle (Court Theatre Chicago); Go Go Go (PS 122, NYC); Deviant Craft (Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage); scenery and costumes for The Women and 1,2,3 (Theater Aachen); Macbeth (Sophsiensaele Berlin) and Kälttransport (TIF Staatsschauspiel Dresden).

Alyson Cummins, Associate Designer
Set and costume design includes: Mixed Marriage, Lyric Theatre, Belfast; Before it Rains, Bristol Old Vic and Sherman Cymru; Pornography, Chapter Cardiff & Welsh tour (Waking Exploits); Pigeon, Project Cube (Carpet Theatre); Ruben Guthrie, New Wimbledon Studio (Iron Bark); How the World Began, Arcola Theatre (Tom Atkinson); Helmet, Helix Dublin & Irish tour (Second Age); Colleen Dawn, Project Arts Centre and Irish tour (Project/Civic/Bedrock); Serious Money and Dying City, Project Arts Centre (Rough Magic AIB SEEDS); Extremities, Mill Theatre (Spark to a Flame); Crosswired, East London Dance Festival; The Trials of Brother Jero, Samuel Beckett Theatre (Arambe); Daily Bread, Project Arts Centre (DYT); Top Girls, New Theatre and Irish tour (Galalglass); Forget-me-not Lane, Teatro Technis (the Lit); Through a Film Darkly, Project Arts Centre (Arambe); Ya Get Me, London schools tour (Old Vic education dept).
Set design includes: Quietly and Perve, Abbey Theatre; The Trailer of Bridget Dinnigan, Project Arts Centre (ITM); No Escape, Abbey Theatre; Off Plan, Project Arts Centre (RAW).
Alyson studied architecture at UCD, after which she was awarded an Arts Council grant to train at Motley theatre design course, and was a finalist in the Linbury biennial prize for stage design 2007.
3. HISTORY OF THE WORKS

LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS
(THE RITE OF SPRING)
‘Scenes of Pagan Russia in Two Parts’
Composer: Igor Stravinsky
Original choreography: Vaslav Nijinsky
Design: Nikolai Roerich

World Premiere: performed by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris on 29 May 1913

Stravinsky, Nijinsky, and Roerich’s famous and highly controversial ballet was commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev for his Ballets Russes. Its French title Le Sacre du Printemps translates literally as The Coronation of Spring. This two act ballet (‘The Adoration of the Earth’ and ‘The Sacrifice’) is a pagan ritual where a sacrificial virgin is plucked from her tribe and dances herself to death for the sake of her rural community.

What made it controversial?
The ballet and music world of 1913 wasn’t ready for such subject matter and the dramatic and shameless changes in the conventions of dance, music and design.

They were outraged by:
• The theme which envisioned a primitive Russian society and the violent sacrificial rite of publicly and savagely stripping a young woman of her virginity that leads to her eventual death.
• Stravinsky’s unpredictable musical composition with its loud and ever changing irregular rhythms, jarring orchestration and seeming lack of melody.
• Nijinsky’s emphasis on awkward ‘unnatural’, ‘vulgar’, repetitive and jagged movements and his dispensing with the beauty that ballet traditionally carried.

Since The Rite of Spring was premiered it has continued to capture the imaginations of choreographers of every dance style and has been choreographed again and again all over the world.

PETRUSHKA
‘Burlesque scenes in Four Tableaux’
Composer: Igor Stravinsky
Original choreography: Michel Fokine
(Vaslav Nijinsky created the title role)
Design: Alexandre Benois

World Premiere: performed by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes at Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris on 13 June 1911

The story of Petrushka is based on the tales of Russian folklore and takes place during the annual Shrovetide Fair in St Petersburg. The atmosphere is filled with the bustle of market stalls, musicians, dancers and other performers.

Three puppets, Petrushka, the Ballerina and the Moor are brought to life by the Charlatan, each adopting a human and emotional existence.

A tragic love story develops as the unhappy hero Petrushka falls hopelessly for the Ballerina who has her sights on the handsome Moor.

Jealousy, repulsion, competition and rage ensue. Petrushka confronts the Moor whose strength and confidence are no match, and Petrushka is struck down by a single blow, watched in horror by the market fair’s revellers.

