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## Page

# European roots
# of Brazilian Carnival parade

By Ricardo Barros

## Overview ot the history of Carnival celebrations in Brazil

The contemporary 'Carnaval' celebrations and parade of the so-called 'Schools of Samba' have been linked to ritualistic freedom of expression and a vivid demonstration of the African roots in Brazilian culture. The competitive parade enthuses audiences and gathers admirers drawn from all over the World for its flamboyancy, panache and debauchery. However, not much research has been done regarding the roots and historic nature of such public events.

This paper does not aim to question the influence of black slave culture in the formation of the socio-cultural phenomenon of contemporary 'Carnaval'. Instead, it aims to explore a rich European cultural heritage that, in my view, contributed to create the intricate fabric of social acceptance, cultural and religious miscegenation witnessed every year in the world-famous street parade all over Brazil.

## The *entrudo* in Portugal and in Brazil

In Portugal, Carnival was celebrated in as early as the 15th and 16th centuries by the name of *entrudo* (meaning 'entering' Lent period). The

popular celebration was gradually established in Brazil during the 17th and 18th centuries, being taken across the Ocean by the increasing number of Portuguese migrants to the New Continent. Its crudest main popular manifestation was in the form of street 'battles', with people throwing water, scented wax 'bombs', flour or even mud on each other. This lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. However, new fashions were imported to Brazil throughout the 17th and 18th centuries with more colonisers migrating to that country. This trend culminated in the early 19th century with the establishment of the Portuguese court in the colony. The court and newly arrived Portuguese bourgeoisie set the trends in Brazilian society, importing from Paris and Italy the habit of elegantly parading in adorned chariots and wearing masks and fancy dresses. This promenade was followed by evening balls in sophisticated exclusive clubs attended by the court and the *élite*. Meanwhile, the lower classes – while still pursuing the *entrudo* way of enjoying carnival – were gradually encouraged to attend rather simple balls instead. This way the lower classes gradually got interested in the more lavish celebrations, abandoning altogether the *entrudo* in the early 20th century.

## *Blocos*, societies and *foliões*

But the latent fire could not be tamed, so in the first few years of the Republic (end of 19th century) Brazilians resorted once again to go out to the streets, this time in a more organised manner in what was called 'carnival societies': they danced and sang, accompanied by wind and percussion instruments. Little 'carnival marches' were chanted to ridicule politicians, and soon tunes were being especially composed for the carnival. By the early 20th century, with street parades being firmly established in Rio and featuring masked *foliões* (revellers) in fancy dress, the lower classes were once again marginalized, and had to restrict their parties to suburban areas of the city. They fought back and got organised in 'Schools of Samba', adopting a structure pretty much similar to what is seen today in Rio: each school would choose a new

theme every year, and this would regulate the whole parade (including music composition, costumes and floats). They gradually acquired recognition from the society, intellectual groups and artists, who in that period developed an increasing interest in popular culture, following political scandals and unequal distribution of funds. It was only in the 1950s that president Getúlio Vargas – yearning for public acceptance and trust following decades of military ruling – officially recognised the parade and provided infra-structure for its development.

This very brief overview paints a scene in which two separate streams of social classes run concurrently, sometimes overlapping each other and some other times taking quite distinct directions. But what is the linking element between popular contemporary celebrations and the noble and elitist parades in bygone eras? As we shall see, this element is the search for form, structure and compliance (in this particular case, of an unprivileged mass aiming to reach for an European elitist standard).

## Historic roots

### The court of d. João VI

Tracing back to early 19th century we see a turning point in Brazilian history: the establishment of the Portuguese court in Brazil between 1808 and 1821. The Portuguese royal family fled from Napoleonic invasion of Lisbon and set court in the Tropics, in Rio de Janeiro. They brought with them not only a large entourage of between ten and fifteen thousand people (numbers are not precise), but also many European traditions. The family itself was very peculiar, with a mad queen (D. Maria), a weak prince (D. João) and his nymphomaniac, power-hungry wife (Carlota Joaquina).

On a positive note, they loved their celebrations. Balls were very common in Rio, and there is quite detailed information about the

running of these, including some personal letters, bills and ceremonial records at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro.

During this period the quadrilles were the most popular dance form performed in such lavish balls. These quadrilles – like the *Quadrilha Princesa Imperial* (a late example, dated around 1890-1910) by dancing master J.A. Piacentini – adopt the typical French choreographic style of the period with steps such as *demi-ronde les quatre, balance et tour, grand chaine, chaine anglaise, moulinet, tour des mains,* and others. It is interesting to note that the index to this edition lists over 320 'of the most popular' quadrilles of that period, pointing to the wide dissemination of European formal dances in the tropical Brazilian society of that period – but this will be the subject for a future paper.

Despite this edition being a very late primary source, there is plenty of evidence about dancing in the earlier years of the 19th century confirming the practice of European-style quadrilles in the balls, and some little snippets on that of dance practice during the 17th and 18th centuries. Amongst these it is worth noting the acceptance and gradual insertion of African traits in dances like the *Lundu,* which was danced by noblemen and slaves alike.

