CHOREOLOGICA

CHOREOLOGICA The Journal
of European Association of Dance Historians

ISSN 1746-5737
Edizioni Joker

Vol. 4 n. 1 - Winter 2008 / Spring 2009

CHOREOLOGICA

The Journal of
European Association of Dance Historians

Winter 2008 / Spring 2009
Volume 4 Number 1

Edizioni Joker

Volume 4 No.1 Winter 2008/Spring 2009
ISSN 1746-5737

European Association of Dance Historians
41 Talma Gardens
Twickenham
Middlesex TW2 7RB
UK

Tel/Fax: +44 (0)20 8892 9638
Email: eadh_queries@yahoo.co.uk
www.eadh.com

Published by Edizioni Joker
Via Crosa della Maccarina 28/B
I-15067 Novi Ligure (AL) - ITALY
Tel/Fax +39 (0)143 322383
Email: info@edizionijoker.com
www.edizionijoker.com

Printed by Digital Print Service
Segrate (MI) - ITALY

Page

Sources for Understanding Sallé's *Pigmalion*

By Sarah McCleave

Although Marie Sallé (1707?-1756) was arguably the most innovative performer-choreographer of her generation, her career presents many enigmas. Her professional activities in the years between her début at London's Lincolns-Inn-Fields Theatre in 1716 and her return there in autumn 1725 are largely obscure; likewise, we know very little about her life after she retired from the Paris Opéra in 1740 (Dacier, 1909; Vince, c. 1965). Her collaborations with opera composers George Frederic Handel in London (1734-35) and Jean-Philippe Rameau in Paris (1735-40) offer us a substantial body of music and two scenarios from which we can gain some appreciation of her creative work, yet two of her most important creations — the ballets en action *Pigmalion* and *Bacchus and Ariadne* (London, 1734) — have been inaccessible, for no music, no scenarios and no choreographies survive.

Sallé's tercentenary year encouraged an exploration of obscure areas of her life and career: while choreographer Jane Gingell effectively captured the essence of *Bacchus and Ariadne* in a performance (mus. Handel) staged at Stockholm's Confidencen Theatre (symposium 'La Sallé', 12-13 May 2007), this article will attempt to elucidate her Pigmalion, drawing on the original source for the story, two eye-witness accounts as well as other dance sources.

Ovid's Metamorphoses

Eighteenth-century choreographers who sought to tell entire stories through action usually worked from sources which were rich in visually suggestive incidents and were also well-known to their audiences. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (circa 8 AD) was a popular poetic source; book 10 (lines 243-297) offers us the first published account of the story which inspired Sallé's *Pigmalion*. Ovid's artistry in his transformation of an unsavoury tale from ancient history has been noted: the story seems to have its ultimate origins in an episode where a Cypriot king attempted to have sexual intercourse with a statue of Venus (Anderson, 1972, p. 497). Pigmalion, a confirmed bachelor, "carved an ivory statue of a woman so convincingly beautiful that he began to imagine it alive" (Anderson, 1972, p. 495). After dressing the statue in "fine clothes" and adorning it with jewels, he takes her to bed. He courts the statue by offering her small gifts; Ovid indicates that the sculptor caresses his creation with such vigour that she would have shown bruises had she been made of flesh (Anderson, 1972, p. 134, lines 256-58).

> Not content with this lifeless thing of perfect beauty, he prayed to Venus [during a festival in her honour] that his wife might be, if not the statue, at least like it.
>
> Ovid paraphrased by Anderson, 1972, p. 495

The festival, which includes a sacrifice of animals, occupies a mere four lines of the poem (Anderson, 1972, p. 135, lines 270-273). After this ritual, Pigmalion prays to the goddess. His state of mind is described as timid ("timide") rather than distraught (Anderson, 1972, p. 499). The favourable omen which he receives while standing at the altar of Venus — "three quick blazings up of the fire and the soaring of a tip (or tongue) of flame into the air" (Anderson, 1972, p. 499) — is emulated in other eighteenth-century theatrical versions of this story (Rameau, 1748 and Rozoi, 1780). After receiving the omen, Pigmalion returns to his house where the statue remains in his bed:

> And when he went home from the temple and began to kiss the ivory, it slowly became flesh, a wife to respond to his passion.
>
> Ovid paraphrased by Anderson, 1972, p. 495

We can appreciate that this story would translate particularly well into a mimed and danced entertainment, as there is not a single action or interaction which is dependent on spoken or sung text for its expression. The tale is both straightforward and appealing, with human love as the ultimate agent of a wonderful transformation (Anderson, 1972, p. 499). The immediacy and intensity of the action — which centres on the marked reactions of Pigmalion and Galatea to each other — would have been a particularly productive foil for Sallé's creative genius. She was equally acclaimed as a graceful dancer and as a moving pantomime; before *Pigmalion* her most noted accomplishment as a choreographer had been her revision of teacher Françoise Prévost's solo choreography for *Les Caractères de la danse* (mus. Jean-Féry Rebel) as a pas de deux for herself and her brother, Francis.

The Mercure Letter

While Ovid's poem alone could provide a modern choreographer with enough stimuli to create a work in homage to Marie Sallé, we are fortunate to have two eye-witness accounts of her *Pigmalion*. (These are both well known, but have never been analysed in depth.) The first was written by an anonymous correspondent and published in the Mercure's April 1734 issue. Written in the manner of a letter to the editor, this source (see Appendix 1) enables us to construct a coherent scenario.

The entertainment opens with the entrance of Pigmalion and his sculptors who perform a characteristic dance with mallet and chisel (Appendix 1, line 8). On Pigmalion's orders, the front of the scene is opened by his attendants to reveal the various statues in his workshop (lines 8-9). One statue excites particular admiration from all the assembled sculptors; Pigmalion himself is moved to sigh before caressing its every curve and limb (lines 10-12). He adorns the statue's arms with

precious bracelets and its neck with an opulent necklace (lines 12-13). Pigmalion succumbs to his passion: while kissing the statue's hands, he expresses his anxieties by falling into a reverie before throwing himself at the feet of a statue of Venus (lines 13-16). This is an adaptation of the "festival" described in Ovid, when the sculptor attends an event where the goddess of love is being celebrated. In Sallé's entertainment, the statue is presumably in Pigmalion's workshop and thus conveniently at hand for his appeal.

Venus's favourable response to this prayer is signalled by three shafts of light and a symphony of appropriate music (lines 17-18; the lighting effect is taken directly from Ovid). The statue gradually becomes animated and surprises Pigmalion and his followers with her expressions of astonishment at both her new existence and also all the objects with which she is now surrounded (lines 18-20). The astonished and transported sculptor offers the statue his hand; she takes it and steps down to perform a series of the most beautiful attitudes (lines 21-23). Pigmalion dances in front of her; the statue copies the most simple and the most difficult movements. The sculptor succeeds in inspiring her to respond to his tenderness (lines 23-26). The Mercure's account continues with a description of Salle's costume (lines 28-32) and concludes by indicating how popular *Pigmalion* has been with its performance for Sallé's forthcoming benefit keenly anticipated (lines 33-37).

It is possible from this source to construct a complete action, for the cast is identified and we have a coherent story with several clearly defined incidents. The writer, however, makes no claim to have provided us with a full account of the work and it is reasonable to assume he was describing the events which struck him particularly, or which he assumed would be of certain interest to his readers.

Berchères and Eighteenth-Century Theatrical Dance Sources

If we turn to the second description of Sallé's *Pigmalion*, which is found in a poem written as a tribute to her by one Pierre Bordes de Berchères (Appendix 2), we find some details which amplify the Mercure's account. By collating these with information from contemporaneous theatrical sources as well as modern studies, we should gain a fresh appreciation of Sallé's ballet en action.

The Mercure opens the entertainment with a character dance for sculptors ("une danse caracterisée"); Berchères instead describes a pantomimed action where Pigmalion oversees the rough planning, trimming, polishing and finishing of the statues (Appendix 2, lines 9-10). A dance for sculptors in Gregorio Lambranzi's Neue und Curieuse Theatrialische Tantz-Schul (1716, Book 2, plate 24; see Illustration 1) reveals this could have been a dance into which some mime was integrated:

> Here is a wooden state which has been covered with pieces of stone, made to adhere by means of plaster, so that is appears shapeless. It is set upon the stage. Then enter two sculptors who chisel the statue as they dance, so that the pieces of stone fall off and the mass is transformed into a statue. The pas can be arranged at pleasure. The air is played twice.
>
> Lambranzi 1716, translated Derra de Moroda (1928/2002), part 2, p. 83

This description suggests a performance where both dance and mime are simultaneous, but Lambranzi's description of a dance for blacksmiths offers another model:

> Two blacksmiths forge a nail in time with the music until the air has been played once. Then one lays down his hammer and dances chassés, ballonnés, pirouettes and pas de rigaudon until the air has been repeated; meanwhile the other one forges. Finally they both dance together and exit.
>
> Lambranzi 1716, translated Derra de Moroda (1928/2002), part 2, p. 83

The character dances — where the character is defined by the nature and quality of his or her gestures — described in Lambranzi are mirrored in the titles for entr'acte dances in the London theatres. Sallé's

sculptors' dance would have been part of the same dance tradition, cultivated in fairgrounds and repertory theatres across Europe (including London, as we can assume from the background of the dancers who performed there). So Lambranzi offers us a valid model for how Sallé's work might have opened.

Further corroboration is offered by Harris-Warrick and Marsh's study of the choreographies for the comic pantomimes of August Ferrère (fl. 1750-1782). They note that group scenes typically frame the beginning and end of Ferrère's works; the opening scene will reveal a group engaged in an activity or dancing together (2005, p. 234). The movement spectrum observed by Harris-Warrick and Marsh ranges from pure mime (with no dance) to the more commonly found situations where mime or gestures were integrated with dance. This process could happen consecutively, or simultaneously (2005, p. 251). As we have seen, Lambranzi offers both models in his 1716 treatise.

The opening sculptor's dance (which doubtless included an element of mime) is entirely in keeping with practice in contemporary pantomimes. All of these expose the characters and locale in the first scene; most of these do so through a group dance.

This opening, in the comic style is apparently followed by some different material evoking the serious and expressive type of mime which had already been cultivated in England by John Weaver (1673-1760), for Berchères tells us that Pigmalion is fiercely protective of his statue and jealous of anyone else touching it (lines 13-14). Although the protectiveness and jealousy could be the products of Bercheres' poetic imagination these reactions would be very effective in the theatre. Moreover, we can see choreographers such as Weaver and Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810) introducing these types of incidents into their own works. Sallé would have known Weaver's work from her years in London and went on to influence Noverre as his teacher in Paris (see McCleave, 2007a). Most probably Berchères' description of Pigmalion's reaction is accurate.

It is uncertain, however, whether Sallé's working methods were closer to Weaver or to Noverre. Weaver preferred to draw on the codified gestures from contemporary acting treatises:

> Jealousy will appear by the Arms suspended, or a particular pointing the middle Finger to the Eye; by an Irresolute Movement throughout the Scene, and a Thoughtfulness of Countenance.
>
> Weaver, 1717 reproduced in Ralph, 1985, p. 754

Noverre, on the other hand, rejected any form of codification, and urged his dancers to feel the emotions they were meant to portray (see, for example, 1803/1966, Letter VII, p. 52-53). It is not within the scope of this present study, however, to determine whether Sallé observed a codified or intuitive method.