Considered one of Stravinsky’s most graphic scores, the narrative of Petrushka develops equally through the actions of the dancers and the musical storytelling. Quick tempos, cascading arpeggios, and retaliating trumpet blasts carry the dancers and the tragic story on its way and to its end.
4. THE PRODUCTIONS

AN INTRODUCTION TO FABULOUS BEAST’S PRODUCTIONS OF THE RITE OF SPRING AND PETRUSHKA

The Rite of Spring & Petrushka is a Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre production in collaboration with Sadler’s Wells, co-produced with Movimentos Festwochen der Autostadt in Wolfsburg, Brisbane Festival, Galway Arts Festival and Melbourne Festival.

The Rite of Spring was developed as a co-production between English National Opera and Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre.

The two halves of Michael Keegan-Dolan’s thrilling dance theatre double bill are a contrast in light and dark that mirror the Stravinsky music of the same names. The imagery in The Rite of Spring is dark, shocking, violent and sexual. The rhythmic elements of the music are played out in scenes of a pagan fertility rite, as age is sacrificed and mother earth is worshipped. By contrast Petrushka is bright and light. Elements of folk dances and warmer days are conjured as the company dances for approval from their ancestors.

Rite is about dark elemental forces, about power and violence while Petrushka is about aspiration, salvation and spiritual enlightenment. Performed by an international cast of 14, both works are theatrical interpretations of the original music that created such outrage and excitement in the early 20th century.

The Rite of Spring [Premiered 2009 at London Coliseum]
Composers: Igor Stravinsky
Choreography: Michael Keegan-Dolan
Lighting Design: Adam Silverman
Set and Costume Design: Rae Smith
Associate Designer: Alyson Cummins

Duration: 35 minutes

Here Michael talks about his visions for these two seminal pieces of work.

Sophisticated Savagery and the Survival of the Species

“When I created my production of The Rite of Spring for ENO in 2009 I was inspired by attempting to realise Stravinsky’s and Roerich’s ideas and the creative forces that were responsible for the original production. These three men were interested in primal forces, forgotten by many but whose power excited them. And although the original creators were Russian, themes such as ancestor worship, fertility rites, human sacrifice, sacred dance and tribal and sexual politics are all themes which continue to connect every man and woman to our origins and to the earth. These themes are more relevant now than ever with our desperate need to reconnect with the earth and her divine power in order to ensure our survival as a species.

My attempt to create this production in 2009 was entirely driven by my desire to honour the music, its composer and his collaborators. The Rite’s creative process then led me on a journey reconnecting me with the land on which I was born and will return to when I die. I became enthralled by the ancestors and their ancient rites.

My original creation explored all these themes using a simple non-linear narrative structure that was packed with immense and beautiful visual imagery within an expanse of almost empty space, with a large, predominantly male cast, and central roles for four women and a young boy.

I have scaled down cast numbers from 23 to 13 performers with a more equal mix of men and woman so the emphasis on sexual politics will be somewhat different. The sophisticated savagery of the music that one can connect with is overwhelming and incredibly beautiful. The connection between music and choreographic action remains fundamental. I continue to be entirely devoted to this music and its origin.”

For this Spring 2014 tour we see The Rite partnered with its older brother, Petrushka.
**Petrushka** (Premiered 2013, Sadler’s Wells)

Composer: **Igor Stravinsky**  
Choreography: **Michael Keegan-Dolan**  
Lighting Design: **Adam Silverman**  
Set Design: **Rae Smith**  
Costume Design: **Doez Lüthi**  
Associate Designer: **Alyson Cummins**

**Duration:** 35 minutes

**Until we are true we can never be free**

"Igor Stravinsky’s early masterpiece *Petrushka* is jammed from beginning to end with the most wonderful dance music. Perhaps some of the best dance music ever composed.

The idea that inspired the story, which in turn invoked the ballet, is profound. The notion that we are all, in some way like puppets, spirits encased in flesh and bone, animated by some mysterious invisible force.

I am interested in *Petrushka* because of its layers. Any good idea will have multifarious levels. A powerful symbol can have seven meanings or more. *Petrushka* has this potential, the potential for multiple interpretations, which reflects the music, which is many-layered.

Superficially the ideas driving the composition are entertaining because the imagery of puppets and masters is theatrical and childish. However, with a little further excavation the question of the transient nature of this mortal incarnation and the question of what lies beyond death is more urgent and thrilling.

For a dancer to be great s/he must be true. There can be no falsehood. For this to happen, the personality with all its needs and desires must retreat and remain quiet. Only then can a dancer connect entirely with the energy that emanates from the music.