The plates by Johann Moritz Rugendas – a German illustrator who visited colonial Brazil in the early 19th century – display the same dance being performed by a group of Negroes, and also by white 'colonisers'. Of importance is to note the Iberian folk arm stance and use of castanets in the second example, setting an interesting counterpoint to the exaggerated hip movement performed by the ladies (with hands on hips) on both plates. A fascinating insight of the mixed reactions to the Lundu reaching the ballrooms (and stage) – denoting a varying degree of acceptance and indeed willingness to foster the social mixing – can be seen in the career of Italian born Marietta Baderna. She migrated to Rio in the late 1840s, where she was well-received after successful performances in the Teatro Alla Scala and Covent Garden. Her colourful character, curiosity and love for freedom of expression
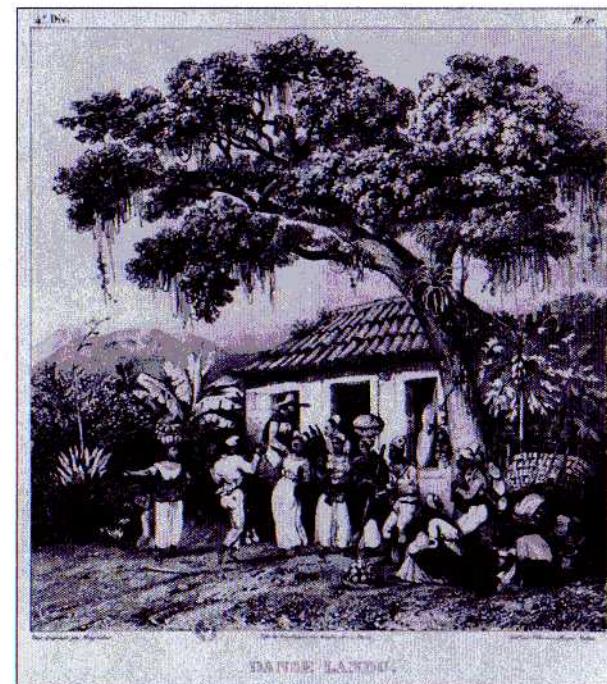


*Danse Landu* (IV, fl.17), in Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Voyage pittoresque dans le Bresil* (1835); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro
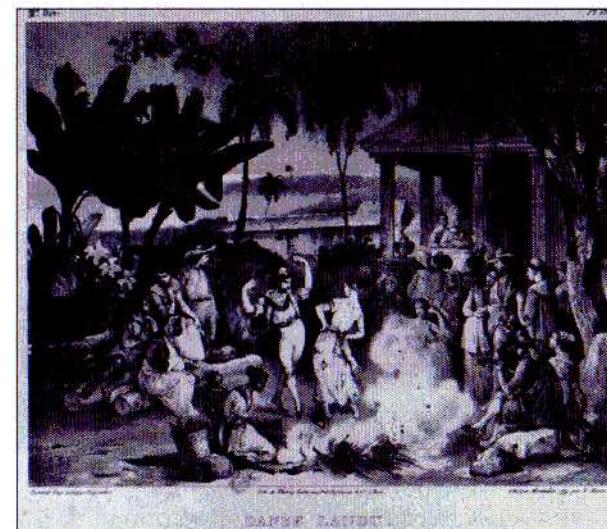


*Danse Landu* (III, fl.18), in Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Voyage pittoresque dans le Bresil* (1835); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

soon had Marietta mingling with slaves in the less-favoured neighbourhoods of Rio. Fascinated with the *Lundu*, she attempted to take it to the stages, at great costs: the elitist high-society, once appreciative of her fine dancing, now (seemingly less receptive of changes) frowned upon her behaviour; and ever since to this day, the term 'Baderna' – which at first was used to refer to the finer and exquisite things in life – now denotes fracas and bad taste.

The cross absorption of influences can also be noticed the other way round, in the two watercolours by Carlos Julião (1776) depicting the 'Crowning of a Black King' and the 'Procession of the Black Queen'.



*Coroação de um Rei nos festejos de Reis* in Carlos Julião, *Riscos Illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (1776); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

The highly Europeanised costumes and the adoption of European instruments and castanets are evidence of such cultural crossover.

The court of D. João VI highly valued opulence, and this could clearly be seen in the many events organised for them. As pointed by Brazilian historian Niza da Silva, in addition to balls and regular *saraus*



*Cortejo da Rainha Negra na festa de Reis* in Carlos Julião, *Riscos Illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio* (1776); Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro

(sort of informal *jours-d'appartments*) these involved fireworks, cavalry, bull-fighting, parades and processions, all minutely detailed by the *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro*, the first periodic in Rio. The first dancing masters to have arrived in Rio, with the court, were Pedro Colona (in 1810) and Joseph Antoine Louis Lacombe. The latter arrived in 1811 and – together with musician Marcos Portugal – took with him a large number of manuscripts, as pointed by António Jorge Marques. Would this shipment have included the only extant copy in Rio's National Library of Ferriol's 1745 *Reglas Utiles* and Jacome Bonem's 1767 *Tratado dos principaes fundamentos da dança*?

## Portugal

The innate Portuguese taste for public festivities is manifested not only in secular events. Primarily it has its roots in religious feasts and processions, a natural expression of such a devout nation. Processions

are, to this day, part of Portuguese culture, and have been so for many centuries. The procession of Corpus Christi, for instance, has been happening every June since the early 15th century. The popularity of such processions in Portugal was such that it guaranteed descriptions of these being published abroad. An early example of this is Ménestrier's description of the procession in honour of St Charles of Borromeu, which happened in 1610. His accounts are a testimony of the wealth employed and indeed of the general sense of devotion with which these processions were carried out, despite its celebratory character.