Returning to Berchères, we find that he also offers further details about the properties used in Salle's *Pigmalion*. He confirms that the statue was bedeck'd with various jewels (Appendix 1, line 13; Appendix 2, lines 17-19), and adds that Pigmalion throws garlands of flowers at the statue's feet (lines 19-20). This is entirely plausible. A search for "garlands" in the electronic resource Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO) reveals at least eight London theatre works dating between 1703 and 1740 where garlands were used as props.

Berchères continues with Pigmalion's adoration of the statue (line 21); while we are given no details, this presumably was done with expressive gestures and glances. The power of Pigmalion's desire triggers an opening of the sky from which a gilded cloud descends, emitting light which encases the statue (lines 23-24). This is a more comprehensive description than the Mercure correspondent's reference to three shafts of light (Appendix 1, line 17) and our knowledge of staging devices from this time suggests that Berchères' description could be entirely accurate.

The sculptors are still present, for they stop work and tremble at the appearance of the cloud (Appendix 2, lines 25-26). Scenes where the figurants are expected to react to events can be found both in Weaver and in Noverre. Berchères' wording suggests that the sculptors had continued to work while Pigmalion was admiring his statue. This type of "background" activity anticipates Noverre's preoccupation with cultivating the effect of a painting in his choreographies, with different

actions and reactions happening simultaneously (1803/1966, Letter III, p. 23-26). The Mercure omits these details as its correspondent was writing for an audience who was chiefly interested in Sallé herself and rather less in the actions of her colleagues.

While Berchères notes the admiration and wonder which the statue's first movements excited (Appendix 2, lines 31-32), the Mercure merely alludes to the onlookers' surprise (Appendix 1, lines 18-19). Berchères' description is reminiscent of Weaver, who described Mars's admiration of Venus thus:

> Admiration is discover'd by the raising up of the right hand, the Palm turned upwards, the Fingers clos'd; and in one Motion the Wrist turn'd round and Fingers spread; the Body reclining, and Eyes fix'd on the Object.
>
> Weaver, 1717, reproduced in Ralph, 1985, p. 754

Next Berchères dwells on the bearing or address of the statue: although covered in a flimsy cloth, she is modest and noble (Appendix 2, lines 32-34). The poet continues by detailing Pigmalion's reaction to her: we are told the sculptor cannot believe his eyes; he experiences and expresses impatience, timidity (this reaction is reminiscent of Ovid), joy and fear; he approaches the statue and applies his trembling lips to her brow. He then thanks heaven for the miracle of her coming to life (Appendix 2, lines 35-43). While Berchères' description suggests a sequence of expressive gestures and facial expressions, the Mercure merely conveys that Pigmalion takes the statue's hand (Appendix 1, lines 21-22). The poet's effusiveness does not make him suspect as a chronicler of Sallé's work, for his art form is highly sympathetic in capturing the emotive nuances which we believe she incorporated into her choreographies. As this portion of the action was depicted by Malter "l'anglais", a dancer derided in Paris for his provincial roots and general unworthiness as a dancing-partner for Sallé (Dacier, 1909, p. 114), the Mercure responds with predictable curtness.

Berchères continues by describing the interaction between Sallé and Malter. The lovers unite, exchanging passionate glances (Sallé was

renowned for her expressive face). Their attitudes, steps, and movements reveal their sentiments (Appendix 2, lines 44-47). This passage would seem to describe a combination of mime and formal dance; it is possible that spatial patterns could have assisted in conveying their budding relationship (see, for example, Goff, 2000).

Berchères then provides some unique details concerning the casting, telling us that Hymen, god of marriage, unites the lovers while shepherds, shepherdesses, fauns, sylvans and nymphs crowd in from all sides to observe the union of the happy couple (lines 48-49). Many of London's danced entertainments ended with a large celebratory dance, so this additional information seems plausible. Let us consider whether the troupe at Covent Garden theatre could have performed this scene. Hymen's role is pure pantomime, so he could have been performed by one of the comedians. Apart from Sallé, Covent Garden had nine female dancers and fifteen male dancers in its employ. This is a large enough company to allow for two or even three of each of the above-mentioned characters. The sculptors may have performed some of the pastoral roles; this practice of doubling roles was common in London dance entertainments: the four Grecian sailors in Sallé's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, for example, also served as the four fauns.

Regarding the casting, we should also consider contemporary newspapers and theatrical scrapbooks. Normally only the two principal dancer's names are given — occasionally their roles, as Pigmalion and the Statue, are also specified. More rarely, the additional names of six male dancers are found (Dupre, Pelling, Duke, LeSac, Newhouse, Delagarde), but their roles as sculptors are known only through the Mercure and Berchères. In London danced entertainments of this time, the newspapers often omit details concerning the cast which can be verified by other sources (normally the scenarios), so the expanded cast as described by Berchères (lines 48-51) is probably accurate. The Mercure's account, ending the action with the dance lesson between Pigmalion and Galatea, is rather unsatisfactory. There are an overwhelming number of precedents (in London and throughout Europe) for group finales when a theatrical entertainment ends with a wedding or celebration; it is also very characteristic to bring in pastoral characters for such

an event. Now that the statue is "real" the sculptors have no further role and it is right that the shepherds and their companions should take over.

Rameau's Pigmalion

While the various sources considered above have given some indications concerning the staging of *Pigmalion* (and it is recognised that there are issues or potential models which have not been considered here and which will bear examination in a more detailed study), we are still bereft of its music, which is a considerable loss. Yet there are models we can consult. Perhaps the most obvious is Rameau's *Pigmalion* (Paris, 1748, lib. La Motte): not only is it based on the same story as was Sallé's ballet en action, but there are further connections through Sallé's work with Rameau in the latter half of the 1730s and her role as teacher of Rameau's statue, Mlle. Puvignée cadette (see McCleave, 2007b, p. 169).

As Rameau's work includes sung text, it is the differences between this and Sallé's entertainment which will strike us at first. The role of Pigmalion is assumed by a singer, that of Galatée (the statue) by a singer-dancer. The (sung) character of Céphise, the frustrated fiancée of Pigmalion, is added. Pigmalion admires the statue during the overture and articulates his feelings for her in sung declamation; he has a fraught encounter with the jealous Céphise then resumes his admiration of the statue (expressed by sung text) before offering a prayer to Venus. The next passage suggests how Sallé's anonymous composer might have dealt with the scene prior to the statue's awakening. Rameau's score contains a "Tender and Harmonious Symphony" (eight chords only are given but this might have been an outline for an improvisation); this symphony corresponds with an increase in the lighting. We then have an alternation of Pigmalion's vocal exclamations with some short musical gestures from the orchestra. In Sallé's work, we can imagine an alternation of physical and musical gestures. The statue's descent and her first walking steps are conveyed with very brief picturesque musical gestures. The statue expresses her wonder (with her own existence, with Pigmalion) in sung recitative. The next moment of particular interest occurs when the Graces instruct her in the "different characters of dancing". The music for this is a suite of ten short dances. Some of these are for the statue, some for the Graces, others for all four dancers. The whole concludes with an expressive sarabande and a lively tambourin for the statue. The stately tempo of the former would have permitted Mlle Puvignée to demonstrate a series of affective attitudes; the lively pace of the latter would have assured her audience that she now had the full use of her limbs. A suite of dance music also accompanies the "characters of dance" demonstrated in composer Jean-Féry Rebel's Les Caractères de la danse (part of Sallé's own repertory from 1726), so it seems reasonable to suggest that the dancing lesson in Sallé's *Pigmalion* would have been accompanied by just such a suite. It is less certain whether her work anticipated Rameau's in featuring slow and lively pantomime dances for the figurants (in Rameau, these are "the people who dance around the statue"). Given the additional precedents considered earlier, we can be fairly confident, however, that Sallé's work, as did Rameau's, ended with a "general ballet".

L'Oracle

Further possibilities concerning the staging of Sallé's *Pigmalion* are offered by consulting the Mercure's account of young Lolotte Cammasse's performance as a statue in the one-act comédie L'Oracle (Paris, Théâtre Français, 22 March 1740; mus. Nicolas Racot de Grandval). As Sallé assumed this role when Cammasse departed for Poland later that spring, it has been suggested that the elder dancer may have coached the younger in the role (McCleave, 2007b, p. 170). As the anonymous chronicler tells us:

> The theatre opens to a delicious garden, with three statues on pedestals. They are animated by the Fairy. [...] The middle statue, which is Dlle Cammasse as Terpsichore, is decorated with garlands. She descends from the pedestal to the level of the stage and begins her entrée with movements of surprise and admiration, forming her steps to a sarabande played by the violin and

the flute. After the sarabande, a muted orchestra plays a lively and fluid air, during which the statue becomes animated by degrees and then dances a very lively and very animated tambourin. With this the entrée ends and the scenes of the comédie continue.

This short and charming comédie ends with another entrée for Dlle. Cammasse She dances a Rondeau, in which the different characters of dance are expressed with an art, which one could call inimitable in a person aged eleven, in whom talents are already more developed and more admirable after around two years of absence [from our stage]. The Airs of the Symphony are composed by M. de Grandval, père.

Mercure, April 1740, p. 766-767, translated McCleave

There are several aspects of this account which correspond with Sallé's *Pigmalion* of 1734 and Rameau's *Pigmalion* of 1748, thus suggesting a developing tradition. The garlands mentioned in Bercheres also bedeck Cammasse as Terpsichore; as in Rameau, the statue dances to a sarabande, followed by a tambourin. Surprise and admiration are expressed, although we should note that in L'Oracle it is the statue who conveys these moods, while it is the sculptors who do so in London. The rondeau (which would have been a piece of music in several sections, with a recurring theme) expressing the different characters of dancing corresponds to the suite found in Rameau.

When Sallé took over Cammasse's role for a performance at the French court on 22 June 1740, the Mercure recorded some of the changes she made:

At the front of the theatre are two statues on pedestals, which are animated by the Fairy [...] These figures are represented in suitable attitudes by D[avid] Dumoulin and by Dlle. Sallé. For the entrée which they danced, two musettes from Terpsichore by [Jean-Féry] Rebel père and two tambourines from Les Élémens by the same composer were substituted for the symphonic airs performed at the Comédie Françoise. The piece was concluded with a divertissement of male and female gardeners.

Mercure, July 1740, p. 1630, translated McCleave

We now have two dancing statues performed by Sallé and her usual Opéra partner David Dumoulin. Music by Rebel replaced the original score by Grandval; the new version included two musettes (allegedly Sallé's favourite dance) and two tambourines. The most logical explanation for this substitution was that Sallé had already worked out an appropriate choreography to Rebel's music; the obvious source for this scene would have been her own *Pigmalion*. With Dumoulin as her partner, Sallé presumably recreated some of the mimed interactions she had already developed with Malter. If her score was a "patchwork" rather than a through-composed score in the model of Rameau's Pigmalion its disappearance is not surprising. A compilation of previously published music would have had no appeal to a contemporary publisher and would also have reduced her patrons' interest in acquiring a manuscript copy. Sallé's own copy may have been dissected as opportunities to re-use the music occurred. This brief account in the Mercure offers us our first concrete leads concerning the music for Sallé's *Pigmalion*, while hinting that this mode of compiling a score might have been commonplace (certainly no surprise at the substitutions is expressed). Possibly music from Rebel's *Les Caractères de la danse* featured as well. Although we are still unable to "reconstruct" Pigmalion we are now closer to understanding the principles which shaped its performance.