It is clear to me that an attempt to recreate the story of the original ballet would be a mistake. It is more interesting to broadly consider the motivating forces behind the four central characters, the setting in a butter market during the Shrovetide Fair and the ballet’s intelligent and quite brilliant musical structure, and then embark on a journey to bring this wonderful piece of music to life through dancers’ bodies in rhythmical action for an audience of today. The music led this creative process and the choreographic imagination followed.

*Petrushka* is staged in an open luminescent space in which we meet the 10 performers, men and women who don’t leave the space again until the music and dancing are complete.

I am interested in the idea of afterlife and what it could mean to a dancer to imagine the sensation of shedding the gravity of the body and dance in this new and potentially extremely liberating space. I like the idea of a judgmental deity (a parallel to the puppet master in the original ballet) who considers closely how truly the 10 dancers perform and passes judgment on them at the close.

I am interested in competition, each dancer competing to dance more truly, more freely than the others to this very brilliant music, each dancer competing with the music itself in a constant play of ever changing roles of leading and following. And within all of this a love story, Petrushka in love with the heartless Ballerina who only has eyes for the fierce and arrogant Moor. Then the Moor who greedily enjoys all of her attention and hates the interference of the little and needy Petrushka.

It is worth noting that in the original The Moor cuts Petrushka’s head from his shoulders before the work concludes. There is authentic violence, passion and desperation in this music as well as an overwhelming sense of joy, celebration and finally complete stillness. The work ends in the most remarkable way. One note and then nothing!"
5. DIAGHILEV, THE BALLET RUSSES AND STRAVINSKY

DIAGHILEV AND THE BALLET RUSSES

Bold, visionary, pioneering ballet impresario and entrepreneur, Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev was born in the Russian Empire on 31 March 1872.

He studied Law at St Petersburg University though had dreams of becoming a composer and took up music and singing at the St Petersburg Conservatory of Music. During his time at university he became involved with The Nevsky Pickwickians a group of art loving students at the university. It was here that he met Alexandre Benois who would join him at the Ballet Russes to design costumes and sets for ballets such as Les Sylphides (1909), Giselle (1910) and Petrushka (Stravinsky, 1911).

Diaghilev brought a troupe of technical and powerfully vibrant Russian dancers to Paris and in 1909 the Ballets Russes would begin to shake the ballet and art world with their modern and risqué choreographic, musical and design compositions which challenged preconceptions of classical dance and questioned the accepted rules of musical composition.

Diaghilev instigated and nurtured ground-breaking collaborations between innovative and controversial artists who were to influence the evolution of modern day art.

Many of the Ballets Russes’ productions were based on traditional Russian themes, and created by Russian born composers, artists and choreographers.

Collaborations included those between choreographer and lead dancer Vaslav Nijinsky and composer Claude Debussy for L’Après-Midi d’un Faune (1912), and Igor Stravinsky, Nijinsky and designer Nikolai Roerich for Le Sacre de Printemps (The Rite of Spring) (1913). With their raw, ritualistic evocative and overt depictions of life through dance, music and design they turned heads and brought outrage to theatre-goers and critics.

Diaghilev died in Venice on 19th August, 1929 though the influence of his vision and the impact of the Ballets Russes was never to be forgotten.

IGOR STRAVINSKY

One of the most influential composers of the twentieth century, Igor Federovich Stravinsky was born in the small town of Oranienbaum in the Gulf of Finland, some fifty kilometres west of St Petersburg on 5 June 1882. The son of a distinguished bass soloist and talented amateur pianist Stravinsky began the average musical training of a young upper class Russian child and showed no great interest or talent beyond this.

As a young man he began to study Law and at the same time, was introduced to the famous composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov with whom he shared his interest in composition and subsequently became his pupil at the Rimsky-Korsakov School. He composed two pieces during this time, Scherzo Fantastique and Fireworks.

In 1908 Stravinsky was discovered by Diaghilev and his The Ballets Russes, and so began a series of groundbreaking collaborations that were to hail Stravinsky as one of the most significant contributors to neoclassical music.

Stravinsky’s compositional style shocked music lovers and art critics. He defied the traditions of traditional musical composition through exploring new technical processes using dissonant unusual rhythms and harmonies and constantly changing time signatures.