'The Portuguese have their ambulatory Ballets which are danced in the town streets, and move into various places, with movable machinery and representations. These are performed in the feasts of the Saints and in their larger ceremonies. Following St Carlos Borromeu's canonisation […] [the Portuguese] wished to pay him public honours. They put his image on a boat, as if he was returning once again to protect the Portuguese Kingdom. All the vessels in the port went three miles into the sea in order to escort the image. […] As soon as the image [of St Carlos] disembarked, it was welcomed by all the religious people, […] who walked in procession ahead of it, together with four large chariots carrying many representations. In addition to these, each religious company carried their respective saints on top of rich platforms. In between each chariot there was a troupe of dancers representing many things. Octavio Coromboni, Bishop of Fossombrone, who wrote the description of this feast […] mentioned that the Italians – and mainly the Romans – were astonished to read that there were dances and ballets in such a sacred ceremony; because in Portugal the procession and feasts do not seem to have enough of a noble and grave character if they are not accompanied by these little 'attioni di Giubilo e d'Allegrezza'.
[…] On the days preceding these occasions large masts are usually erected outside the churches where the ceremony will take place, and in other places where the procession and representations will pass by. These masts are […] adorned with wreaths, ribbons and banners of many colours […]. These mark the places for the acted representations, where the march stops and where the dancers perform the main 'entrées de ballets'.[1]

Ménestrier makes it clear that the sacred parade was punctuated by dancing. There was also some attention to the theatricality of the parade, with vessels and chariots or floats doubling as 'moving stages'. Such chariots carried 'representations': would these be pantomimic elaborations on a theme? Another element in prominence is the decoration of streets, venues, chariots and costumes.

## Spain

We can find parallels between the above description and another procession that took place in Spain one year before that (in 1609). Ménestrier describes this in great detail too.

'The Jesuits performed, in Spain, an ambulatory ballet for the beatification of St Ignace of Loyola, their founder: the theme of this ballet represented the main events from the Siege of Troy. The first act was performed outside the doors of the Church of Our Lady of Lorette, where a wooden machine of great proportions appeared first, representing the horse of troy. This horse started to move, surrounded by a Ballet representing the battle of Troy and accompanied by a large band of musicians. The procession would move to the Square of St Roch, which was partially decorated to imitate the City of Troy, with towers and outer walls. With the arrival of the horse, part of this wall fell down, the Greek soldiers jumped out of the machine and the Trojans came out of their City – all carrying fireworks – and they

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[1] Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les regles du theatre* (Paris, 1682), pp. 98-102.

performed a marvellous danced battle. Both the horse and the city fired fireworks towards each other, but what were most admirable were eighteen trees all covered in fireworks, which created in the sky the most extraordinary figures.

After dinner next day, four brigantines richly adorned, painted and gilded, with many flags and carrying a large group of musicians appeared in the sea. Four ambassadors of the four corners of the World [...] came to pay respect to [St Ignace]. [...] All ships and galleys in the port saluted these brigantines with artillery. When they arrived on the shore the ambassadors disembarked and immediately climbed aboard a chariot superbly adorned, and were accompanied by three hundred Cavaliers all dressed 'à la Grecque'. They marched towards the College, preceded by many trumpets and kettledrums, after which people of many nations – all dressed in their typical costumes, danced a very pleasing ballet, composed of four groups for each of the four parts of the World.

The kingdoms and provinces represented by genies marched with these nations in front of chariots which carried the ambassadors from Europe, Asia, Africa and America, each of them being escorted by sixty-six Cavaliers. [...] Amongst the dances seen there was one performed by young children disguised as monkeys and parrots; leading the [American] chariot there were twelve dwarfs riding little hackneys. The African chariot was pulled by a dragon, the Asian one by two elephants harnessed 'à la Persienne', and the European one by six beautiful horses superbly harnessed. The diversity and richness of costumes were equally important ornaments in the singularity of this ambulatory ballet'.[2]

[2] Michel Bonnet, *Histoire generale de la danse sacrée et prophane* (Paris, 1724), pp. 89-93, and Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les regles du theatre* (Paris, 1682), pp. 103-06.

The theatricality here is even more so evident, with suggestions of pantomimic dances being performed to represent a 'battle'. Interestingly, both descriptions mention a maritime procession. We also note the wealth of floats, the incredibly large number of 'cavaliers dressed *à la Grecque*', and the grand-finale with fireworks. Undoubtedly the church was set in a quest to impress, please and at the same time to exert power over the public and rulers alike.

### French *carroussels*

The use of floats and vessels in the descriptions above bring to mind one of the many etymological interpretations of the word 'Carnivale': one in which it stems from 'carrus navalis', or 'naval car'. One cannot help but compare such events with the Caroussels, as described by De Pure in 1668:

> 'One must attentively advise the organization of a *Carrousel*, be it regarding the construction or number of chariots employed. Opulence defines magnificence, but the precepts give meaning to opulence.[...] A perfect *Carousel* has a design both amorous and martial, and must parade groups of people, a procession of chariots and the operation of machines all with a continuous relation to their plot and design. For instance, the 'abduction of Helen', performed as a *Carousel*, will present lovers on a chariot, accompanied by an infantry and cavalry. The Greeks, on foot, running to rescue their Beauty, clash with the army. The Trojans go back to their city. The enemies surround the city and, after many well-planned and choreographed attempts, break into its walls and set it alight with fireworks. Everything follows in this way, all subject to the action'.[3]

[3] Michel de Pure, *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris, 1668), pp. 193-95.

As we have observed, mounted horses were employed not only to pull the floats, but also to form an impressive *cortège* of three hundred horsemen in the Spanish procession. This would be too good an opportunity not to insert an impressive choreographed equestrian evolution. We shall see later in this paper that equestrian displays were also adopted in Brazilian processions in the 18th-century.