Appendix 1

Lettre à M***

Mlle Sallé, sans trop considérer l'embarras où elle m'expose, me charge, Monsieur, de vous rendre compte de ses succès. Il s'agit de vous dire de quelle manière elle a rendu la fable de Pigmalion et celle de Bacchus et d'Ariane, et les applaudissements que ces deux Ballets de son invention ont excités à la cour d'Angleterre. Il y a près de deux mois que l'on voit représenter Pigmalion, et le public ne s'en lasser. Voici de quelle maniere se développe le Sujet. Pigmalion entre dans son Attelier avec ses Sculpteurs, qui forment une Danse caracterisée, le Maillet et le Ciseau à la main. Pigmalion leur ordonne d'ouvrir le fond de l'Attelier, qui est orné de Statuës aussi bien que le devant; il en paroît au milieu une qui attire pardessus toutes les autres l'admiration de tout le monde. Il la regarde, il la considere et soupire; il porte ses mains sur ses pieds, sur sa taille, il en examine et en observe tous les contours, aussi bien-que des bras qu'il pare des bracelets précieux, il orne son col d'une riche collier, il baise les mains de sa chere Statuë, il en devient enfin passionné; il exprime ses inquiétudes, d'où il tombe dans la réverie; aprés quoi il se jette aux pieds de Venus qu'il conjure d'animer ce marbre.

Venus répond à sa priere; trois traits de lumiere paroissent et sur une simphonie convenable, la Statuë commence à sortir par degré de son insensibilité: à la surprise de Pigmalion et de ses suivans elle témoigne son étonnement de sa nouvelle existence et de tous les objets dont elle est entourée.

Pigmalion, plein d'étonnement et de transport, lui rend la main pour sortir de sa position; elle tâte, pour ainsi dire, la terre, et forme quelque pas par degrés dans les plus elegantes attitudes que la Sculpture puisse desirer. Pigmalion danse devant elle comme pour lui montrer; elle repete depuis les choses les plus simples jusq'aux composées et aux

plus difficiles; il tache d'inspirer la tendresse dont il se sent penetré et il en vient à bout.

Vous concevez, Monsieur, ce que peuvent devenir tous les passages de cette action exécutée et mise en danse avec les grâces fines et délicates de Mlle Sallé. Elle a osé paroître dans cette Entrée sans panier, sans jupe, sans corps et échevelée, et sans aucun ornement sur la tête; elle n'estoit vêtuë avec son corset et un jupon, que d'une simple robbe de mousseline tournée en draperie, et ajustée sur le modèle d'une Statuë Grecque.

Vous ne devez pas douter, Monsieur, du prodigieux succès de cet ingenieux ballet [sic.], si hereusement exécuté. Le Roy, la Reine, toute la Famille Royale et toute la cour, ont encore demandé cette danse pour le jour du Benefit, pour lequel toutes les Loges et les Places du Théâtre et de l'Amphitheatre sont retenuës il y a un mois. Ce sera le premier jour d'April.

Je suis &c.

Londres 15 Mars.

Mercure de France, April 1734, p. 770-772

Appendix 2

Le Jardin de Delos ou Terpsichore a Londres.
Idylle.
Sur la Demoiselle Salé Danseuse Françoise sur ses Danses D'Ariane & de Pygmalion au Théâtre de Covent-Garden a Londres.[1]

Il dit, sur le Cristal de la Liquide Plaine 1
Reflechit Tout à Coup l'Appareil d'une Sçene
De ce Bois Embelly les Arbres arrangez

Traéent Artisement des détours ombragez,
Ils offrent un Jardin[2] où d'espace en espace
Tout l'attirail que l'Art des Phydias embrasse,
Des Marbres Modelez des Mains de l'ouvrier
Etalent d'un Sculpteur le Rustique Attelier,
C'est de Pygmalion, sous ses Yeux chaque Eleve
Dégrossit, Taille un Bloc, le Polit & l'Acheve,
Mais luy Suel Occupé sur un Travail plus Beau,
Grand Chef d'Oeuvre de l'Art de son Docte Cizeau,
Pour de Vives Beautez Insensible, Farouche
Jaloux, ne permet pas qu'une autre Main y touche,
Sous un Grec Vêtement, c'est la Belle Cypris,
Le Marbre de Paros en rehausse le Prix,
Le Travail est Parfait, la Tête reparée,
De Perles, de Rubis par ses Mains est Parcé,
Il en Orne ses Bras, se Jettant a ses Pieds
De Guirlandes de Fleurs il veut les Voir Liez,
Il Fait plus, il l'Adore, en s'Adorant Luy même
Dans ce Divin Effort de son Sçavoir Suprême;
Tout a Coup le Ciel s'ouvre, un nuage Doré
D'un Eclat Lumineux rend ce Marbre entouré
De l'Eleve éblouy chaque Oeuvre suspendue
Prête a cette Splendeur une tremblante Vûe,
Mais Quel Prodige! O Ciel! Quelle Faveur des Dieux!
La Matiere se Meut, & s'ébranle a leurs yeux,
Un invisible Main, dont la Force est Puissante
Agile ses Refforts, la Statüe est Vivante,
L'Attitude du Corps charme, Ravit, Suprend,
Tous Admirent son Port Modeste, Noble & Grand,

[1] In: Pierre Bordes de Berchères, *Crane-Court, ou le Nouveau Temple D'Apollon. A Londres. Ode a Messieurs de la Societé Royale de Londres* (London, 1734), 'Tracts Relating to the Royal Society 1700-84', Copy used: GB-Lbl 740.c.24 (4).

[2] Le Theatre de Covent-Garden ou Commun Jardin, parce qu'on vend des Fruits & des Fleurs dans la Place de ce Nom qui est voisine.

Sur son Sein découvert par la Toile Legere
Brille de la Pudeur le Sacré Caractere,
Pygmalion saisy n'ose en Croire ses yeux,
Impatient, Timide, en même Tems Joyeux
Et Craintif, il Approche, en tremblant il Applique
Sa Lévre sur son Front Sa Sensibilité
Aux Premiers Feux d'Amour Nez avec la clarté,
Pour Affermir ses Pas il la Soutient, la Presse,
Son Coeur de Marbre encor se Fend a sa Tendresse,
Ils Rendent Grace au ciel, qui fait Naitre en ce Jour
L'Amour pour la Beauté, la Beauté pour l'Amour.
Par un Geste Naif ces Deux Amans s'unissent,
Leur Flame se déploye, & leurs yeux s'attendrissent,
Leurs Airs Passionez, leurs Pas, leurs Mouvemens
Découvrent de leurs Coeurs les Secrets Sentimens.
L'Hymen va les Unir, des Bergers, des Bergeres,
Des Faunes, des Sylvains, des Nymphes Boccageres
D'un Spectacle si Beau les Regards Enchantez
En Foule sur ces Bords Volent de tous cotez.
Ce Poëme Müet, cette Vive Peinture
Par la force de l'Art surpasse la Nature,
Dans le Vray, mais en Beau, ce qu'on y voit se rend,
L'Elegant, & le Simple y Brillent, mais en Grand,
Egalement Touchant, également Sublime
Le Sage l'Inventa, la Sagesse l'exprime,
D'un Peuple de Heros Noble Délassement,
Qui Signalant son Goût par l'Applaudissement
En Protegeant les Arts, les Rend plus Beaux encore
Et d'un Digne Laurier couronne Terpsichore.

FIN

Bibliography

Anderson, William (ed.) Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6-10. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972.

Berchères, Pierres Bordes de. Le jardin de delos ou Terpsichore a Londres. Idylle sur la demoiselle Salé [sic] danseuse françoise sur ses danses d'Ariane et de Pygmalion au théâtre de Covent-Garden a Londres in Crane Court, ou le nouveau temple d'Apollon a Londres. Ode a messieurs de la Societé royale de Londres. London: n.p., 1734.

Dacier, Émile. Une Danseuse de l'Opéra sous Louis XV: Mlle Sallé. Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1909.

Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://galenet.galegroup.com./servlet/ECCO

Goff, Moira. Imitating the Passions: Reconstructing the Meanings within the Passacaglia of Venüs & Adonis in Jordan, Stephanie (ed) Preservation Politics: Dance Revised, Reconstructed, Remade, Proceedings of the Conference at the University of Surrey Roehampton (1997). London: Dance Books, 2000, p. 154-165.

Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Carol G. Marsh. Putting Together a Pantomime Ballet in Harris-Warrick, Rebecca and Bruce Alan Brown (eds) The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and his World. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, p. 231-278.

Lambranzi, Gregorio. New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing (1716). Translated by Derra de Moroda, edited by Cyril W. Beaumont (1928). Mineola, New York: Dover, 2002.

McCleave, Sarah. Marie Sallé and the Development of the ballet en action in Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland, Vol. 2, 2007a, p. 1-23, http://www.music.ucc.ie/jsmi/.

McCleave, Sarah. Marie Sallé: A Wise Professional Woman of Influence in Brooks, Lynn Matluck (ed) Women in Early Dance. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007b, p. 160-182.

Mercure. April 1734, p. 770-772.

Mercure. April 1740, p. 766-767.

Mercure. July 1740, p. 1630.

Noverre, Jean-Georges. Letters on Dancing and Ballets (1803). Translated by Cyril W. Beaumont. New York: Dance Horizons, 1966.

Ralph, Richard. The Life and Works of John Weaver. London: Dance Books, 1985.

Rameau, Jean-Philippe. Pigmalion (1748) in Saint-Saëns, Camille (ed) Oeuvres complètes Vol. 17. Paris: Durand, 1913.

Rozoi, Barnabé Farmian de. Pigmalion, Drame lyrique en un acte en prose; représenté pour la premiere fois sur le Théâtre des Comédiens Italiens Ordinaires du Roi, le samedi 16 Décembre 1780. London/Paris: La Veuve Ballard et fils, 1780.

Vince, Stanley. 'With Entertainments of Dancing': A Life of Marie Sallé, Dancer at the Paris Opera in the Time of Louis XV. London: typescript, c. 1965.

Weaver, John. The Loves of Mars and Venus. A Dramatic Entertainment of Dancing. London: W. Mears and J. Browne, 1717.

CHOREOLOGICA

Dramas at Drury Lane

By Madeleine Inglehearn

The Theatre Royal Drury Lane was one of London's leading theatres in the 18th century which was a period of great growth in interest in theatrical productions to the general public. The Hanoverian royal court was less interested that their Stuart predecessors, in private masques presented at Whitehall, they much preferred a visit to the public theatres with their family, and this naturally meant an increase in audience figures with the upwardly mobile populace finding these socially acceptable place to see and be seen at the same time as being entertained.