The Firebird (1909–1910), Petrushka (1910–1911), and The Rite of Spring (1911–1913) did more to establish Stravinsky’s reputation than any other works and the fame of the Ballets Russes rested mainly on these musical and choreographic collaborations.

He worked in collaboration with designer Nikolai Roerich. The Rite of Spring Roerich’s drawings depicted ritual sacrifice in a primeval society and influenced the harsh percussive polyrhythms of Stravinsky’s composition.

With the onset of World War 1, Stravinsky moved with his family to Switzerland where he continued his work reverting to classicism not forgetting his Russian roots, creating works such as Wedding in 1923 depicting a Russian peasant wedding.

Stravinsky then found himself in France and finally settled in America in 1939 where he continued to explore his iconic style. He died on 6 April 1971 in Manhattan with more than 100 works to his name.
6. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION AND CREATIVE MOVEMENT TASKS

Each of the following discussion points and creative tasks makes reference to the themes evident in The Rite of Spring and Petrushka and Michael Keegan-Dolan’s choreographic approaches. Tasks can be further developed through researching themes, engaging in movement analysis and focussing on production elements (sound, lighting, costume and design).

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

Use of Costume

Michael Keegan Dolan’s (MKD) The Rite of Spring and Petrushka use costume in different ways.
Rae Smith created the costume for The Rite of Spring. Petrushka costumes were designed by Doey Lüthi.

[A] Consider the use of costume in the different sections of The Rite of Spring and discuss how this might emphasise aspects of the theme. What do you think the floral dresses symbolise? Why does MKD costume both the men and the women in dresses? The Shamanic Queen wears long black flowing robes. Why do you think that is?

[B] Research the designs that Nikolai Roerich created for the original production of The Rite of Spring. Look at for example:
www.kcrw.com/etc/programs/at/at130129once_wild_now_below/at130129d0d.jpg
www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/image/0016/231244/27668_rite_spring_costume_610x915.jpg
www.thetimes.co.uk/tto-multimedia/archive/00054/arts_ballet_74882807_54832c.jpg
How do these compare with Rae Smith’s designs?

[C] In Petrushka, Doey Lüthi’s designs are more simple and in complete contrast to those by Alexandre Benois.

Research Benois’ costume designs; for example:
http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/r-negin/mncompcond.html
www.christies.com/lotfinderimages/D53800/alexandre_benois_a_costume_design_for_petrushka_the_moor_d5380017h.jpg
www.petruschka-klavierfestival.de/images/das_werk_und_seine_kontexte/AKG_6_Large.jpg
http://web.mmlc.northwestern.edu/~mdenner/Drama/plays/petrushka/1petrushka.html
Why do you think this is? And to what effect?
How do you think the white paint on the dancers faces adds to the piece?
Discussing Work around a Chosen Image

[A] Look at the following images from Fabulous Beast’s *The Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka*:

What do you think is happening in each photograph? Notice the use of space, numbers of people, costume, set, lighting. Where is the balance in power? How do you come to this conclusion? What do you anticipate could happen next? Observe the contrast between the images. How well do you think these images sit together? Explain.

[B] Find images of the original ballets of *The Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka* performed by the Ballets Russes' and compare with images from the Fabulous Beast productions. Look at, for example:

http://housesandbooks.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/rite-of-spring.jpg
http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2013/2/12/1360686052699/Russian-Ballets-At-Paris--001.jpg
www.russianballethistory.com/Petruchka.jpg
www.petruschka-klavierfestival.de/images/das_werk_und_seine_kontexte/AKG_5_Large.jpg

For teaching purposes, the two photographs on this page are reproduced at a larger size on the following pages.
Fabulous Beast — The Rite of Spring
Fabulous Beast – Petrushka
Exploring the Influence of Rituals or Traditions

The Rite of Spring and Petrushka have their roots in Russian folklore. Michael Keegan-Dolan has reimagined these ballets in a contemporary style with a deep connection to his own cultural heritage. In his The Rite of Spring Keegan-Dolan includes reference to Irish rituals and traditions, for example, the brewing and drinking of tea and hare-courting.

- Research hare-courting and its traditions.
- Consider the symbolism of the hare and its connection with Spring.
- Research how the pack instinct manifests itself within the pack.
- Consider behaviour, hierarchy, interaction and movement.
- Discuss how this pack instinct developed in different sections of The Rite of Spring.