## Brazil

Following the 'discovery' of Brazil in 1500 the Portuguese quickly established an administrative structure in the new colony, through which extractive culture would flourish. Initially benefiting from Brazil's abundant vegetation (with the 'sugar cane cycle' in the 17th-century, only possible by means of the forced influx of African slaves), the Portuguese ventured further inland with the purpose of establishing settlements and to enslave Brazilian indigenous population. Such expeditions were propelled by the Dutch occupation of Angola, which caused the traffic of slaves between Africa and Brazil to scarce. Once these settlements were established it did not take long before mining expeditions finally discovered gold and precious stones, particularly in *Capitania of Minas do Ouro* ('*capitanias*' were hereditary transferred strips of land of huge proportions, a system adopted by Portuguese colonisers), a region today known as *triangulo mineiro* ('mining triangle') in the state of Minas Gerais.

The gold rush, allied to the decline of sugar cane trade, originated the extended 'Gold cycle' or 'Golden Age', which was the basis for economical, social and political development in 18th-century Brazil. Thus, the main economical axis shifted from the agrarian centres in the North-East to the mining centres in the South-East. New towns quickly flourished and attracted an unprecedented number of Portuguese migrants. Above all, the *Vila Rica do Ouro Preto* (or literally translated as 'Rich village of Black Gold') was drastically and quickly transformed from a settlement into the region's capital within just twenty-two years of its foundation in 1698. The city witnessed

luxurious gold clad churches and majestic villas being erected. Part of the gold was also sent to the Brazilian capital of that time, Salvador, where it was equally employed to decorate churches.

The increasingly wealthy population of Vila Rica put on memorable festivities – most of which had religious connotations – as the population wished to express their thankfulness to God for all the gold so abundantly found virtually everywhere around that region.

## Triunfo Eucarístico

Amongst these festivities, processions with combined religious and secular characteristics were major events during the 18th century: a tradition inherited from the pious Portuguese coloniser, cultivated and cherished in the colony. Such an institution reached its epitome in 1733 with the *Triunfo Eucarístico*. The church put on a magnificent display of grandeur in order to celebrate the inauguration of a new parish church, and to mark the relocation of the Eucharistic Sacrament to its new abode – a real 'Eucharistic triumph'. The festivities lasted thirteen days and were meticulously depicted by Simão Ferreira Machado, and published in Lisbon the following year.

The profusion of details described, ranging from the fabrics used to make the costumes, the order of the procession, street ornaments and the presence of honour guests exemplify the splendour witnessed by the locals. Here are just some succinct excerpts in a simplified translation taken from the highly ornamented and poetic writings of Ferreira Machado:

> 'This is the solemn relocation of the Eucharistic Sacrament from the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary to the new temple of Our Lady of Pillar.
>
> In preparation, several masked characters were responsible for announcing the impending festivity [...] from late April until the

3rd of May. On this day two flags were taken to the streets. Two luxuriously dressed people took them to stand outside the two churches – which they represented – marking the beginning and end of the procession.

On the Ascension Day [ed. Thurs 14 May] the new church was blessed, followed by dancing and masquerades, with all participants richly dressed. They carried on their varied and much pleasing performance during daytime, while in the evening one could hear a pleasant harmony of music. These lasted until the 24th May, the day of the procession.

In the six days preceding [the procession] all the inhabitants of Ouro Preto kept the city constantly illuminated. Given the city's high location, this gave the impression the lights shone from Heaven itself.

In the morning of the 24th May one could see – on the streets where the procession was scheduled to go by – a magnificent scene: silk and damask throws hanging from the windows, offering a varied and pleasing view in perspective. […]

On the streets there were five tall arches, well spaced from each other: a triumph in gold and diamonds. […] In addition to these arches there was an altar in which the Divine Sacrament would rest: its design was a graceful imitation of the street arches.

Before the procession left a Mass was said in the church of Rosário. Once the Mass finished, the procession ensued in the following order:

An opening dance with thirty-two 'Turks and Christians' dressed in military fashion, leading two finely painted chariots, carrying singers and many instrumentalists. This was followed by another dance of pilgrims, richly dressed and offering great variety and evolutions through their solemn gestures.

After this one could perceive yet another dance, composed of musicians dressed in gold and silver embroidered silk: these were accompanied by two floats with unique decorations: a small one carrying a serpent, an a larger one with a very high dome in which a knight was concealed. Once the dome was opened the knight promptly sprang out and jumped on top of the serpent.

Immediately behind there were four characters on horseback, representing the four winds: North, South, East and West, all dressed in dramatic costumes 'à trágica': the West wind carried a headdress of white fabric covered with silver, gold and diamonds, and circled with a white plumage with dark accents. This was finished with a bow on the back of the head made of silver and pink ribbons; covered with a diamond encrusted diadem and a tall white *plumage*. The chest [-plate] was covered in tiny white feathers, adorned with silver lace. The cape was made of white silk with green flowers, adorned with trimmings of silver. The sleeves were made of fine mesh and lace. Petticoat breeches had three layers of white silk with green and pink flowers, with a silver fringe. The high boots were covered in feathers. On his back two wings and a letter with his initial. On his left hand a trumpet, from which hanged a transparent banner, hand embroidered, adorned with silver, pink and red ribbons.

[…] these figures were followed by the most majestic characters of the procession, all dressed 'à tragica' and on horseback. They were led by 'Fame' […] She was surrounded by two lackeys dressed as Mercury. 'Fame' declaimed several elegant poems throughout the procession.

The next group followed [on with] a figure on horseback representing the village of Ouro Preto: this figure was dressed in gold and wearing a turban. Her horse was the best and most beautiful in the parade, and had the finest saddle seen in the

whole of Brazil, made of gold embroidered green velvet; the harness covered in ribbons, gold, flowers […] and diamonds.