Drury Lane offered a wide variety of entertainment ranging from serious Shakespearian tragedies, through the comedies of the Restoration dramatists to the farcical Commedia style pantomimes of John Rich. An evening at the theatre usually consisted of two productions, first a straight play followed by a farce or pantomime. These were often separated by dancing or singing with 'dancing between the acts' of the play.

Dancing, therefore, played an important role in the theatre programming and there was competition between the theatre management to get the best artists. This included importing dancers from overseas who

could be advertised as famous in their own country and therefore a special draw to English audiences. Most of these 'foreigners' were French or Italian, and London audiences soon developed favourites among these artists.

From time to time, however, these 'stars' could give theatre managers sleepless nights and headaches. It must have been difficult calming explosive temperaments and soothing homesick hearts; whilst keeping control of petty jealousies and greed required immense tact. Sometimes, however, these internal squabbles became public in spite of all the managers efforts and then the audience would be only too ready to join in the quarrel and take sides.

Two particular incidents erupted into the public domain, both involving the dancer Catherine Roland. There were two Mesdemoiselles Roland performing in London at this time, Catherine mainly at Drury Lane and Anne, the younger sister at Covent Garden, while they lodged near St. Martin-in-the-Fields with their brother Francis and several other French colleagues. On 7th December 1734 Catherine was booked to appear with another dancer Mr. Michael (Michel?) Poitier at Drury Lane, but neither of them turned up and the Manager, Mr. Fleetwood, worried that his audience for the night *'would be highly offended, and make a great Uproar, (their Names being published in the Play-bills of the Day)'*, sent a Mary Ferg, to their lodgings to find out where they were and insist they come at once. It is not clear what Ferg's connection was, although a Master Ferg danced at Drury Lane from time to time. According to Ferg's affidavit she went as instructed and was told by Poitier *'that, for his Part, he was ill, and as for Mrs. Roland, she was not at home; and besides, his dancing without hers would signify little, and positively refused to go to the said Theatre:'* Ferg also reported that she was told by Mrs. Poitiers *'that Ms. Roland was gone from home, on Purpose that she might not be compelled to dance that Evening; and that the said Mrs. Roland was not brought to England to be made a Slave, or [words] to that or the like Effect.'*

Mr. Fleetwood was indeed right and an uproar was created by a disappointed audience. There appear to have been legal repercussions which dragged on until on 3rd March 1735 when the Daily Journal published all the depositions on the case in an attempt to settle matters. Reading these papers it does seem that one of the problems was the language barrier and the need for various people involved to have their messages translated from French to English and vice versa. Poitier got his doctor, Charles Dennis, Surgeon to swear that his patient was in fact ill and that he would not have been dancing at this time but *'being unwilling to disappoint the Company' [...] I do believe it was his Intention had he not been prevented by Mademmoiselle Roland's Indisposition'* . The doctor confirmed that on other occasions Poitier had danced when he was unfit and *'I myself, at Mr. Fleetwood's Desire, did accompany both him and Mr. Poitier to the Theatre for fear Mr. Poitier should have wanted my Assistance during his Performance there'*, implying thereby that Poitier was not one to let his audience down without good cause.

Another person dragged into the argument was the famous dancer Denoyer. One of the messengers involved in this tooing and froing claimed that Denoyer had sent him to Poitier with the message *'that he did not know how much he would wrong himself and Mrs. Roland if they did not come, having over-heard the Commedians talk amongst themselves;'* This suggests that their fellow actors and dancers were also indignant at being let down. On the other hand Roland published an extract from a letter she had received from Denoyer after the event suggesting that '*Mr. Fleetwood has promised me to justify you and Mr. Poitier in the publick Papers To-morrow'* which seems to have been the only apology she at this time for what happened. Poitier, on the other hand was far more conciliatory and after protesting about *'the Speech made against me from the Stage'* concluded that *'I shall only add, that if ever I have been so unfortunate, as to fall under the Displeasure of the Publick, I am heartily sorry for it, and I never had any Intention to do it, thinking myself too greatly obliged for the many Favours I have receiv'd,'*

In spite of this trouble, Mlle Catherine Roland and Michel Poitier continued to dance together at Drury Lane from time to time, and there were no more reports of trouble until 1739 by which time Roland was being partnered by Denoyer himself. In January 1739 once again trouble broke out at Drury Lane. On 16th January the Daily Post reported that *'For several Nights past there has been great Disturbances at Drury-Lane theatre; [...] about Mons. Denoyer and Madem. Roland, and last Tuesday night the two last were both pelted off the Stage; some Person was so inhuman as to throw a Stone, or some such Thing, at Roland, which hitting her on the Temple, knock'd her down, on which she was carried off the Stage, and continues very Ill: Twenty Pound Reward is offer'd by her for discovering the cruel wretch that did it.'* It does seem extreme to carry stones to the theatre to throw at the dancers, although reporting the same incident, the Country Journal or The Craftsman reported that *'Mlle Roland was knock'd down with an Apple'* a rather more innocuous weapon.

The cause of this disturbance can be found in letters written to the newspapers by Roland and Denoyer. According to Denoyer himself it started at the beginning of that season, when the Management asked him to choreograph a new dance, and he tried to set up rehearsals which involved Roland. He says *'The rest of the Performers, with the Music and myself waited, in the Expectation of her Attendance, but were disappointed three several times,'* When the Manager asked why the rehearsals were not progressing and were told the reason, he went to Roland's lodgings to enquire and returned with the answer that she wanted rehearsals of all *new* dances to take place at her lodgings. Denoyer says that he did this *'tho' an unusual custom, and a Place very improper to practice Performances, which are to be represented on the Stage'*. One can imagine the frustrations of trying to rehearse a ballet with dancers and musicians in a room at a lodging house when, presumably the Management were prepared to make the stage available between performances. It was obviously managed, however, because early in the new season on 8th December 1738, a *new* Grand Ballet by Denoyer was presented at Drury Lane in which Roland danced, and

this was repeated several more times during December.

Some time after this Denoyer tells us that being asked to revive an *old* dance, which he and Roland had already danced several times in the past, *'seeing Mrs. Roland one Evening at the theatre, after the Play was over, I desir'd her to practice the old Dance that Night on the Stage, which she refus'd with great Warmth, on which some high Words pass'd between us.'* According to Roland's letter, the result of these 'warm words' were that she went to the Manager and extracted from him a promise that she should not have to dance with Denoyer again, though the Manager later declared that he '*absolutely denies he ever made her such Promise, and that her surprise at seeing her Name in the Bills need not have been so great, since he had personally acquainted her with his Resolutions on that Head several Days before'*. Whatever the truth of this, however, on 13th January, Denoyer and Roland were advertised as dancing a programme which seems to have been a repeat of the Grand Ballet performed the previous December, and presumably defined by Denoyer therefore as *old*.. All went well until the point came where they were to dance together when Denoyer said *'to my great Surprise, I found her determin'd to confuse the Dance, and by taking hold of her endeavour'd to recover the Disorder she had wilfully occasion'd on which she attack'd me in a manner which I leave the Audience then present to judge of'*. Denoyer strenuously denied Roland's statement that at this time he called her

'a B—h', (Bitch).

The outcome of this public quarrel on stage seems to have been the stone/apple throwing incident on the 16th, when the audience expressed their anger at having their entertainment spoiled by private squabbles and indeed the Manager himself concluded his own report on the incident in the Daily Post of 31st January:

'In any Animosities between Mr. Denoyer and Mrs. Roland, the Manager thinks himself no way obliged to interfere, unless when they become displeasing to the audience, or injurious to his Interest; and

hopes that for the future no private disputes behind the Scenes will be suffer'd to prevent the Business of the Stage, and destroy the Regularity and Decorum of publick Entertainments.'

The outcome of this latter quarrel seems to have been that Roland moved to join her sister at Covent Garden, where they were billed as Madem Roland the Elder, and Madem Roland the Younger, or simple Anne Roland. Meanwhile Denoyer got a new partner in Mlle Chateauneuf, a partnership which again ran into trouble when Chateauneuf was taken ill and unable to appear as promised on the play bills. In this case it does seem to have been a genuine illness, but some members of the audience, perhaps remembering the previous disappointments, got very angry indeed and, according to the Daily Advertiser of 25th January 1740 *'several Gentlemen in the Boxes pull'd up the Seats and Flooring of the same, tore down the Hangings, broke down the Partitions, all the Glasses and Sconces, the King's Arms over the Middle front Box was pull'd down and broke to Pieces, they also destroy'd the Harpsichord, Bass Viol, and other Instruments of the Orchestra; the Curtain they cut to pieces with their Swords, forc'd their way into the lesser Green-Room, where they broke the glasses, etc. and after destroying everything they could well get asunder, to the amount of about three to four hundred Pounds Damage, left the House in a very Ruinous condition.'*

An Eighteenth Century equivalent of hooliganism? Apparently one of these 'gentlemen' repented of his involvement in the episode and sent the Management £100 towards his share of the damages.

From 1740 to 1742 Denoyer danced at Covent Garden where he seems to have had a more peaceful stay, dancing often with Barbara Campanini and avoiding Mlle Roland.

Certainly it did not affect his position of friendship with members of the royal family.

"Dove sono i bei momenti...". The Eclipse-Ellipsis of Love in the Italian "Ballo Grande"

By Elena Grillo
(Translated from Italian by Simonetta Allder)

"Dove sono i bei momenti..." sings the Countess of Almaviva in Act Three of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, remembering nostalgically the days when the Count was passionately in love with her, days which seem long-gone. As we are talking about love – or, rather, about the absence of love in the Italian "ballo grande", it should not seem that strange to begin our essay with *Le Nozze di Figaro* and, seemingly, so far from the subject matter. On the contrary, there is a reason for this: *Le Nozze* is, en outre, the watershed where two opposite ideas of love come together, or rather clash. This does not apply entirely to the play by Beaumarchais, although it caused a stir when it was first published – and, indeed, some go so far as to view it as one of the causes of the French Revolution. However, it does apply to Mozart-da Ponte's operatic version of the play.

And if we wish to explore the idea of love, what better moment to do so than that in which this love is undergoing a transformation?

"Dove sono i bei momenti
di dolcezza e di piacer
dove andaro i giuramenti
di quel labbro menzogner"

sings the Countess as she abandons herself to a yearning for the past; and by so doing, she reveals her innermost self, her true character and that of her unfaithful spouse.

The two of them could not be more different from one another: worlds apart, like two distant planets that revolve in opposite orbits, separated by a cosmic void (the fact that the two are reconciled in the end, thanks to the clever intrigues of Figaro and Susanna, does not bridge their diversity).