CREATIVE MOVEMENT TASKS

Task 1 – Improvising with Music (p22)
Task 2 – Physical Rhythm (p23)
Task 3 – Using Props In your Choreography (p23)
Task 4 – Using Props as a stimulus for your Choreography (p24)

These movement tasks focus on different elements of the works and on Michael’s approach to creating his choreography. Although each task is complete in itself with ideas for development, it is recommended that dance teachers and leaders devise a warm up which begins to introduce these themes and approaches for exploring and developing dance.

Encourage the students to share their processes and movement material with others during and at the end of the movement tasks. Giving and receiving positive comments and constructive feedback will help to enrich movement exploration, technique and performance and will deepen a more thoughtful choreographic experience.

Solo

Standing, sitting or lying in the space, listen to the music.

Try to stay relaxed and allow yourself to absorb the music and how it develops.

Notice the melody, rhythms and dynamics, use of repetition and instrumentation.

Shift your focus between the music and the calmness of your body.

Now begin to allow the music to lead how your body moves. Notice if there is a particular body part that has come more to life or has an urge to move.

Keeping your eyes closed take that body part on a dance with the music.

Try to avoid ‘deciding’ how to move next, but let the rhythm, pulse or the spaces in the music guide you.

Start small and allow yourself to ‘play’ along with the music. Allow the movement to grow with the music. Stop and play again, perhaps returning to that same body part, repeating or changing the movement or shifting the focus to another part of the body.

Continue to move in this way until you feel the whole body is taking part, conversing with itself and the music.

As you are beginning to take up more space or change the speed of the movement, open your eyes, becoming aware of the space and those working around you.

There may be some movements that stay with you, that are working for you. Stay with these and play with them more. Does a movement from one part of the body initiate another elsewhere? Is there a particular fluidity or fragmentation of the movement that you would like to follow or move between?

Begin to select movements that flow together and join them in a phrase.

Ideas for Development

Solo/group work

Developing ideas from Images: As you have been dancing you may have become aware of an image or series of images that began to appear in your mind. Revisit these images. What can you see in them? What connects the different elements or components. Do they relate to nature, or an emotion or a memory perhaps? Note all of these down in the form of a bubble diagram or mind map on a large sheet of paper using ‘nature’, ‘emotion’ and ‘memory’ as suggested focus points. Explore and expand on what the image might symbolise or represent for you.

In a small group share the ‘image thoughts’ of each person. Together choose one person’s ‘image thoughts’ to develop some new movement sequences.

Improvising with one, then two elements from the ‘image thoughts’, create a short solo. Considering the use of space, dynamics and body
parts as you develop new motifs and phrases. Share these solos within the group.

Repeat this process with the other ‘image thoughts’ and discuss how they might be crafted into a short dance. Consider group formations, facings, unison and canon as you explore.

**Duet**

**Musical conversation.** Using your solo from the original task and working with a partner, create a duet where a dancing conversation is taking place. Dancer 1 performs the beginning of their phrase. Their partner borrows the last movement to initiate the beginning of theirs. Dancer 1 borrows the last movement performed by Dancer 2 and continues on their dance. Follow this pattern until both phrases have been performed. Repeat this until the cross-over becomes more fluid, perhaps to the point where the common movements are performed in unison.

This can be further developed by exploring the space more as you dance. For example, moving around each other throughout the course of the duet or moving away and coming back together or dancing side by side as you travel forwards or backwards. Consider how using the space in these ways might influence how the duet might emphasise the nature of your relationship.

**Task 2 – Physical Rhythm**

In both The *Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka*, Michael creates sounds through the dancers’ bodies. This creative task explores how you can use your body to emphasise the rhythms and dramatic build of both the music you choose and your choreography.

Listen to a piece of music from one of the two works which builds in dynamic intensity. For example, from around 15 minutes 20 seconds of Part II, The Sacrifice in *The Rite of Spring* or The Dance of the Gypsies in *Petrushka*. Listen for the layerings of rhythm, phrasing and instrumentation as well as the crescendo. Also be aware of the spaces in the music.

**Solo**

Create a short motif from improvising with a stepping pattern comprising steps, stamps and shunts. Ensure that the motif includes movements that are on and off the beat and incorporate at least two pauses. Repeat this motif allowing it to gather energy and some expanse in terms of the size of the movements, but stick to the tempo.

Develop your motif by shifting your orientation in the space, changing direction as you travel through it.