The following group represented the seven planets offering a judicious memory of antiquity.

[…] Yet another platform carried the image of the martyr St Sebastian, portraying arrows made of silver and a diamond encrusted pin gathering his garment. The platform itself was made up as a triumphant chariot, covered in red silk and gold fringes. [4]

The incredibly detailed text goes on to mention many other groups of people, most of which theatrically dressed – one can note the resemblance of those descriptions with the intricate work of the Cuzco tradition of religious painting in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

The overall procession lasted three days. On the evening of the fourth day a huge fireworks display illuminated the skies. All of these were followed by nine days of non-stop partying, alternating horse parades, *comédies* and bull fighting. Every night a huge banquet was served to 'people of distinction', and accompanied by music concerts. Ferreira Machado concludes his description adding:

> 'There is no recollection in the whole of Brazil or indeed in the Americas of such a majestic event, which the generous Brazilians have performed, receiving admiration from the whole World.'[5]

The level of organization and effort put in the *Triunfo Eucarístico* is unprecedented and unquestionable. It bears incredible similarities to the processions described by Ménestrier, in the following aspects:

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[4] Translated extract of Ferreira Machado's original text in Affonso Ávila, *O lúdico e as projeções do mundo barroco II – Áurea idade da áurea terra*, 3rd edition (São Paulo 1994), pp. 63-77.
[5] *Ibid.*
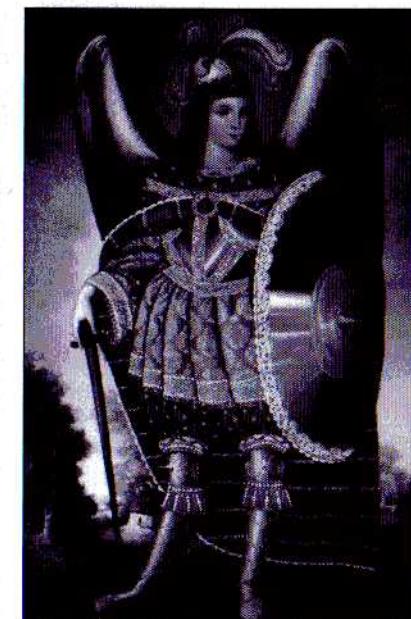


*Arcangel Miguel* (Elizabeth Alvarez) and *Arcangel Miguel* (Angel Gutierrez), n.d., after Cuzco school 1650s; private collection Ricardo Barros

- The marking of main spots along the route, with either arches or 'ribbon trees';
- The presence of banners with images of saints or of the churches;
- Dancers dressed in theatrical manner;
- 'Moving machines': a serpent, a wooden horse, a dragon;
- Cavaliers dressed 'à la Grécque' or 'à trágica';
- 'Ambassadors and troupes of dancers from the 4 corners of the World' as in the Spanish procession, or 'four winds' as in the *Triunfo Eucarístico*.

We can appreciate that the sense of structure contained in 18th-century processions such as the *Triunfo Eucarístico* was carried through the centuries and preserved in the contemporary carnival celebrations. This, together with the sense of collective escapism, the general contrast of extreme socio-economic levels and the yearning for

social acceptance by the lower classes are indelible ties between past and present.

## Parallels between past and present celebrations

One of the earliest detailed descriptions of the high level of organisation and care with the structure of events of this calibre can be found in St Hubert's *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*.[6] One can ascertain that such model was implicitly present in all sorts of public spectacles, from Ballets to Masques, from Carroussels to Joustes, and crucially, as one can note, in processions and street festivities throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Similarly, we can trace striking parallels between the elements in the contemporary Carnival parade and St Hubert's listed 'items' in the making of a Ballet, which suggest that high degree of organisation and striving for structure and form sieved down – possibly inadvertently – over the centuries, permeating elitist and popular celebrations alike, and producing a highly organised event such as the contemporary Carnaval:

- *Enredo*:
  Similar to the theme or *sujet* in the Ballet, it defines the whole development of the parade. It's expressed in words by the *samba-enredo*, an equivalent to the sung *récits*.
- *Comissão de frente*:
  Opening committee, a group of people that introduces the *enredo* through evolutions on the avenue having a similar function to the *prologue*.
- *Alas*:
  The numerous groups of people, each dressed in a particular way in order to represent a historical fact, a character or an aspect related to the theme. Similar to the *'Entrées de Ballet'* which, at a first glimpse did not bear direct relation to each other, but in fact all

[6] Michel de St Hubert, *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* (Paris, 1641)

related to the *sujet*. In the same way the *Entrées de ballets* depended on the *récits* in order to elucidate the *sujet*, the *Alas* depend on the *Samba-enredo* to make the threading of the theme evident. In this sense, both *Alas* and *Entrées de ballet* have more of an illustrative rather than narrative function.

