

EDUCATION RESOURCE



A SECONDARY/WACE

MICHAEL CLARK COMPANY

TO A SIMPLE, ROCK 'N' ROLL... SONG.

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TO A SIMPLE, ROCK 'N' ROLL ... SONG.

Michael Clark Company
United Kingdom
Dance

About the performance

Britain's wild child of dance Michael Clark and his award-winning company make their Perth debut with *To a simple rock'n'roll ... song*. Widely regarded as one of Britain's leading choreographers, Clark's work seamlessly crosses the boundaries between the worlds of classical ballet, contemporary dance, fashion, music and visual art. Awarded an honour by the Queen for 'services to dance' in 2014, Michael Clark staggered somewhat bemused out of Buckingham Palace into an extended period of introspection. *To a simple rock'n'roll ... song* is Clark's latest work.

To a simple rock'n'roll ... song features original lighting design by artist and filmmaker and long-term collaborator, [Charles Atlas](#). Act II features a stage adaptation of Charles Atlas's psychedelic multichannel video installation, *Painting By Numbers*, first shown in London in 2010. Costumes design is by [Stevie Stewart](#), co-founder of the iconic 1980s label Bodymap, and another longstanding creative collaborator with Michael Clark. The work is set to music by Erik Satie, Patti Smith and David Bowie, including the track title from Bowie's final studio album, *Blackstar*.

The work begins with a reflection on Erik Satie and his influence on Clark's mentors past and present – the dance meticulous and coolly refined. Next, commanding choreography pulsating with a propulsive force to the punk rock of Patti Smith's landmark album, *Horses*. Then, an iridescent tribute to David Bowie, intricate, sublime, the mood moving from elegiac to joyously rebellious.

Made possible thanks to the generous support of Patrons of New Work

Co-produced by the Barbican, London, Michael Clark Company, Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg

Michael Clark Company is an Artistic Associate of the Barbican and supported using public funding by Arts Council England

With thanks to Platform Theatre, Central Saint Martins

About the performers

Choreographer

Michael Clark

Lighting Designer

Charles Atlas

Costumes

Stevie Stewart, Michael Clark

Associate Director

Kate Coyne

Dancers

Harry Alexander, Daniel Corthorn, Sophie Cottrill, Kieran Page, Oxana Panchenko, Rowan Parker, Alice Tagliento, Benjamin Warbis.

About Michael Clark Company

Hailed as "British dance's true iconoclast", Michael Clark is a defining cultural figure. Since emerging in the 1980s as a prodigy at London's Royal Ballet School, he has remained at the forefront of innovation in dance, collaborating with such compelling artists as Sarah Lucas, Leigh Bowery, Peter Doig, Charles Atlas, Jarvis Cocker and The Fall. Michael Clark's performances are marked by a mixture of technical rigour and experimentation, intense and fine-tuned choreography intersecting with elements of punk, Dada, pop and rock. Michael Clark founded his own

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company in 1984. It has toured worldwide, performing in Europe, North America, South America, Asia and Australia, as well as at the Barbican in London, where it has been a resident company since 2005.
<http://www.michaelclarkcompany.com/>

About Michael Clark

Michael Clark was born in Scotland and trained at the Royal Ballet School in London (1975 -1979). In 1979 joined Ballet Rambert, working primarily with Richard Alston. The first concert of his own choreography was in 1982 at London's Riverside Studios, where he became resident choreographer.

Michael Clark and Company was launched in 1984. The company was immediately successful: the company toured internationally and Clark was commissioned for major dance companies including G.R.C.O.P., The Paris Opera, Scottish Ballet, London Festival Ballet, Ballet Rambert, Phoenix Dance Company and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Clark collaborated with fashion designers Bodymap, artists Leigh Bowery and Trojan, as well as The Fall, Laibach, and Wire, as well as producing considerable work for film and video, including *Hail the New Puritan* (1984) and *Because We Must* (1989) with Charles Atlas.

In 2005 Michael Clark became an Artistic Associate of the Barbican Centre, London, and embarked on the Stravinsky Project, a three-year project to produce a trilogy of works to seminal dance scores by Igor Stravinsky. In 2010 Michael Clark Company spent the summer in-residence at Tate Modern, London in preparation for a new large-scale performance commission for the Turbine Hall. The production *th* premiered in June 2011.

In 2011 Robert Gordon University Aberdeen conferred on Michael Clark an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts (Hon DArt) in recognition of his distinguished career in the field of choreography and dance, and the first monograph on Michael Clark, celebrating the whole of his career to date, from the late 70s to the present was published by Violette Editions. In 2014 Clark collaborated with artist Duncan Campbell on his Turner Prize-winning film *It For Others*, and in June that year Clark was awarded a CBE for services to Dance in the Queen's birthday honours. In 2016 Clark was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance.

Themes

- Multi-arts collaboration
- Breaking the rules
- Historical context and contemporary music

Ideas to explore with students

Historical context

What role does historical context play in the evolution of a dance performance? How might Michael Clark's works be interpreted differently today than they were in the 1980s?

Revolution expressed

In his book *Lipstick Traces*, musicologist Griel Marcus writes that various kinds of angry, absolute demands - demands on society, art, and all the governing structures of everyday life - are coded in phrases, images, and actions that are articulated through a singular revolutionary voice. In what way is Michael Clark a revolutionary figure of dance? How is he an iconoclast?

The influence of classical dance

Michael Clark said in an interview "Most people who think they're leaving classical ballet tend to reject it completely. I quickly realised it was very much part of me ... Outside the classroom I tend to not have any boundaries, so I respond well to someone telling me that this is right, you cannot do that." To what extent does classicism in dance mediate the content of Clark's work? Do you need to have rules in order to break them?

Collaboration

Clark's collaboration with artist Charles Atlas has played a key role in the development of much of his work. Do other choreographers collaborate in this way? How has Clark's tendency for collaboration across art forms changed or influenced his work?

Resources

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/10/michael-clark-company-review-dance-bowie-barbican-london-patti-smith>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/oct/02/michael-clark-i-still-make-the-dance-on-my-own-body-first-interview-to-a-simple-rock-n-roll-song>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2009/aug/27/guide-dance-michael-clark>

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