

PRAYING MANTIS DREAMING

SYNOPSIS

In the Aboriginal Dreaming stories of the Jhirrinbala Tribe of Northern Australia, the news carrier is a spiritual entity which takes on the shape of the Praying Mantis. In this form it observes the life and lifestyles of every person in the tribe, both male and female, from the time they are born until their death. The Praying Mantis watches over them and passes news about them to other members of the tribe. It will also warn them when they are in life threatening situations or imminent danger but it cannot change their destiny. That can only be done by the Aboriginal people themselves.

PRAYING MANTIS DREAMING is a ballet about the purgatorian existence of mixed-blood Aborigines who are not accepted as Aborigines by tribal people nor as whites by non-Aborigines.

PRAYING MANTIS DREAMING traces the life of PATRICIA, the daughter of LILI, a woman of the Kurrabi Clan, and DARBY, a white stockman. LILI already has a son from a previous liasion with a tribal man, but when PATRICIA is born she is half white and the tribe will not accept her, because of this she is sent to live with her father.

The Praying Mantis watches over PATRICIA as she grows up and leaves home for the city and the hurried and harried life-style of a detribalized Urban Black. He is saddened as he sees her drifting from alcohol and drug abuse into a more seedier lifestyle, hurtling forward at breakneck speed towards her own destruction. He cannot stop her so he carries the news of her plight back to her family's tribe.

BINDINMARA, PATRICIA'S brother, and other members of the tribe are told about PATRICIA by the Praying Mantis, their totem spirit. BINDINMARA is sent to the city to search for her. In the meantime, PATRICIA is given cultural dreams by the Praying Mantis to prepare her for BINDINMARA'S arrival.

Every night PATRICIA dreams about Jhirrinbala and finds the peaceful contentment and joy of living her life as a woman of the Kurrabi clan. Every morning she wakes up to find herself in a chaotic, hostile environment living life as a Black prostitute.

The Praying Mantis stands guard over PATRICIA until BINDINMARA can find her. Will BINDINMARA succeed or will she finally achieve her own inevitable destruction?

" Praying Mantis Dreaming" - Scene Notes

Scene 1.

Stage in full darkness. Charlie appears and all that is visible is the light of his helmet and he dances around the stage for approx one min. Mining sound accompany the piece.

A pool of light suddenly appears on a traditional woman and her son, who are talking(storytelling).

At the same time a PM appears in the background. The boy feels the PM presence and shivers. As he turns to face the PM the PM has disappeared (to occur twice) within the min.(traditional sound)

1st SHAFT

A shaft of light shoots out in red like a dirt track on the floor. At the end of this shaft, Charlie sits waiting for a lift back to town. (truck sound)

As soon as the truck sound passes, trad woman and son appear walking toward Charlie's direction.

They do not openly acknowledge his presence, although they know he is there.

As they pass him at the end of the light he follows them into the (wing) (3 lots of 8, Davids contemp music)

BLACKOUT for 2 sec

With the Blackout the PM appears quickly then disappears again

STYLE DIRECTION

Stylised costume of mother and son. Charlie is real. Sitting on some symbol of mining. Early morning in Arnhem Land. Lighting set time of day and location.

When P.M. appears stage is special lit, no setting.

2nd SHAFT

Same mood but trad women appears first and Charlie follows her (8 secs) he is drawn to her yet does not know how to approach. He is curious about this women whose culture is so different from his. As they are walking thru the shaft, body contact occurs, between the two and they leave the stage.

(David, 3x8)

BLACKOUT for 2 sec

PM appears briefly.

STYLE DIRECTION

Night, one week later.

3rd SHAFT

Charlie and trad woman appears walking hand in hand. They are cautious with each other. At the other end of the shaft, his desire is so great for her and he suddenly grabs her. She fights his sudden outburst and he then drags her off stage.

(David's music)

BLACKOUT for 10 sec- PM appears briefly

(Music David - woman giving birth)

STYLE DIRECTION

Middle of the day, hot - two weeks later.

4th SHAFT

Trad woman carrying baby surrounded by her trad family. As they walk down the shaft. Her family do not accept the birth of this child, at the end of the shaft she hands the baby to charlie. As she hands the baby over the PM appears and the trad woman and family disperse.

All that is left is charlie, baby, PM and small trad boy. Charlie leaves in opposite direction of trad people. The PM follows charlie and baby. The mother grabs the small boy off the stage.

(Music David- haunting)

At the end of this scene you hear an areoplane, in darkness.

STYLE DIRECTION

Dusk

SCENE 2.

STAGE IS DIVIDED IN HALF BY LIGHTING AND SET

One side is urban setting, kitchen apartment

Charlie is seated there (10 yrs later, child is 10 yrs old) he is not coping bringing up a child.

Drama movement	1. Serving food	
express.	2. Alcohol	(Music David)
	3. Abuse	
	4. Making up. Love/caring	
	5. Charlie dies - He collapses (natural cause)PM comforts childs reaction.	