- *Harmonia & Bateria*:
  Literally translated 'harmony' (with harmonic instruments such as *cavaquinhos* and guitars) and 'drums', together these correspond to the *musique*, basis for the representation and indispensable in the threading of the theme.
- *Passistas & destaques*:
  These are prominent individuals in the procession. '*Passistas*' perform the *Samba-no-pé* (virtuoso samba steps) and are relatively low in numbers. '*Destaques*' stand on privileged spots, usually high up on floats, and display exquisitely elaborated costumes, with their roles being delineated by a very clear hierarchy. They relate to the *corps de ballets*, which also maintained a hierarchical system in the distribution of *roles*.
- *Mestre-sala & Porta-bandeira*:
  Usually dressed as nobleman, the *Mestre-Sala* can be compared to the *Maître*. He is the faithful partner to the *Porta-bandeira* throughout the parade, performing evolutions in which he protects her all the time. The *Porta-Bandeiras* carries the school's flag. She is seen as the personification of the school of samba. In this sense she relates to the *essence of ballet*, which had the *Maître* as her faithful guardian, protecting her from vices and ensuring the smooth conduct and order during a performance.
- Floats (*Carros alegóricos*):
  The most entrancing and awesome '*machines*' that can represent eagles, lions, beasts, monsters, grottos, cascades, fireworks or whatever the imagination suggests.
- Costumes (*Fantasias*):
  The most varied, surprising and dream-like costumes, making use of a profusion of feathers, golden and silver fabrics, sparkling jewels and other accessories that highlight the hierarchy amongst participants.

● *Evolução*:

It is the way in which the parade develops. A good evolution is similar to a '*bonne ordre*' in the Ballet. The school must perform within established standards, observing time, number of participants in each section, creativity and association to theme, quality of costumes, floats, performance and dancing.

## Conclusion

This paper exposed the roots of public festivities – mainly through the inheritance of Iberian processions in the Brazilian colonial culture – in order to establish structural and sociological parallels between the contemporary carnival parade and the germ of ballet in 17th-century France. By superimposing what could initially be seem as completely incompatible artistic forms, we can unveil a strong European influence as a formative factor in the history of public events that originated the Brazilian carnival celebration. More importantly we can apprehend, through the cross absorption of influences and adaptation between colonisers and the working force, early signs of cultural integration and ethnic miscegenation that permeate Brazilian culture to this day.

# Don Juan dans le ballet pantomime de Gluck et Angiolini

## Part II

By Françoise Dartois-Lapeyre

Après avoir montré, dans la première partie, la façon dont le ballet *Don Juan* est né, en 1761, dans le milieu curial viennois, d'une volonté consciente de composer rationnellement un ballet d'action tragique, et après avoir étudié les adaptations réalisées pour passer du thème littéraire à l'expression chorégraphique sous la forme de différents types de danses, nous analysons ici deux réactualisations du ballet, reflets de la vision de ce mythe moderne par deux chorégraphes contemporains.

### III - Réactualisation chorégraphique du mythe

#### *A - Interprétation dans le style baroque par Marie-Geneviève Massé*

#### 1. Une version courte pour une concentration dramatique plus intense

La partition manuscrite d'origine étant indisponible, Patrick Cohën-Akénine, à la tête de l'orchestre des Folies françaises pour remonter le ballet, en 2006, à l'Opéra de Versailles, n'adopte pas exactement la version courte des quinze numéros chorégraphiés par Angiolini, et

étudiée par Lois Gertsman et Sibylle Dhams;[1] il opte pour une durée musicale de 35 minutes, excluant onze numéros de la version longue.[2]

Le scénario d'Angiolini est adapté par la chorégraphe Marie-Geneviève Massé, qui garde la division en trois actes, comme l'avait fait précédemment Regina Beck-Friis pour les reconstitutions au Théâtre royal de Drottningholm:[3] la noce interrompue par les écarts de Don Juan, la fête suspendue par l'arrivée du Commandeur et le cimetière ; mais elle concentre encore davantage l'action dans un nombre réduit de scènes, accentuant la dramatisation et supprimant l'anecdotique : la rue et l'entrée de Don Juan chez Elvire sa maîtresse par exemple. C'est à l'intérieur même de la maison, au cours des préparatifs du mariage, que Don Juan séduit la femme du Commandeur – nommée ici Angélique – provoquant le défi et le duel. Il n'y a pas de changement de lieu au second acte : les invités poursuivent leurs danses car ils ignorent la mort du commandeur. Il n'y a pas de travestissement (comme dans l'opéra de Mozart) et le banquet lui-même disparaît au profit du bal : menuets et forlanes sont interrompus par l'arrivée du Commandeur. La dimension allégorique est renforcée, car le décor n'est pas matérialisé, les coups ne sont pas frappés sur une porte : l'impression devient surréaliste et a-temporelle, surtout au troisième acte.[4]

Le ballet, représenté à l'Opéra de Versailles sans décor spécifique et sans autre machinerie qu'une trappe, se trouve privé, faute de moyens, de l'effet de surprise et d'émerveillement suscité par la

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[1] Lois Gertsman, 'Musical Character Depiction in Gluck's Don Juan', Dance Chronicle Studies, in Dance and Related Arts, vol. 1, n°1 (1977), pp. 9-21.

[2] N° 4, 5, 6, 7 (gavotte) ; 9, 10 ; 13, 14, 15 ; 21 ; 29 de la version longue reproduite dans C. W. Gluck, Sämtliche Werke, op. cit.

[3] Regina Beck-Friis, programme du ballet Don Juan au Théâtre royal de Drottningholm (1999).

[4] Mozart, au contraire, précisa dans les didascalies de Don Giovanni que tout se passe en vingt-quatre heures : 'Journée terrible pour tout le monde'. A. L. Bellina, 'Considérations sur les genres', La "Querelle des Bouffons" dans la vie culturelle française au XVIIIe siècle, op. cit., p. 83.

machinerie lors de la création. Il est vraisemblable qu'une représentation au théâtre de Cesky Krumlov, avec la magie des changements à vue, permettrait de mieux comprendre la fascination ressentie par les spectateurs à Vienne en 1761. Lors de la seconde reprise de 2010, sous la direction musicale de François-Xavier Roth, les toiles peintes du scénographe Antoine Fontaine, renforcèrent la dimension spectaculaire, et le décor lugubre du cimetière accentua considérablement la dimension tragique.