Create a sequence comprising your original motif and your motif development building in energy and size of the movements and your use of space.

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**Ideas for Development**

**Duet**

Learn each other’s movement sequences and perform each in unison up until the point where the shift in direction happens. Then perform these final parts of the sequences beginning either facing each other or back to back.

That is, both performing Dancer A’s sequence in unison, then both performing Dancer B’s sequence in unison, then both performing Dancer A’s directional phrase in unison, and finally, both performing Dancer B’s directional phrase in unison. This final section will give an impression of a conflict or confrontation, providing you keep up the energy of the sequence.

**Contact Duet**

You can begin to develop your duets further by ensuring that you place yourselves close together whilst performing the final part of the sequence. Perform this part making note of when there may be opportunity for physical contact, whether as a lean, a push, a pull, a lift or some other manipulation. Whilst maintaining the essence of the sequence, explore and set contact as part of this final section. Consider how you might leave each other at the end of the sequence.

**Task 3 – Using Props In your Choreography**

At the beginning of *The Rite of Spring*, the opening sequence reveals a seated line of seemingly downtrodden dancers each cradling a box. We are immediately struck with a feeling of intrigue as to what could be inside each box. This task encourages you to think about how to include props effectively in your choreography.

**Solo**

**The Box**

Find a box, a big box. Explore its shape and size. Try lifting it in different ways; for example, by scooping it up in your hands from underneath or hugging your arms around it to lift it. How can you move it across the space? Imagine that it’s extremely heavy or unbelievably light. Does it
hold something precious? Is there something alive inside that’s making it move?

Begin to imagine a story for your box and your relationship with it. This could be narrative or thematic. How does that story build? How does the mix of the physical and the imagined develop?

As with the exercise on improvising with music, allow the box to lead and the creative ideas will follow.

Idea for Development

Whole group dance
Everyone places themselves and/or their boxes in a circle. In canon the dance with each box begins. Notice where there are crossing points.

Could these offer an opportunity to ‘share’ moments of the box stories?

Is this the point where the boxes start to be abandoned in the space?

Are they ever retrieved? Are any opened or damaged? What happens next?

Task 4 – Using Props as a stimulus for your Choreography

This task takes you through the process of using a prop to explore an idea.

Solo

Exploring the concept of heaviness and weight Find a big, thick, heavy coat. Put it on and notice its weight. How does it feel on your shoulders, your arms, around your body? Run in it, sit down on the floor with it on, stand up again. Reach your hands above your head, stretch them out in front of you, drop them by your sides. Take the coat off and perform all these movements again. Put the coat back on and repeat the sequence again. Notice the difference in your movement and how wearing the coat alters how you perform. Explore other simple movement tasks with and without the coat and notice the effect.

Take a large sheet of paper and quickly write down all the words that describe the effect when wearing the coat, then when not wearing the coat.

Create a phrase of movement using the words when wearing the coat and another when not. Mix the sequences together to emphasise an internal struggle.

Ideas for Development

Solo

Character development Use the words describing the effect of wearing the coat to create a character. Consider what might have contributed to his or her weightiness. Can you show the decline into or the emerging out of this state through your motif development?

Trio

A character’s daily life List a range of tasks that might be part of someone’s weekly routine. For example, the process of leaving the house, tying shoelaces, looking for something lost. Choose three of these and explore them further, noting each part of the process. Create a short sequence for each using a range of levels and movement qualities. Put the jacket back on and repeat the sequences emphasising the physical effect the coat has on how you perform. You will notice that the movement changes because the coat becomes limiting. With each dancer taking on one sequence relating to one of the routine tasks set the movement material discarding the coat for performance. Consider whether you perform in unison or canon and how you position yourselves in the space.
7. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

UK TOUR 2014

GRAND THEATRE, BLACKPOOL
Tue 1 April at 8:00pm
Post show talk
01253 743346 www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk

NORTHERN STAGE, NEWCASTLE
Fri 4 & Sat 5 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk 4 April
0191 230 5151 www.northernstage.co.uk

SHERMAN THEATRE, CARDIFF
Tue 8 & Wed 9 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk 8 April
029 2064 6900 www.shermancymru.co.uk

SADLER'S WELLS, LONDON
Fri 11 & Sat 12 April at 7:30pm
0844 412 4300 www.sadlerswells.com