2nd Stage:- traditional setting

counteract the 5 emotions (drama movements)

by

1. Hunting red kangaroo
2. Nadigy dance Alcohol
3. Boxing dance
4. Water and Wind
5. White cockatoo

(Music trad)

PM links the stages one and two.

BLACKOUT

STYLE DIRECTION

Urban side - realistic.

Traditional side - stylised

P.M. stays in traditional side - stylised.

SCENE 3.

PM comforts girl

Young girl is 17 yrs old and she is standing near the grave, she dances with the invisible PM (Music David)

which leads into the stage which becomes fully lighted

STRIKE THE GRAVEYARD PROP

Travelling - different people parade around the stage. The girl roams between the crowd, the small boy is (now big) part of crowd, dressed in a swag. (noisy street people sounds and contemp music)

The crowd disperses and the stage is bare except for young girl and the son. Then the son leaves.

The girl sits down on the bench, she lays down on it then she dreams. From out of under the bench, people covered in leaves, the P.M. Leads the four people out of the bench. The 4 people lift her off the bench and move her around the stage with the P.M. in front. The young girl is suddenly confronted with the son. They realise they are blood. They sniff each other and the p.m. intervenes. He stops them

STYLE DIRECTION

GRAVEYARD - stylised, spooky. Patricia - plain.

TRAVELLING - Exaggerated chaos. Characters realistic, but exaggerated minimal eg by a coat, hat.

Lighting stylised. Patricia a real plain Jane. Brother real.

Into end scene 3.

INTERVAL for 30 minutes

Scene 4.

The girl is sitting on the bench, as a pro, there are many characters around. The setting is a busy street. Everyone is a freeze pose. The p.m. crawls out from under the bench and crawls past each character. As he does this, the characters come alive one by one, and then the p.m. quickly disappears.

Suddenly full on noises (YOU FUCKING BITCH etc)

The girl knows everyone in the crowd. With in the crowd is her pimp (TI fella) she is full on lovy dovy with him. Just as they enter disco door, the son appears in the street. The son feels her presence and becomes angry. He throws a boomerang and goes crazy. Then leaves the scene, just as the girl and the pimp

come out of the disco . They walk centre stage (Still street action) the set is pulled of stage to reveal a bed, pimp and girl doorie, full on poking under sheets (Tasteful Scene)

STYLE DIRECTION

Realistic bench. Dreamlike atmosphere. Brother realistic and plain. Exaggerated realism of street scene & characters, set, costume fusion of all this except Patricia who is a special costume, light, space - same as brother and P.M.

Scene 5.

Suddenly a TI elder enters the scene drumming a warup. The p.m. pulls the sheet of the bed. To urge the island boy to take action with his people. Island contemp dance begins led by the island boy. The dance ends with the sound of the boe everyone departs the stage . Suddenly the girl awakes to the sound as well realising the TI boy has gone never mind he was a good poke anyway. Then falls back to sleep.

STYLE DIRECTION

Stylised dreamlike island section.

Scene 6.

Suddenly the PM appears , dances over the girl and there are 5 other PM's as well, came from out of bed.

The PM's dance the Praying Mantis

The girl wakes to the dance - is she dreaming?

She starts dancing with them, her brother comes on and joins in. They have body contact.

The brother disappears in the middle of the dance

Each PM leaves the stage one by one. The big PM and girl are left. He takes her back to the bed, she falls back to sleep.

The mother comes on, then brother dances with PM. The dance ends with the 3 looking over the bed.

BLACKOUT

STYLE DIRECTION

Spirit like feeling - not dreamlike. Metaphysical.

Key characters - brother, mother realistic.

Scene 7.

The mother, son, daughter and PM dance a quartet. (4 people's dance)

The dance ends and all that is left is mother and daughter.

BLACKOUT

STYLE DIRECTION

Mother, son realistic. P.M. stylised. Patricia dreamlike.

Set is minimless. Focus on people - concentrating on essence of

each character. Auras will produce the setting.

Scene 8.

A shaft appears and illuminates a trad environment, the girl is bewildered by the culture the brother appears dancing the trad PM dance. She is in awe, she tries to participate in the trad dancing.

The trad people leave and the girl is left alone with the brother.

STYLE DIRECTION

Stylised traditional environment. Time - late afternoon. Before sunset. Characters stylised. P.M. spirit-like. Spirit homecoming feeling - dreaming place.

Scene 9.

The PM appears and dances a solo in the trad setting, the brother and girl sense the spirit of the PM.

The spirit of the PM draws the girl toward the trad setting.

Suddenly the other setting appears- it is her old kitchen where she grew up. The girl turns and starts toward the kitchen.

The PM runs after the girl...

STYLE DIRECTION

Very mystical as well as reality of urban set.

Mood of direction of production ending relies on sound.

BLACKOUT THE END

(Sound, A girl laughing from within darkness accompanied by trad music)

Music Stops - then

(Sound - aeroplane taking off)

The Praying Mantis is on the plane going back to city to get more black fella's and bring them back to their roots)