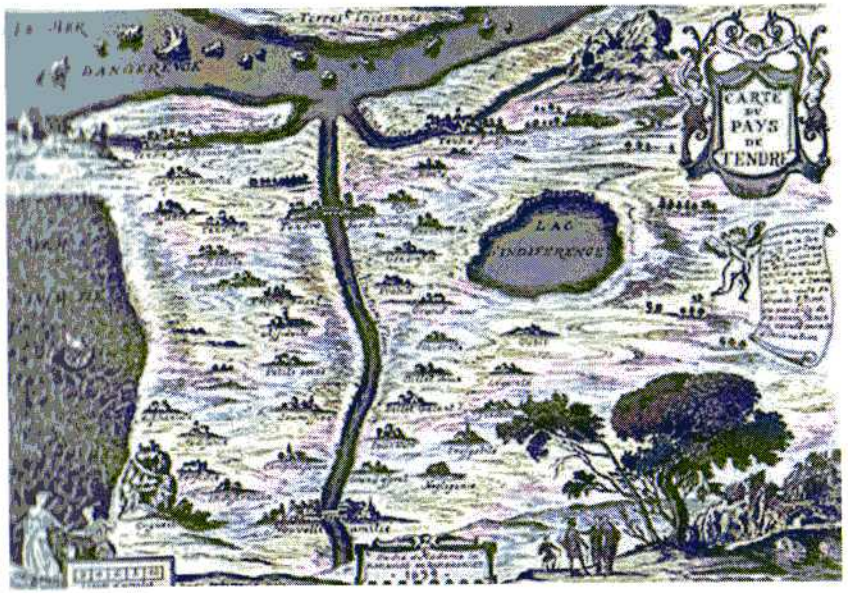
Two distant worlds that do not communicate, not because one of them loves while the other flirts with any wench who happens to be around, but because they are separated by that watershed we mentioned earlier: on one hand the Count, with his lies and infidelity as he chases after his obliging country lasses, represents the libertine aspect of the 18th century which views love as a game of hide-and-seek, as a sort of hunting exercise, with ambushes, diversions and chases until the prey is trapped and yields.

On the other hand we have the Countess who represents a different and faraway world: she is as yet not a well-defined prototype of a new sensitivity which will soon be influenced by the idea of romantic love.

"Porgi amor qualche ristoro
al mio duolo a' miei sospir
o mi rendi il mio tesoro
o mi lascia almen morir"

This is the other aria in which the Countess reveals herself, her ardent and possessive nature, and in which, for the first time, the alternative LOVE/DEATH makes its appearance.

The Count is one of the last characters who moves along that polished board-game of sensuality and refinement which was expressed for the first time in the salons of the affectation mocked by Molière in his *Les Precieuses ridicules* (The Affected Young Ladies"). First and foremost, the salon of Mademoiselle de Scudéry where, around the middle of the 17th century, the Carte du Pays du Tendre was devised: the map of social relations and of the itineraries of perfect love which



for over a century had supplied literate lovers with a precise indication of the cardinal points to head for as they elegantly explored the land of love. The map represents an imaginary land called the Royaume du Tendre (Realm of Tenderness) which must be explored by the Lover in order to embark on his or her initiation voyage to the land of love. The toponyms are taken from the love-vocabulary that had been codified in the salons of affectation.

The Realm has three rivers, Inclination, Estime and Reconnaissance, which flow into the Mer dangereuse ou d'Inimitié, and three main cities all of which are called Tendre: Tendre-sur-Inclination, Tendre-sur-Estime and Tendre-sur-Reconnaissance. Near the river source is a fourth city called La ville de l'amitié nouvelle. The land is dotted with "gallant" villages such: Grand-Esprit, Jolis-Vers, Billet-Galant, Billet-Doux, Sincerité, Bonté and so on. But the Lover must be careful not to lose his or her way because along the road there are other villages that have far less attractive names such: Négligence, Oublie, Perfidie, Orgueuil. If the Lover gets lost, he or she might end up in the Lac d' Indifférence.

This map was devised as a playful allegory of amorous sentiments and it created a fashion: it was repeatedly copied, modified and enriched until the end of the 18th century. The declared purpose of the map and of the milieu in which it circulated was *badinage* or love-sport, pure banter, clever and elegant teasing, the triumph of the exquisite and incomparable *petit rien* or trifle. From the same inspiration, a line of amorous literature came into being, above all in France. Suffice it to mention Laclos and his *Les liaisons dangereuses*, or the gallant plays of Marivaux.

The Conte d'Almaviva belongs to this world, to the affected and amoral world of playful badinage.

The Countess comes from a completely different breed. Her character pursues an entirely different concept of love, a love that has little or nothing at all to do with flirtation, frolic or elegance. The Countess is the living proof that "*On ne badine pas avec l'amour*", you simply "Don't Play with Love" . It is Alfred de Musset who tells us this, the very same de Musset who was himself swept away by his passionate love for George Sand (and many others too), who was, in turn, carried away by her passion for Chopin, the latter being carried away by his love for Sand and ultimately by tuberculosis and death.

It is Romanticism that appears on the horizon of history with its baggage of themes: the homeland, history, the Middle Ages, folklore, fairy-tales and, above all, love in its manifold aspects. Love with its young Werthers (of note is the fact that the German Werther commits suicide for love while his Italian counterpart, Foscolo's Jacopo Ortis, commits suicide as a consequence of political delusion), with its Lord Byrons and its corsairs. Whilst Shelley flees towards his death on the shores of Italy and Keats writes his odes to nightingales, Greek urns and Melancholy. All the way down to Marguerite Gautier dying of consumption and to the soppy feuilletons, brimming over with love, feelings, suffering and death.

We know that a new vital sap was infused into ballet thanks to the themes dear to Romanticism, thereby giving it a new lease of life. A combination of unprecedented circumstances converged, allowing ballet to produce masterpieces that are still performed to this day and

loved all over the world. Such circumstances included: gas-lighting in the theatre, which allowed the lights to be dimmed or intensified and the creation of special effects; the technique en pointe which, launched by some ballerinas, was soon to become the recognised language of female dance; the presence of enterprising and far-seeing impresarios, charismatic ballerinas, brilliant choreographers and, last but not least, intelligent and well-read critics such as Théophile Gautier.

And here we come to *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*, to mention but the most famous and significant of the Romantic ballets. In other words, the two ballets that gave rise to a myriad of imitations, copies and variations, and whose light spread throughout the western world at the speed of lightening.

From the Paris Opéra which represented its "institutional" centre, the Romantic ballet radiated, in the space of few years (in some cases in just few months) to the most remote places. It was a time in which Europe was enjoying a period of relative tranquillity and its newborn industries were beginning to prosper. The incessant roaming of the artists, be they choreographers or dancers, from one theatre to another, from one city or country to another, in pursuit of success, engagements, money and of a adoring audiences, allowed the Romantic ballet creed to spread to the most remote regions of Europe, all the way to far-off Russia. In the mid 19th century, Russia was, as we will see later on, ready to appropriate itself of the Romantic ballet and to turn it into an original creation of its own.

The Romantic ballet found admirers also among the bourgeoisie, in those places where such a class existed. In some cases, the members of this new social category came from the upper middle class (industrialists, lawyers, financiers); in others, they came from the lower or very low middle class and were shopkeepers, traders or clerks. So it was that the "gods" became a place were performances were judged, where the fortunes of dancers, choreographers and musicians were made or undone. This was the case across the western world.

For example, the very same sylphs who in 1832 had been acclaimed when they danced in Paris with the great Marie Taglioni in Filippo Taglioni's *La Sylphide*, with its clear choreography, had reached the

city of Copenhagen in 1836. Here they told the same story in dance to the enthusiastic Danish public: the sad tale of Scotsman James and his fiancée Effie, of the love-struck sylph and of the vindictive witch. In Copenhagen, however, the choreography, by Danish choreographer Bournonville, and the music were completely different from the earlier version.

As for *Giselle*, also produced in Paris in 1841, in the space of just a few years it was being performed everywhere, even in Russia. In fact, we must be grateful to the Imperial Theatres of Russia for preserving this masterpiece for us. *Giselle* was dropped from the repertoire in Paris towards the end of the 1860's and the ballet would have been sadly lost had it not been preserved within the repertoire of the Imperial Theatres where Marius Petipa, the French choreographer who founded the Russian ballet tradition, turned it into a classic.

The story of *Giselle*, similarly to that of *La Sylphide*, is set partly in real life and partly in the world of the supernatural, in keeping with the Romantic aesthetics; also the love of which it tells is both natural and supernatural.

This sort of subject-matter was exactly what appealed to the upper and lower middle classes that flocked to the theatres: a pinch of fairy-tale, a dose of folklore, a small measure – or rather a generous one – of sentiment and pathos, ending with the death of the heroine and the hero's despair. This was perfectly tailored to contemporary taste and was what all the other art forms were pursuing, obviously along with other themes as well.

Russia took up the (prevalently) French Romantic ballet and continued to treat the romantic theme of supernatural love until the end of the 19th century. I am, of course, referring to *Swan Lake*, the masterpiece of the late Russian Romantic ballet that was to become a sort of icon of ballet itself. Although *Swan Lake* was created at the end of the 19th century, the romantic themes it contains have not lost their thrust. All the staple ingredients are there: love, the supernatural, a broken vow, death: and, as usual, these ingredients are successful.

On this occasion, these themes were put together by Petipa and woven into an extraordinary choreography to an extraordinary score by

the great Piotr Ilych Tchaikovsky who also composed two other masterpieces of the late Romantic ballet: *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*.

And what about Italy?

Salvatore Viganò with his 'coreodrammi' (*Prometeo*, *Mirra*, *I Titani*, to mention the most famous) was the most significant choreographer at La Scala, Milan in the early 19th century. His works do not have the slightest suggestion of a romantic vision of love, but are all based on mythological and neoclassical themes. The only hint of Viganò's interest in a romantic ideal was his choice of a Shakespearean subject: *Othello*.

Viganò's 'coreodrammi' treated a variety of grand subjects and the productions were very lavish; the main characteristic of his choreography was the alternating of mime and dance. The 'coreodrammmi' were the forerunners of the Italian 'Ballo Grande' or, rather, a putative father – perhaps one ought to say 'putative grandfather' seeing as more than a generation of ballet productions separates the 'coreodrammmi' from the 'Ballo Grande'.

Judging from the titles and subject-matter of the librettos, the works produced during the decades that followed Viganò's 'choreodramas' seem to be inspired, on one hand, by what was going on in Paris. For example, in 1841 Italian choreographer Antonio Cortesi produced his version of *La Sylphide* to music by Schneizhoffer (who had composed the music for Taglioni's *La Sylphide*), as well as his own '*Gisella*' (sic!) to music by Bajetti in 1845. On the other hand, the Italian choreographers also continued to draw their inspiration from mythological and historical themes, in the Viganò tradition.

A short list of titles of some of the ballets which were prduced in the thirty- year period from 1846 to 1876 will illustrate this point in an exemplary way:

— In 1846 Giovanni Casati stages his *Sardanapalo* (*Sardanapalus*) and his own *Manon Lescaut*.

