

Dance 2367H

December 2, 2019

Small Assignment B

Duet of Oedipus and Jocasta: Turmoil of Love

The duet begins as Oedipus pulls Jocasta up from lying down and carries her to her chair. Jocasta uncrosses her arms and points her branch prop towards Oedipus, her focus directly at him as if she were about to shoot him with an arrow. Oedipus breaks his strong, proud stance and jarringly slaps his knee. He then uses a combination of sharp straight legged movements, taut bent knees, and stiff vertical jumps to move closer to Jocasta. Every time he jumps, he hits his hip, asserting his masculinity. Jocasta stays frozen in her sitting pose with branches held horizontally out as Oedipus puts his foot over Jocasta's shoulder. By doing so, he assumes the more powerful position in the relationship. Jocasta stands up and brings one of the branches above to create an L shape, Oedipus mimics this L shape with his leg straight out to the side, flexed. Oedipus plants his foot in Jocasta's side, inducing her to sit down, and then proceeds to bend over and kiss her. Oedipus is the dominate character even though he is younger and should respect Jocasta. He gets up as the music gets more violent and vigorously threads his arm over and over again through his cloak. Jocasta watches with her branches crossed above her head as Oedipus swings his straight legs out into the air and jumps.

Oedipus does a repeated right angle turn sequence with his arm straight out where every time he faces front Jocasta flinches as if she is being pulled by a string. Then Jocasta gets up and does a little dance for Oedipus where she makes different angular shapes with her branches. She rolls down on to the floor in front of Oedipus as if she were inferior to him. Jocasta sits up and repeatedly hides and reveals her face from behind the branch. Oedipus marches around Jocasta with straight wooden legs and entangles her in his cloak. Oedipus pulls Jocasta up and they

march with mirroring straight legs as they stare far off into the distance, branches held vertically behind their heads. Jocasta does not try to break her inferior position by initiating her own movement but instead moves with Oedipus like a puppet. They hook their inner arms together and hold the branches with their outside arms at an upward right angle as they inch forward. Then they repeat the marching sequence in the other direction before Oedipus yet again puts his foot over Jocasta's shoulder. They stare intently at each other and inch towards the ambiguous minimal shapes that furnish the stage.

A chorus member stomps her foot twice and Jocasta threads herself between Oedipus's legs, bending backwards at the knees. Oedipus does a sequence of repeatedly bending forward over Jocasta with his leg high in the air behind him and hovering horizontally over her. Oedipus vigorously grabs at Jocasta's chest, alternating arms, in time with the sharp, dissonant music. Oedipus picks Jocasta up underneath her arms and Jocasta spreads her legs wide open in the splits as Oedipus spins her around. This dance sequence represents Jocasta's position as his lover. Then the music becomes softer and Oedipus falls towards the ground as Jocasta cradles him like a baby. Then Oedipus rolls over Jocasta and kisses her. This alternating sequence of mother-child gestures and gestures of lovers is repeated until the end of the duet.

In typical Graham fashion, the dance movements in the duet of Oedipus and Jocasta are not segregated by gender like in classical ballet. However, to portray the paradoxical relationship Jocasta shares with her son, Graham uses effort and physical positioning. Oedipus uses more forceful movements, while Jocasta does the movements more slowly, almost as if she is posing. In addition, Oedipus puts his body over Jocasta to assert his dominance in the relationship. Graham weaves some gestures that represent the relationship between mother and child in order to fully convey the irony of the relationship. Overall this dance piece is jarring and uncomfortable to watch, displaying a different tone from the usual partnering dance.