OXFORD PLAYHOUSE
Tue 15 & Wed 16 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk 15 April
01865 305305 www.oxfordplayhouse.com

GRAND OPERA HOUSE, BELFAST
Sat 19 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk
028 9024 1919 www.goh.co.uk

THE LOWRY, SALFORD QUAYS
Tue 22 & Wed 23 April at 8:00pm
Post show talk 22 April
0843 208 6010 www.thelowry.com/dance

HALL FOR CORNWALL, TRURO
Fri 25 & Sat 26 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk 25 April
01872 262466 www.hallforcornwall.co.uk

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE, COVENTRY
Tue 29 & Wed 30 April at 7:30pm
Post show talk 29 April
024 7652 4524 www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE
Fri 2 & Sat 3 May at 8:00pm
Post show talk 2 May
0115 941 9419 www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk

Running time 92 minutes including an interval

Age suitability 16+. Contains nudity, sexual imagery and smoking.

UK TOUR INFORMATION

Dance Touring Partnership

Formed in 2002, Dance Touring Partnership (DTP) is a network of theatres working together to bring exciting and engaging dance to audiences around the UK. It has commissioned new work and, through its national tours of groundbreaking dance, aims to build audiences, increase the range and diversity of work available and encourage new attenders into dance. It also gives people the opportunity to meet artists and experience new dance first-hand through workshops and talks as well as providing useful education resources to students and teachers. The combination of these has helped to dramatically change the face of dance in the UK.

Since 2004 DTP has toured Ultima Vez, Australian Dance Theatre, Jasmin Vardimon, Renegade Theatre, Stan Won’t Dance, Theatre Rites, Fabulous Beast, Hofesh Shechter, Tanja Liedtke’s Twelfth Floor, Bounce Street Dance Company, Danish Dance Theatre, Shaun Parker & Company, Blanca Li Dance Company and Nobulus.

To find out more about DTP and sign up to receive updates about future tours visit www.dancetouringpartnership.co.uk

DTP core members

Brighton Dome
Hall for Cornwall, Truro
Lighthouse, Poole
The Lowry, Salford
Northern Stage, Newcastle
Nottingham Playhouse
Oxford Playhouse
Sherman Cymru, Cardiff
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Post show talks

Post show talks are taking place across the tour. For more information visit the tour website www.fabulousbeast.co.uk
UK WORKSHOP INFORMATION

The Rite of Spring & Petrushka workshop has been designed to enhance the dance curriculum in the UK and will support students with their study and development.

Led by two company dancers or Michael Keegan-Dolan, the workshop will introduce Fabulous Beast and the works, and will include a full technical warm up, repertoire and creative tasks, concluding with a warm down. Students will have the opportunity to develop their choreographic / creative skills and learn about Fabulous Beast’s choreographic process.

The Rite of Spring is about dark elemental forces, about power and violence while Petrushka is about aspiration, salvation and deliverance.

The workshop will focus on developing key motifs and themes as they appear in the production. Through the warm up and repertoire sections students will have the opportunity to expand on their dance vocabulary and performance skills.

Students are encouraged to ask questions in an Artist Q & A at the end of the workshop.

Suitable for: Age 16+ [studying at GCSE / A Level / BTEC]
Duration: 1.5 hours inclusive of warm up and Q&A session at the end of the workshop
Level of experience: Beginners with some experience and students at intermediate level
Maximum No. of Participants: 25
Costs: £150 + VAT and local travel costs

To book workshops: If you are interested in a workshop, or would like more information about Fabulous Beast’s work, please contact education@dancetouringpartnership.co.uk

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Online Reviews and Competitions
For more information on how to post online reviews and take part in competitions visit www.fabulousbeast.co.uk

Facebook
Visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DanceTouringPartnership

Twitter
Follow us on twitter @dancetp
RESOURCES, REVIEWS AND LINKS

Websites

www.fabulousbeast.co.uk
Fabulous Beast UK Tour website
Log on for up to date information about the tour, workshops, video clips, competitions and blogs by the Company

www.dancetouringpartnership.co.uk
Visit the Dance Touring Partnership website to sign up for news about future tours and workshops, to download a selection of free Resource Packs from previous tours, hear the latest dance industry news, and useful links to tour, company and regional dance agency websites.

www.fabulousbeast.net
Fabulous Beast website

www.fondation-igor-stravinsky.org/web/
The Composer, Igor Stravinsky

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00fkbzo
A discussion on Stravinsky’s Petrushka