— In 1853 Perrot revives his *Cattarina ossia la figlia del bandito* (*Caterina or the Bandit's Daughter*).
In the same year we have a *Palmina ossia la figlia del torrente* (*Palmina or the Daughter of the Stream*) and two ballets by Rota, *Un fallo* (*The Wrongdoing*) and *Il Giocatore* (*The Gambler*).
— In 1856 Casati tackles Shakespeare in his ballet *Il sogno d'una notte di mezza estate* (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*).
— In 1859 Rota produces *Cleopatra*.
— In 1862 Paolo Taglioni produces his famous *Flik and Flok*, a so-called 'Ballo Fantastico'. This work is also considered a forerunner of the 'Ballo Grande', and in particular of *Excelsior*, on account of its spectacular scenes and special effects, the numerous dancers and extras on stage and, last but not least, of its grand finale in which the female dancers wear the traditional plumed helmets and the uniform of Italian 'Bersagliere' soldiers over their tutus.
— Two years later, Rota produced *Contessa di Egmont* (The Countess of Egmont).
— In 1868 Paolo Taglioni presents his *Leonilda* and *Ippolito Montplaisir* his *Brahma* and *La Camargo*. The following year Montplaisir produces *La Semiramide del nord* (*Semiramis of the North*).
In 1875 Manzotti produces *Rolla*.

However, in 1876 we have *La sorgente* (La Source), the ballet which Saint Leon had created ten years earlier at the Paris Opéra to music by Minkus and Delibes.

We are getting quite close to the period of the so-called 'Ballo Grande' (*Excelsior* is dated 1881), a genre which falls more into the heroic-historical-mythological category than into the romantic/ sentimental one: indeed, it is almost entirely devoid of love-themes.

Why is this so

In order to answer this question, we must say a few words about Italian history, literature and art.

The histories of Italian literature refer to *La lettera semiseria di Crisostomo al figliuolo* (*Crisostomo's Half-Serious Letter to his Son*) by Giovanni Berchet as the key for defining the romantic movement in Italy. In this essay, the characteristics of the new literary style were carefully analysed and proposed as a model: literature, it was submitted, must be for the people and not just for the chosen few; the modern romantic themes are better than the old classical ones and the new genres are more suited to the new subject-matter treated. The trouble is that, at the end of the letter, Crisostomo writes that he was really joking and that classic literature is the ultimate achievement .

It is not my intention here to comment on Berchet's positions; I merely quoted him because I think the closing verses of one of his best-known poems, *Il Giuramento di Pontida*, are extremely pertinent vis-à-vis the love-theme in the context of the 'Ballo Grande':

Su! Nell'irto increscioso Alemanno
Su! Lombardi puntate la spada;
fate vostra la vostra contrada,
questa bella che il ciel vi sortì.
Vaghe figlie del fervido amore,
chi nell'ora dei rischi è codardo
più da voi non ispiri uno sguardo
senza nozze consumi i suoi di'.

This poem was written in 1829, a long time before the 'Ballo Grande', but it is interesting to note that passion and overpowering love are absent even from the poetry of the father of Italian Romanticism, while the heroic/patriotic sentiment, to which love must be subordinate, is strongly present.

The same can be said at least about a part of Italian figurative art, the 'historical' painting whose main exponents were Appiani, Hayez and, later, Girolamo and Domenico Induno. In several of his works painted in the 1820's, 30's and 40's, Hayez, expresses the aspirations of Italy's pre-Risorgimento political culture, especially that of the Lombardy region, for example, *I vespri siciliani* (*The Sicilian Vespers*)

and il *Ritratto del Conte Arese in prigione* (*Portrait of Count Arese in Gaol*).

Italian romanticism is so inextricably tied to the Risorgimento ideals of independence that it seems to have done away with all sentimental 'frills'; consequently, Italy's literature and art are so closely linked to the making of Italy, to the creation of an Italian nation and people, that the heroic/patriotic ideal appears to have prevailed over anything else.

How could a country like Italy, so steeped in history – right down to its very roots and the memory of ancient Rome with its culture, literature as well as its conquests (at the time it was not considered politically incorrect to emphasise them!) – fail to have a heroic vision of itself when it finally became a nation? A vision of itself as a great nation or, as people used to say in those days, as a great world power?

And how could it fail to celebrate its achievements and to view them as the result of the heroism of its soldiers, of the genius of its inventors, of the bravery of its discoverers?

And seeing that poet like Giacomo Zanella feels the need to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal, and Carducci, in his *Inno a Satana* (*Hymn to Satan*), the steam-engine, why should not dance do the same?

Un bello e orribile
Mostro si sferra,
Corre gli oceani,
Corre la terra

Corrusco e fumido
Come i vulcani
I monti supera
Divora i piani

Sorvola i baratri
Poi si nasconde
Per antri incogniti
Per vie profonde

Ed esce indomito
Di lido in lido
Come di turbine
Manda il suo grido

Both beautiful and awful
a monster is unleashed
it scours the oceans
is scours the land

Glittering and belching smoke
like a volcano,
it conquers the hills
it devours the plains.

It flies over chasms,
then burrows
into unknown caverns
along deepest paths;

To re-emerge, unconquerable
from shore to shore
it bellows out
like a whirlwind,

Amidst such grandeur and heroism, can there be any room for love?

There is room for the family as an ideal place wherein the young can be groomed for a glorious future, but there is certainly no room whatsoever for love and passion, for love and death, for 'Love' with a capital L.

It is not surprising, therefore, that love simply does not feature in the 'Ballo Grande': it is not there in *Excelsior*, nor in *Sport* and not even in the ballet which is named after it: *AMOR* (*Love*).

To quote from an article by Ugo Pesci published in a magazine called *Illustrazione Italiana* on the occasion of the première of *AMOR*

at La Scala Theatre in Milan during the Carnival season of 1886: "...Manzotti's concept of love is based on Plato's concept as expounded in the *Symposium*, accepted by Dante and, in part, by Pascal too. It is a sentiment which is not directed at material beauty alone, but extends to all that is beautiful within the social order, the legislature, the arts, the sciences and in all that is abstract. It is love for all things beautiful in the Creation."

The ballet is divided into two parts and sixteen scenes:

Part One

Chaos
Love as the organizing force of the Universe
The First Kiss
The River of Humankind
The First Work of Man
Parnassus
Greece as a Temple of the Arts
The Triumph of Caesar
End of Part One

Part Two

The Orgy
The Destruction of Rome
Barbarossa's Invasion
The Oath at Pontida
On the Road to Legnano
The Battle of Legnano
Freedom Lights up the world
The Triumph of Love

Originally, the ballet was meant to have had two more parts: the reawakening of the people in 1789 and the patriotic uprisings of 1848.

However, Manzotti decided not to add them because the work would have ended up being excessively long.

As was customary, the ballet had a dedication:

"A Milano
Seconda Roma
Anima e polso della Lega Lombarda
Che stenebrando l'umanità del Medioevo
Accese col libero amor patrio
L'alto sentimento
Del nuovo diritto dei popoli..."

"To Milan
A second Rome,
Heart and soul of the Lombard League,
Which dispelled the darkness enfolding the people of the Middle Ages,
And, with the torch of love for the freedom of the motherland,
Kindled a new noble sentiment:
The belief in the rights of people..."

The following are some figures that demonstrate how grand this 'Ballo Grande' really was:

There were more than 600 performers on stage during *AMOR*, including dancers, mime-artists and extras, not to mention 12 horses 2 oxen and 1 elephant; backstage were 200 technicians and handymen. More than 3000 costumes were used, as well as 8000 props, from flabella to bludgeons and so on.

There were 44 performances of this ballet; it was revived only once, in 1902, probably on account of its technical complexity, in a new reduced version by Ettore Coppini that went on for 50 performances.

After which it was forgotten. (In 2008 Adriana Borriello and Giannandrea Poesio created a completely new modern version of the ballet

for the Accademia Nazionale di Danza on a new orchestration for the string quintet of Manzotti's music by Paolo Bacalov).

This is not the case as far as *Excelsior* is concerned. For many different reasons and in many different ways, Excelsior has succeeded in penetrating Italian culture. It has remained in the Italian memory and in Italian theatres - as well as, for a considerable number of years, also in many theatres around the world – for a very long time. Indeed, in 1967 when it was revived – or, rather, 're-created', as Ugo Dall'Ara the choreographer/re-constructor of the modern version of this ballet is always anxious to specify – at the Teatro La Pergola in Florence, *Excelsior* had not yet entered the realm of "HISTORY" but it was still in a sort of twilight-zone, perched somewhere between memory and history. That is why we looked fondly at this ballet in the same way that we look at our grandparents' foxed photographs and think, with a smile, about how we used to look.

Evenings on Olympus

Part I

By Mike Dixon

One winter night in 1970, rushing headlong to a student party, I ran round a corner into the King's Road, Chelsea, collided with an old gentleman and nearly knocked him off his feet. As I seized him by the lapels of his coat to pull him upright I came face to face with the man I admired more than any other in the world. "My god... Sir Frederick Ashton!" I gasped, more truthfully than he realised. He smiled ruefully as I held him by the shoulders to offer some stability. "Yes, I'm Frederick Ashton and I'm relieved you're not a mugger, young man, because you have the grip of the devil." We chatted amicably for a few minutes and I was invited to dinner later that week. Thereafter I frequently visited him for drinks and long talks at his Marlborough Street home. This delightful routine continued for the two and a half years we were neighbours. I resided in Radnor Walk which was a five minute stroll away from his home at the other side of the King's Road and I would often receive a summons for evening drinks by a letter written that very morning - the postal service in those days was amazingly efficient – and the signature on the letters, which I have always kept, told its own small story as it progressed from F.Ashton, to FA, then Fred, to ultimately, Freddie.

Sir Frederick Ashton bestrode British choreography like a diffident colossus from 1926 until his death. His influences were Pavlova, Mas-

sine, Cecchetti and Nijinska. He created the English style of dance with its sharp, fast footwork and expressive épaulement, all firmly rooted within a demi-caractère tradition. His breathtaking versatility and ability to create masterworks in many genres earned him the soubriquet "The Shakespeare of the Dance". He created the core repertoire of the Royal Ballet and was vital to the Company's growth and development. He had resigned as Director of the Royal Ballet six months before I met him and was in the mood to talk about his life and career. I once said "Don't you get tired of my questions about dance and generally talking shop." His response was: "Nowadays I get little opportunity to talk about shop so I quite enjoy it." We would sit in the armchairs either side of his fireplace and converse fuelled by large glasses of whisky. Ashton could drink the best part of a bottle of scotch without showing the slightest sign of inebriation and the more he drank the more amusing he became. When he died in 1988, full of years and garlanded with honours, various televised and written tributes attested to his sparkling conversational wit and his exceptional ability as a mimic and raconteur. Curiously, few of those interviewed could supply any cogent examples. At the time I found this rather irritating since my head was full of memorable stories and incidents and my frustration increased when I was invited to his memorial service in Westminster Abbey, where only Margot Fonteyn's tribute seemed to capture the essence of the man I knew.

Although I spent a few weekends at Chandos Lodge, Ashton's Queen Anne mansion at Eye in Suffolk, all our one-to-one meetings took place at Marlborough Street. In my early twenties my social life was in hyper-drive, with an address book full of celebrity friends and acquaintances. Michael Powell, director of the *Red Shoes*, had shown up at my 20th birthday party in college with his wife and entourage and dazzled all my tutors, to the intense bemusement of my fellow students who hadn't the faintest idea who he was. Virtually every night of the week featured a party or a dinner – usually both - and the prospect of spending weekends away from London held little appeal. Ashton appreciated this and the first time he invited me it was with the words: "Come and stay in the country but bring your knitting, you might get

bored. You can swim but there isn't a lot else for someone of your age to do. The décor might not be to your taste either. I collect things: obelisks, Wemyss-ware, lots of chickens sitting on baskets, that kind of thing." I confessed it all sounded pretty ghastly, which seemed to amuse him, but the reality was that Chandos Lodge was a gem of a house with beautiful grounds and the whole thing done in impeccable taste. When I examined my diaries for the purposes of this article I realised that my visits to Ashton at Marlborough Street were initially intermittent but built up to a regular frequency in 1972 up to the summer of 1973. In the autumn and winter of '72 I started recording some of his bon mots for the first time.