## 2. Gestuelle baroque et diversité des styles dansés

Aucune notation de ce ballet n'étant parvenu jusqu'à nous, Marie-Geneviève Massé inventa une chorégraphie pour ce ballet, en utilisant le vocabulaire chorégraphique du XVIIIe siècle et en s'efforçant de respecter le style et le sens de l'oeuvre.

Les gestes y racontent l'action en même temps que l'expression des corps et des visages, et la danse varie selon les personnages. Don Juan s'identifie dès le début du ballet par une superbe diagonale de brisés exprimant son ambition et ses velléités. Il appartient au monde nobiliaire où l'honneur se défend à l'épée, et c'est souvent dans une position inspirée de l'escrime qu'il affronte ses adversaires : le bras gauche en l'air et le bras droit tendu en avant. Il ne s'agit pas d'une pose baroque, mais d'un geste théâtral, qui est une belle invention chargée de sens et adaptée aux codes de l'honneur de l'époque moderne. Lorsqu'il devient victime et qu'il est touché à son tour, Don Juan cambre le buste en arrière à la limite du déséquilibre.

L'alternance contrastée entre des scènes tragiques et des passages de Commedia dell'arte est conforme à l'esprit du baroque. Marie-Geneviève Massé imagine pour Sganarelle de brusques mouvements de pieds en dehors et en dedans, des positions accroupies et c'est sur la pointe des pieds que le personnage s'esquive. Pierrot et Charlotte dansent gaiement en sautant sur un banc. Pierrot présente son cœur à Charlotte au n° 8 de la partition et Mathurine pousse un cri de surprise lorsque la main de Pierrot s'égare le long de son dos. La chorégraphe

s'inspire de la tradition des premières mises en musique du mythe, qui empruntaient à la *commedia a braccio*, mais elle exclut ce type de danse au dernier acte, traité dans le registre tragique.

Don Juan danseur est un être éminemment terrestre et les valeurs surnaturelles lui sont étrangères: l'angoisse religieuse passe ici au second plan par rapport au règlement des conflits humains.[5] Comme Goldoni, la chorégraphe renonce au dîner fatidique, à l'invraisemblable statue ambulante et à la foudre naturaliste qui éclate dans un ciel serein, mais elle ne gomme pas la mesquinerie du valet.[6] Le divin n'est pas totalement évacué, car les trahisons impardonnables exigent la vengeance divine, même si les furies sont remplacées par 'les ombres menaçantes de tous ceux qu'il a trahis' : les femmes dépitées deviennent furies pour rendre la justice, elles encerclent et terrassent Don Juan.

### 3. Le rôle des femmes, magnifié et décisif

On compte, parmi les personnages principaux mis en scène, quatre hommes et six femmes, sans compter les Furies, qui lors de la création étaient conduites par Louise Bodin, première danseuse, mentionnée par Gumpenhuber.[7] Elles forment ici un ensemble magnifique et cohérent, symbolisant la vengeance féminine autant que divine. Mais la femme, ambivalente, fait aussi preuve de douceur et de tendresse, par exemple dans la très jolie ronde où elle fait mine de bercer son enfant.

La mise en scène joue sur ces antagonismes renforcés par la symbolique des couleurs : le rouge de l'amour côtoie le noir de la mort,

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[5] Le ballet annonçait d'une certaine façon *Don Juan de Maraña ou la chute d'un Ange* d'Alexandre Dumas (1837).

[6] Dans sa tragi-comédie *Il Don Giovanni Tenorio ossia Il Dissoluto* (1736), éditée en 1754, Goldoni avait tenté de réordonner la pièce chaotique de Tirso (alors attribuée à Calderon) et connue en Italie dans sa version traduite, *Il Convitato di pietra, opera regia ed esemplare* de 1632, due peut-être à Giacinto Andrea Cicognini. A. L. Bellina, 'Considérations sur les genres', *La Querelle des Bouffons dans la vie culturelle française au XVIIIᵉ siècle*', op. cit., p. 87.

[7] S. Dahms, 'Some Questions on the Original Version of Gluck and Angiolini's *Don Juan*', *Dance Chronicle*, op. cit., p. 431.

et les Furies se distinguent par de longs manteaux rouges et des tricornes. Olivier Bériot s'est inspiré des costumes du XVIIIᵉ siècle, mais en les stylisant pour les adapter librement pour la danse. Ainsi les robes à paniers sont suggérées par la structure du costume conçu pour laisser la liberté de mouvement ; les jupes, ouvertes par le milieu, sont en tissus synthétiques d'une légèreté incomparable. La nature des étoffes et les garnitures différencient socialement les personnages. Charlotte et Mathurine, servantes – et non paysannes comme dans Molière – portent chemisier et corset lacé sur une robe longue ouverte sur le devant, laissant entr'apercevoir les culottes au genou et les jambes revêtues de collants. Un fichu retient leurs cheveux.

Dona Ana adopte les poses typiques des danses de caractère espagnol et joue des castagnettes, dans un costume de forme semblable mais plus élaboré, avec un bustier fermé, des étoffes plus riches et plus chargées en couleurs : rayées sur les manches et bustier, mouchetées sur la robe. Masquée, elle porte un loup sur les yeux et une mantille dans les cheveux : autrefois trompée par Don Juan, elle vient prendre sa revanche et le provoque au cours d'un somptueux fandango.

Le valet – qui dans cette interprétation contemporaine a retrouvé son nom – Sganarel, porte une livrée rayée, rehaussée de bandes roses et bleues, qui le rattache à la tradition de la *Commedia dell'arte* : il est le seul témoin de la mort du Commandeur, exécuté tandis que les invités insouciants continuent la fête.

