

The Floating Opera Play, or How To Bomb-Proof Your Horse  
By  
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Author's Note

The author wishes to express that he is not an expert on opera or dance. His academic expertise, such as it is, lies more in the area of linguistics and theatrical story structure. He does know the difference between Pina Bauch and Peter Sellers. However, in the event of meeting the author, please don't ask about Martha Graham, Deborah Hay, or Merce Cunningham.

How then, can this author who rarely goes to see dance, and has no honest understanding of movement vocabulary, write a "dance" piece? The author might as well be writing an instruction manual on how to bomb-proof a horse. He pondered the matter and approached it from every angle he could consider. And finally he decided there was only one way to write a dance piece: as honestly as he could. To use vocabulary he is familiar with such as "slam" and "bounce" and "dive" and, most importantly, to focus on story and character.

When discussing Austin, TX, with a park ranger from New York City, the author learned Austin is a celebrity-town for gardeners and has what is widely considered the most sophisticated parks system in America. Zilker Park, in the heart of Austin, is a straightforward, expansive piece of land, designed for recreation in an active town. In a town nicknamed "Paris for cowboys", Zilker is a character all its own with open fields, rose gardens, natural springs, and a river, all under the Austin skyline. Zilker is also notable for its immense bat population, Mexican bats to be precise, who swoop and fly at sunset each night.

As the author wrote this piece, he learned this dance doesn't know it's a dance. It thinks it's an opera, or a play, but clearly it is neither. The author would prefer to invent another category for such a piece, but thinks it is best to just call it what it is, a floating opera of a play. As with most dances, the story is what matters, and not what it is named.

The Dance

Zilker Metropolitan Park. Austin TX. 78767. At sundown, when the bats fly. Three hundred or so dancers, preferably children as younger people have a level of innocence that makes a story like this much more interesting. The dancers work together, like cogs, to form the illustrations.

The audience is situated on chairs and benches on a cliff that overlooks a field of green grass. In Zilker Park, these rocks are located to the south, with the field to the north. Of course, any park with a large field would do. Oh, and this dance could easily be done in a European football stadium, but I think it would be served best in a park setting. The

sound of a school bell is heard. Three hundred dancers scramble on to the field in complete chaos, laughing and playing, then quickly form a “grid”.

A brass band is located directly behind the audience and begins to play “slow” music.

The grid of dancers begins to sway to the music. Then, the dancers use their bodies to form a rose garden. For a moment, the music stops and the roses sway in the wind to the sound of silence.

The band begins to play “smooth” music.

The dancers form the clouds and the sky and bats.

The band begins to play “twisted” music.

The dancers scatter and break into teams.

The dancers form an airplane.

Another team forms bats flying by the airplane.

Suddenly, the band begins to play “bad” music

The plane hits a bat.

The airplane begins to fall.

All other dancers scatter.

The airplane slams into the ground and explodes into flames.

Silence, as the flames shake. Then...

The dancers form The Pilot, crawling from the flames.

Then, dancers form The Boy.

The dancers form a horse.

The Boy rides the horse.

They approach The Pilot.

The Pilot confronts the boy with a weapon.

The band plays “dangerous” music.

The Boy offers The Pilot water.

The band begins to play “kind” music.

The Pilot takes a sip of this water.

Then, the Boy scatters the water on the ground.

Flowers grow from the scattered water and sway in the wind.

The Boy gives The Pilot food.

The Pilot eats some...

Then The Boy throws the remaining food in to the air.

The remaining food forms the sun.

The dancers form roses again, swaying in the wind.  
The band is silent.

The dancers that make the roses then form a horse. The Boy helps The Pilot onto his horse, and takes him across a grand landscape of trees, and flowers, and rivers, and finally a town.

The band plays “adventure” music.

The Boy introduces The Pilot to the “men” of the town.

The dancers form The Nasty Man. He is nasty to The Pilot.

The band plays “nasty” music.

The dancers form The Proud Man. He is rude to The Pilot.

The band plays “proud” music.

The dancers form The Sad Man. He ignores The Pilot.

The band plays “sad” music.

The dancers form The Drunk Man. He is “friendly” with The Pilot.

The band plays “drunk” music.

The dancers form a house.

The band plays “home-sweet-home” music.

The Boy takes The Pilot to the house.

The Boy and The Pilot eat.

The Boy shows The Pilot a picture of his mother and father.

The band plays nice music.

Then the sun turns into the moon and stars.

The Boy points to the sky, as the dancers become bats again.

The next day....

The Boy and The Pilot go for a walk.

The dancers become a fox.

The fox goes to The Boy and The Pilot.

The fox smells The Pilot and runs away.

The dancers form clouds.

The band plays “war” music.

The dancers make many warplanes.

The warplanes “bomb” the town and its men.

The dancers scatter. They slam into one another.

The dancers form the horse again.

The Boy and The Pilot ride the horse away from the town.

    The warplanes chase them.

        The warplanes drop bombs.

The Boy and The Pilot ride the horse over fields, hills, roses, and rivers.

    The warplanes chase them.

        Then, the dancers form one single plane.

            Then, the dancers form one large dropping bomb.

The horse is dead.

The Boy is hurt.

The Pilot is fine.

The band is silent.

    No more “war” music.

The Boy crawls to The Pilot.

    The Pilot holds The Boy.

        The Pilot gives The Boy water.

The dancers form the pilots of the warplanes.

    These pilots motion for The Pilot to come with them.

The Pilot will not leave The Boy.

The group of pilots point weapons at The Pilot.

    They motion for him to come with them.

The Pilot says “goodbye” to The Boy.

The Pilot then scatters the rest of his water on the ground.

The Pilot goes with the pilots of the warplanes.

    These dancers disappear.

The Boy is alone.

Roses grow from the scattered water.

The band is silent.

The roses sway in the wind.

The school bell rings again, and all the dancers scatter away, laughing.

The field is left empty

Silence.

The End