Number eight Marlborough Street was a small Georgian town house with a drawing room in the appropriate Georgian style, with armchairs and sofa covered in black and white striped ticking. A valuable antique black and gold bow-fronted cabinet occupied the wall opposite the fireplace. A black lacquer tray on legs stood between the armchairs and was covered in his collection of snuffboxes and a gold –plated statuette of Taglioni as the Sylph. The mantelpiece was always covered in stiff, engraved invitations edged with gold. These were all for grand dinners, balls and embassy receptions and jostled for position with the black candles in their holders. Ashton always sat in the armchair beneath the famous Tchelichev drawings of his head. The hair had been rendered in pencil as if it were composed of leaping flames and he told me that this idea was to be used by the sculptor of the portrait bust destined for a foyer of the Royal Opera House. I sat in the facing chair with its back to the drinks table by the front window and in my role of drinks monitor I would pour him a series of large scotches. As the evening progressed the stories grew more amusing and a sure sign that he was well-oiled was the level of personal revelation. At one such juncture I asked him about a framed drawing on the wall of a well-shaped male torso with what appeared to be prodigiously exaggerated genitals. "Oh, that's Nicholas Magallanes, an American dancer," he sighed, gazing into the middle distance. I enquired no further, although I suspect the sigh was of longing rather than of remembered bliss.

A typical visit kicked off with Ashton answering the door himself,

pecking me on the cheek, and launching immediately into his recent news as he poured the first drinks. Occasionally, the door would be answered by the departing factotum who would usher me with solemnity into the great man's presence. Ashton would roll his eyes at this performance and I once heard him say in the hall: "Don't use that word. You are *not* my butler. You are a glorified char. Keep your place!" After slamming the door behind the miscreant, then dilating at length on the domestic shortcomings of the "butler" he concluded: "But he does make wonderful cucumber sandwiches." This was true. These exquisite wafer-thin morsels usually formed the halfway point of the evening, when we would descend to the kitchen to unwrap and consume them as an effective form of alcohol absorber.

Ashton was a sublime conversationalist, witty, direct and informative. He usually told the truth when asked a direct question. His words were clearly enunciated with emphatic vowels and a slightly sibilant "s", but he never raised his voice and the sentences tended to have a falling cadence at their end. He always sat well back in his chair, his posture upright, like a king giving an audience. The curving gestures of his arms and head were graceful as he punctuated the narrative line of an anecdote or even a musical number. Once he sang a José Collins song for me called, appropriately, *Cigarette*, for he was a chain smoker, literally lighting up his cigarette with the previous one. His hand was permanently formed into an elegant shape, holding the cigarette between his index and middle finger. On the rare occasion it did not contain a smoking fag the hand was still formed as if holding an invisible cigarette. With his other hand he would draw the tips of his fingers delicately but sensually backwards through his hair, from the hairline to the crown, with the top of his hand facing the ceiling. It was a unique, curious gesture. The luxurious white hair was all his own. Once, in outraged terms, he declared: "Bobby Helpmann's hair is all added to - And black! At his age! Mine is real. Here, tug it, go on - just pull." I declined the offer and placated my host by declaring that it was obvious that his hair was all his own and that Helpmann looked like the Dago from *Façade* with his black locks. Ashton's little vanities took

strange forms. One evening he said: "When the Royal Ballet went to the United States for the first time the Company men were corralled together for a medical in a large hall. We all stripped to the waist and the chief doctor went into ecstasies over my chest, caressing it, and telling the other doctors to come and look. My thoracic cavity is very deep, probably twice as deep as most men. All those beautiful specimens including Michael Somes were standing there, ignored, while the doctor went into rhapsodies about my beautiful thorax - but of course, he meant beautiful in a medical sense."

Ashton liked to laugh, but when he laughed it was in a fastidious way, tittering like a spinster, his shoulders gently shaking up and down and baring his large horse teeth reluctantly. He was a giggler and the only time I heard him laugh out loud was when I recounted an incident where I had accidentally put my hand on Princess Margaret's bosom. He would compel me to repeat this embarrassing story to people who knew her. He never laughed at his own stories, however, and sometimes he would recount a brilliantly polished anecdote then stand without warning and announce: "I must pee," and leave the room. It has to be said that the lavatory on the ground floor was well worth an excursion for the visitor. His honorary doctorates, many national honours and Chevalier of the Legion d' Honneur all hung there, floor to ceiling on every wall. The first time I discovered this room I laughed out loud. When I returned to the drawing room I said: "That's too much." He replied with mock hurt: "I have to hang them somewhere."

He did not live in the past but the significant names of previous generations were never far from his lips. The ones whom he loved, the ones he respected, the ones who had made him what he was. Often I longed to stop the flow of anecdote or revelation and ask questions to clarify something factually. I rarely did, preferring to let the natural rhythm of the story continue. What I did, however, was to try to remember the exact words he had used rather than interpret what he had said. In this way my memory formed a series of gnomic utterances on key people. "Karsavina had the biggest range of all the dancers I saw and was the greatest repertory dancer of them all. She was a queen on stage, a great mime. Compared to Karsavina, Margot (Fonteyn) has-

n't even begun." I recorded this statement in my diary when I returned home to confirm that I had heard aright. Fonteyn was the greatest dancer I had ever seen and I was shocked to hear her thus described. "I wrote in the introduction to Karsavina's book that she was the last great exponent of épaulement which is now a lost art." Ashton didn't say to which of Karsavina's books he was referring and I didn't interrupt because he was in the process of demonstrating different forms of épaulement. He was at pains to explain that many dancers seemed to think that there was just one form of épaulement, whereas there were many, and that Karsavina instinctively understood this through her work with Fokine, Massine and others. I hung on his every word. It was like a master class. He also talked of Karsavina's sense of what was right and proper, referring to a visit to her by either Sokolova or Lopokova. The visiting ballerina had arrived hatless but at the gate had retrieved a hat and hat pins from a bag and secured it to her head before ringing the bell. Karsavina had said proudly to Ashton: "Quite right, when visiting the prima ballerina of the Maryinsky!" He later told me that she had anxiously confessed to him that she needed to live until at least 90 years of age to ensure that her son came into some inheritance money. She did, dying in 1978 well into her nineties.

Ashton was the first to describe Diaghilev to me. (Twenty years later Alicia Markova would also share her unique impressions of the founder of the Ballets Russes.) Ashton, being a brilliant mimic, reproduced Diaghilev's rolling walk and head movements: simultaneously comical and intimidating, and the manner in which he would loll his head and play with his monocle when watching class. These were uncanny moments. It was as if Diaghilev was in the room. On Lopokova: "She had a wonderful personality. When she came on stage in Massine's *La Boutique Fantasque* it was like a hundred champagne corks going off at once." Spessivtseva I saw being treated like a queen, with all the other dancers curtseying to her. She was the most classically perfect but not in the least theatrical." Ida Rubinstein, star of a number of Fokine ballets, he explained, although beautiful in appearance couldn't really dance, particularly on point, and proceeded to demonstrate her "technique" by staggering round the room, leaning heavily on the furniture, before striking very brief poses and clutching at a door-frame as he made an extravagant devil-may-care gesture with his head thrown back. He had the enviable ability to fix on a key characteristic of a personality to parody.

During our discussion of a famous danseur's performance in *Le Spectre de la Rose* he suddenly said: "I always see Nijinsky in *Spectre* because he was short and I think the Rose has to be short for the piece to work. It might seem irrational but I have strong opinions on this subject. You know, I always feel the presence of Nijinsky *here* (indicating his shoulder) because I was one of the pall-bearers at his funeral. The coffin was lined with lead and was very, very heavy. Poor Mr Beaumont was on the opposite side (Cyril Beaumont, ballet critic and publisher) and he was already frail and elderly. I felt he was in some distress and so I kept pulling the weight onto my own shoulder and the coffin dug in unbearably. So now, whenever the winter is bitterly cold I always feel Nijinsky resting on my shoulder and hurting like hell."

Nijinska, of course, he revered, having worked with her when he was a young dancer, and acquiring much of his own choreographic aesthetic. He invited her to mount *Les Biches* and *Les Noces* for the Royal Ballet in 1964 and 1966. "*Les Noces* is a masterpiece, a work of genius, so I used to programme it as often as I dared. Audiences don't like it because they don't understand it, so I always put it on a programme with two popular works, happy ballets, like *Les Patineurs* or something to sugar the pill. I showed audiences *Les Noces* because it was good for them, good for their souls." It was strange to think of a worldly man like Fred as a spiritual person but indeed there is a great deal of spirituality in his work. A discussion about religion one evening led to a typically beguiling story, full of dramatic pauses. "You know Mike, when the last war started I told the Company that I was going to read the Bible from cover to cover, starting with Genesis and reading my way right through to Revelations. When I reach Amen at the end of the Bible, I told them, the war will be over! So I started to read. I didn't rush. Members of the Company would come up to me and say: Have you finished the Bible yet? And I would say, No I'm still on the Book of Judges, or Esther, or wherever I was, and they would exhort

me to hurry up and finish. And do you know, on the DAY that I finished reading the Bible, on that VERY day that I read the last Amen and closed the book...the war went on for another two years..."

Martha Graham was an admirer of Ashton and he demonstrated to her how Isadora Duncan danced. "Martha said that people had described Duncan's dancing to her but that I was the only one who was able to show her. When Tony Richardson decided to make the film of *Isadora* he asked if he could bring Vanessa Redgrave to talk to me about Isadora's performances. I reluctantly agreed and got out pictures and old programmes." However, Ashton felt that the tall, lanky actress was so wrong for the part that the film would be a disaster. "I urged him to used Lynn Seymour but no one knew who Seymour was and she would have been poison at the box office." Of course, at this point Ashton had not created *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan* (1975) for Seymour. This piece will now remain the closest and most accurate evocation of an Isadora Duncan performance anyone could witness, notwithstanding the shreds of grainy film that still exist. "The idea is now current that Isadora was foolish and camp. She was *not* camp!"