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01slnqm
A discussion on Stravinsky’s The Rite of Spring

www.roerich.org
Nikolai Roerich, Costume designer for The Rite of Spring

collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?limit=15&narrow=1&q=alexandre+benois&commit=Search&quality=1&after-abc=AD&before-abc=AD&category[]=39&offset=0&slug=0
Alexandre Benois, Designer for Petrushka

www.centralschoolofballet.co.uk
Central School of Ballet where Michael Keegan-Dolan trained

www.artsaward.org.uk
The official Arts Award website with information on how to register for training and delivery

www.nationaldancecats.co.uk
The National Dance Centres for Advanced Training (CATs) provide national programmes to support the development of young dance talent in order to prepare for vocational dance training.

www.toumani-diabate.com/uk_bio.html
Malian musician and composer Toumani Diabate

www.fela.net/bio
African musician Fela Kuti

Reviews of The Rite of Spring and Petrushka

Sadler’s Wells, April 2013

http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/apr/12/rite-of-spring-petrushka-review
www.ft.com/cms/s/2/a5f8c672-a355-11e2-ac00-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2gUgDXoyk

Additional Links

Youth Dance England: www.yde.org.uk

www.artsaward.org.uk

Bridge Organisations

Funded by Arts Council England, these organisations use their experience in the sector to connect children and young people, schools and communities with art and culture. This means connecting schools and communities with National Portfolio organisations and others in the creative and cultural sector, including museums and libraries.

BRIDGE WEST MIDLANDS
Arts Connect West Midlands
Tel: 01902 518 565
Email: info@artsconnectwm.co.uk
www.artsconnectwm.co.uk

BRIDGE SOUTH EAST
Artswork
Tel: 02380 332491
Email: info@artswork.org.uk
www.artswork.org.uk

BRIDGE NORTH EAST
Sage Gateshead
Tel: 0191 443 5293
Email: bridgenortheast@thesagegateshead.org
www.thesagegateshead.org/about-us/bridge-north-east

BRIDGE YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER
Cape UK
Head office Leeds: 0845 450 3700
www.capeuk.org
Dance Agencies

BIRMINGHAM
DanceXchange
Tel: 0121 689 3170
Email: info@dancexchange.org.uk
www.dancexchange.org.uk
Specific regions: Birmingham, West Midlands

GLASGOW
Dance House
Tel: 0141 552 2442
Email: info@dancehouse.org
www.dancehouse.org

LONDON
The Place
Tel: 020 7121 1040
Email: artistdevelopment@theplace.org.uk
www.theplace.org.uk
Specific regions: London, International enquiries

NEWCASTLE
Dance City
Tel: 0191 261 0505
Email: info@dancecity.co.uk
www.dancecity.co.uk
Specific regions: Tyneside, Northumberland, County Durham, Teeside, Cumbria

NORTH WEST
North West Dance
A national dance agency partnership.
Please contact the individual Regional Agency Partners: Cheshire Dance, DiGM, Ludus Dance, & MDI
www.northwestdance.org.uk
Specific regions: Cheshire, Manchester, Lancaster, Liverpool

NOTTINGHAM
Dance 4
Tel: 0115 941 0773
Email: info@dance4.co.uk
www.dance4.co.uk
Specific regions: Notts, Lincs, Leics, Northants & E. Midlands

SOUTH WEST
Dance South West
Tel: 01202 554 131
Email: office@dancesouthwest.org.uk
www.dancesouthwest.org.uk

SUFFOLK
DanceEast
Tel: 01473 639230
Email: info@danceeast.co.uk
www.danceeast.co.uk
Specific regions: Suffolk, Norfolk, Beds. Cambs. Herts. Essex, Peterborough, Southen & Thurrock

SOUTH EAST
South East Dance
Tel: 01273 696 844
Email: sed@southeastdance.org.uk
www.southeastdance.org.uk
Specific regions: East & West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, Kent, Medway

SWINDON
Swindon Dance
Tel: 01793 601700
Email: info@swindondance.org.uk
www.swindondance.org.uk
Specific regions: Wiltshire, Southern Region

YORKSHIRE
Yorkshire Dance
Tel: 0113 243 9867
Email: admin@yorkshiredance.com
www.yorkshiredance.com
Specific regions: Whole Yorkshire region
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