During many conversations Ninette de Valois was rarely the subject of discussion. In retrospect I realise that although Ashton loved her, he resented her role in forcing him into retirement from his position as artistic director of the Royal Ballet, this fact was not known outside a small circle of people at the Royal Opera House at the time. The general view was that Ashton quit while he was ahead, at the height of his creative powers. He never alluded to the circumstances of his departure from the Company and naively, I never asked, since Ashton was self-avowedly lazy and I assumed he had chosen the time of his own going. On the subject of laziness: "People often ask me about the extended lazy periods when I am not creating a new work and say to me: Yes, but while you are sitting alone you are surely contemplating wonderful ideas, music and inspirations for new works? And I say, No, (hopeless shrug) I am just staring at the walls." Clearly he did not want to diminish the god-like status I afforded him by revealing the truth about being pushed out of the directorship of the Royal Ballet. I did, however,

receive one inkling when he somewhat cattily referred to de Valois as being an "on the spot dancer." When I asked him to expound on this statement he explained that she had been a very clean dancer with a good technique but "was not convincing performing travelling steps." Then why had he created a role for her in the fiendishly difficult pas de trois in *Les Rendezvous* which is composed of fast travelling steps? He merely shrugged and then changed the subject slightly: "*Les Rendezvous* is one of my favourite ballets. It was the first real success that I was happy with; much more so than Les *Patineurs*, which most people prefer. I felt that professionally I had attained something significant and that I had moved forward in terms of my craft."

He also talked with some asperity about other dancers who had contributed significantly to his reputation through their performances. "When Margot officially became a Guest Artist with the Company and thus able to command higher fees a ballerina of the company came to see me." (Ashton named the dancer is question.) "She sat in the chair you are occupying now and begged me to make her the prima ballerina of the company. I told her it was unthinkable. You are a soubrette, not a prima ballerina, I told her. You are wonderful in certain things but not suitable for leading a company. She wept, went on her knees, promised everything, but she was wasting her time." It was during the recounting of this anecdote that I realised how implacable he could be when it came to artistic matters. There was no compromise in his nature in this important area. Richard Buckle once referred to Ashton as being shy, diffident and fearful. In many ways this was true but where his work as a choreographer or artistic director was challenged a steely expression entered his eyes and the mouth hardened.

I arrived at Marlborough Street one day to find two animal hides draped across the backs of the furniture – a lion and a zebra, as I recall – that looked so incongruous in the setting of his drawing room that I asked what on earth they were doing there. "A present from Merle Park," he answered airily. "I am thinking of making a pas de deux for her on the lines of *Thaïs*." Ashton had a great regard for Park as a dancer. "She has courage, she will always take risks. I had to bully Antoinette a bit when I made the *Thaïs* pas de deux because it has some

physically daring aspects. With Park you never have to push, she just takes the risks. Sibley is very good but she lacks recklessness A short while later Ashton made *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* for Park and David Wall, with Derek Rencher making an appearance as the figure of Death who twines them in his coils. Wall, he also admired, lamenting: "He married too young. He should have concentrated on being a star. Influential people should have been taking him out to dinner and showering him with gifts. Marriage and parenthood get in the way of a great career. Pavlova understood that; so did Markova." Unsurprisingly, all of Wall's greatest created roles were made for him by Kenneth MacMillan.

When Ashton talked about Anthony Dowell it was clear that he was in love with the dancer as a person as well as an artist. "I wish I could find someone like Anthony. He has the capacity to love people older and wiser, he is kind and sweet." Dowell represented a physical and emotional ideal for Ashton and the continuing refrain of Dowell's personal qualities were repeated over the months like a mantra but I often wondered how Dowell felt about this emotional infatuation and whether it led to a lessening of respect . When Ashton made references to Saint Anthony - his favourite saint, to whom he prayed when he lost things - I was never entirely sure whether he was referring to the Catholic version or Anthony Dowell.

Anna Pavlova always came up in conversation. "Ulanova could run... a wonderful run. But she couldn't run like Pavlova, who would throw a veil across her breast, tilt back her head and rush forward with an arching back. The impression of sheer speed was exhilarating." In my diary entry for 14 February 1972, an evening when Ashton, fairly unusually, took me out for dinner I wrote, regarding the Russian dancer: "Pavlova's run, walk, eyes. The crap. The sixteen year old's voice." The latter part of this entry now puzzles me. I think the reference to crap was to her repertoire but the sixteen year old's voice could either refer to Pavlova's voice or Ashton's immaturity when speaking to her. I have wracked my memory but cannot remember the attribution. Like everyone else I knew that Ashton had decided to become a

dancer after watching a Pavlova performance in Lima, Peru. What I did not realise, until our conversations, was that Ashton had actually known his idol. "I once asked her if I could watch from the wings. She looked at me thoughtfully for a moment as if making up her mind. Then she said: No, not *you*. Pavlova knew that her magic only worked from the front and that if I saw her from the side that I would no longer be in thrall to her. She was very generous but could also be jealous and vindictive. There was an English dancer in her company who had a great success one night dancing a cachucha. During the excited applause Pavlova, who was standing in the wings about to go on stage, sent a message to the conductor: *The Swan*! She changed her costume from the item she was about to dance, made the audience wait, then went on as the Dying Swan, giving a hugely moving performance, which of course obliterated the memory of the cachucha dancer. Karsavina was a great dancer but Pavlova was the greatest because she had the highlights. Her curtain calls were a work of art in themselves." He explained that Pavlova never simply walked onto the stage to acknowledge applause. Instead, a spotlight would "search" the stage for her and she would dart into the spotlight beam and suddenly freeze, startled, lowering her eyes and looking like an exotic bird caught in the light of a hunter's torch. She would never approach the audience *en face*, always presenting a graceful shoulder to her public in ravishing épaulement. After a tumultuous ovation she would raise her eyes briefly to the audience then dash into the wings, emerging frequently to repeat curtain calls that took longer than the variation she had just danced. Ashton did not simply describe: he demonstrated. He made Pavlova come alive and as a consequence, whenever I examine pictures of her I am sometimes convinced that at some deep level I have actually seen her perform, other than on black and white film. Of course, what I had seen was a great artist imitating another great artist but it was mightily potent. After one "show" he sank heavily into his chair and said: "I don't do this for everybody, Mike, I'm showing you because you are interested." (I remember thinking at the time: Come on Freddie, these are well-rehearsed party turns and I am sure you do this for absolutely everybody.) Years later, talking about these performanc-

es with some of his colleagues who had known him well, I realised that Ashton had been telling the truth. The colleagues were fascinated by the information I was telling but they had not seen him demonstrate Pavlova's curtain calls nor any of the other pieces. I felt suddenly humbled because I had been given the privilege of these magical moments and had not fully appreciated their rarity: private performances by one of the choreographic geniuses of the twentieth century.

The anecdotes and wisdom flowed out of him like a stream of liquid gold and I felt that I was there, like an acolyte, to catch these outpourings in the cup of my memory. There was never a tape recorder in the room and we never discussed anything that was prefaced by an admonition or imprecation regarding confidentiality. Many of the things he told me about his colleagues were dynamite but he seemed unfazed by the possibility of the information going further. I suppose that over many months his trust grew and the real revelations came at the same time that I realised I needed to record some of them in my diary. I was certainly constantly aware at this time that Ashton, whilst not the most famous, nor the wealthiest person I knew, was certainly the greatest. One was absolutely conscious one was in the presence of a creative genius and that his conversation was utterly beguiling. For an impressionable young man these experiences were just like visiting Mount Olympus for an evening to converse with the gods.

The Incomparable Hester Santlow: A Dancer-Actress on the Georgian Stage. By Moira Goff. Ashgate Publishing HB. ISBN13: 9780754658054. £50.00. 218pp; b&w illustrations.

In the Preface to her book Moira Goff admits that Hester Santlow left very little information about her personal life in the form of letters, diaries, parish records or comments by contemporaries. This has obviously made it difficult to write an in depth history of this Dancer-Actress. Goff's research has been thorough and meticulous. What little she has been able to glean is dealt with simply and with no attempt to add gloss to Santlow's story. Unfortunately because these facts are so few, she has resorted to listing all Santlow's appearances on stage, adding a synopsis of the plot of each play as it is mentioned. This does, therefore, become something of a catalogue, and Santlow herself remains a rather shadowy figure until the final Chapter when she retires from the stage and takes on a persona as mother and grandmother.

In fact, the most colourful character to emerge from this book is James Craggs, the father of her daughter Harriot and, with no theatrical involvement, but a very engaging personality.One of the major facts to emerge from this book, therefore, seems to be that, in spite of her early dance training, Santlow was more of an actress who danced, rather than the famous ballerina who occasionally acted, as we have all been led to believe.

This is a book that will be of great value to academics and researchers, though it is unlikely to reach the best sellers list.

Madeleine Inglehearn

This review first appeared in Dancing Times, May 2008 Volume 98 No.1173.

Serge Lifar Musagète. A Film by Dominique Delouche. Doriane Films DVD £17.99. Approximate running time 130 minutes. PAL Region code: 2.

Born in Kiev in 1905, Lifar studied there with Bronislava Nijinska, before joining Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, in 1923. He was promoted to premiere danseur in 1925 and created many roles, including the title roles in George Balanchine's *Apollon Musagète* and *Prodigal Son*. After the death of Diaghilev in 1929, he initially became an étoile at the Paris Opéra Ballet, also taking over as ballet master when Balanchine was forced to withdraw through illness. His dark, exotic looks, athletic body and charismatic personality gave him an animal intensity that stunned the Opéra dancers.

He brought French ballet into the 20th century from where it seemed to have languished in the 19th century with the Opéra still being something of a "Salon". He soon introduced weekly ballet performances, where previously the company had mainly performed in conjunction with the opera company. His reforms at the Opéra's ballet school developed an outstanding generation of dancers that included Yvette Chauviré, Jean Babilée and Roland Petit. He was dismissed from the Opéra in 1945 with accusations of collaboration with the Germans, but returned to the from 1947-58 as ballet master.

In *Serge Lifar Musagète*, the fifth in the invaluable series of dance documentaries devised and directed by Dominique Delouche (in French with English sub-titles), the work of Lifar, particularly his choreography for the Paris Opéra Ballet, and his revisions and updating of the technique of the French school, are considered with excerpts from several of his ballets, in which a younger generation of dancers are rehearsed in his works, frequently by the original protagonists, such as Yvette Chauviré and Nina Vyroubova. There are enlightening interviews with those who knew and worked with him, including Jean Babilée and Serge Peretti, as well as archive film clips. This invaluable documentary gives a fascinating insight of a talented, but complex man who was one of the most important figures in 20th century dance.

Two early short films by Delouche, *Le Spectre de la danse* (1959) for which Lifar was choreographer, and *L'Adage* (1964) are included as extras, as well as an interview in which Delouche discusses all three films.

Patricia Daly

This review first appeared in **Dancing Times**, December 2008 Volume 99 No.1180.

CHOREOLOGICA

The refereed journal of the European Association of Dance Historians aims to provide a forum for historical and theoretical explorations of dance histories and practices. These may include analyses of individual works or investigations, whether they be monographic, contextual or interdisciplinary. Submissions may address topics ranging from past dance practices to contemporary themes. More in particular, the editorial board welcomes essays rethinking current approaches and theoretical understanding of dance practice, history or crossovers into other disciplines.

For guidelines of submission please see the publications section on www.eadh.com

Editorial Board Choreologica

European Association of Dance Historians
Flat 9 / 27 St. Stephen's Gardens
London, UK W2 5QU

eadh_queries@yahoo.co.uk

On cover: Marie Sallé

ISSN 1746-5737

9 771746 573707 00901

€ 11,00
£ 10,00
$ 15,00