Les cheveux de Dona Elvire, fille du Commandeur, sont dissimulés par une mantille. Elle arbore le costume le plus élaboré : prévu pour le bal de ses noces, il évoque une robe à paniers garnie de volants jaunes ornés de garniture noire.

Angélique, jeune et jolie femme du Commandeur, revêt un costume de style aristocratique tandis que Pantalone porte un manteau à manches bouffantes sur une culotte rouge et des collants bleus ; n'étant pas indispensable à la distribution finale, il disparaît. Toinette tient les

volants de sa robe toute simple, tandis que Pierrot, amoureux de Charlotte et jaloux de Don Juan, porte une culotte rouge lacée aux genoux, une ceinture large retenant sa blouse, dissimulée partiellement par une veste sans manche à longues basques.

Don Juan, tout de rouge vêtu – couleur symbole de la passion – porte une culotte de gentilhomme ornée d'une bande noire, et une veste vermillon. Cet habit à l'espagnol et son long fichu noué à l'arrière de la nuque le distinguent tout à fait du « grand seigneur méchant homme » de Molière, interprété à l'époque par Millot qui portait un costume à la française.[8]

Alors que les femmes conquises par Don Juan se disputaient l'affection de ce monstre insensible, elles font bloc contre lui, attitude qui deviendra fréquente à partir du livret de Da Ponte.[9] Déjà vers la fin du ballet, elle ressentent le besoin de se liguer contre lui : le rôle de Donna Elvire, bientôt accusée de folie, est devenu essentiel dans *Don Giovanni*, comme dans l'interprétation de M. G. Massé. De même la figure du Commandeur, héritée de Don Gonzalo dans *l'Abuseur de Séville*, se caractérise par sa rectitude morale, qui le conduit à provoquer en duel son propre gendre.[10]

Si la descente aux enfers de Don Juan est plus sobre que lors de la création, sans feu d'artifice, sans volcan ni tremblement de terre, elle est, par la formidable adéquation entre la musique et la chorégraphie, extrêmement saisissante et envoûtante. Au terme d'une progression sans faille et profondément émouvante, Don Juan est englouti par le tourbillon magistralement orchestré de ses victimes jusque dans les entrailles de la terre, conformément à la volonté de Gluck puis de

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[8] Millot en Don Juan dans Molière, *Don Juan*, I, 1. Henri Bouchot, Catalogue des dessins relatifs à l'histoire du théâtre conservés au Département des estampes de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, E. Bouillon (1896), n° B 468.
[9] *Don Juan. L'Avant-scène Opéra, op. cit.*, p. 42. Entente entre Elvire et Zerline et quatuor : 'Non ti fidar, o misera'.
[10] Attitude reprise par Goldoni, puis Bertati et Da Ponte.

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Mozart en 1798, qui fait tomber le rideau du Kärntnerortheater sur son cri infernal.

### B - Interprétation dans le style contemporain par Thierry Malandain

#### 1. Une version longue pour une lecture structurelle et universelle

Pour créer son *Don Juan*, T. Malandain, chorégraphe de la Compagnie du Ballet de Biarritz, retient l'ensemble de la partition de Gluck soit 49 minutes. Il en propose une formulation très abstraite, où les mésaventures de Don Juan ne sont pas évoquées de façon explicite comme un récit continu d'événements, mais plutôt comme une juxtaposition d'épisodes reliés de façon allusive à la pièce de Molière. Même si l'histoire nourrit la facture, ce n'est ni une reconstitution historique, ni une parodie : c'est une relecture chorégraphique, 'un exercice consistant à poser un regard nouveau sur un ouvrage ancien'.[11]

Sganarelle étant absent, c'est un triangle de protagonistes qui fonctionne : Elvire, le Commandeur et Don Juan, fragilisé par l'apparition de la Mort et sujet comme les autres humains aux 'frémissements intérieurs', à l'horreur et à la terreur exprimées par la musique. La démultiplication des personnages et leur interprétation, indifféremment par des hommes ou des femmes, ajoute à la pièce une dimension chaotique et sexuelle.

Dans la mise en scène très épurée et très élaborée, un soin particulier est apporté au décor, minimaliste mais intégré à l'action, et

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[11] T. Malandain, *Bulletin d'information du Centre Chorégraphique National/ Ballet Biarritz*, n° 30 (avril-mai-juin 2006): http://www.malandainballet.com/assets/pdf/n30, le 15/3/2011. DVD *Les petits riens [...]/ Don Juan / Georges Flores*, réal. ; Christoph Willibald Gluck, comp. ; Thierry Malandain, chorégr. ; Jorge Gallardo, décors, costumes ; Véronique Aniorte, Camille Aublé, Giuseppe Chiavaro... [et al.], DVD vidéo, Centre chorégraphique national Ballet Biarritz-Opéra théâtre de Saint-Étienne, 2006.

aux lumières, qui soulignent la pureté des mouvements et accompagnent 'les phases émotionnelles'.[12]

## 2. Ouverture sur le repas funèbre et la profanation du banquet

Influencé quant à la forme par la technique cinématographique, T. Malandain construit son ballet en commençant par montrer Don Juan mort, allongé sur une longue table et pleuré par une assemblée de silhouettes féminines en robes noires, invitant à un flash-back.[13] Il renvoie à l'origine du mythe, à l'ancienne légende italienne de Leonzio, qui après avoir buté sur une tête de mort en traversant un cimetière pour se rendre à sa noce, est entraîné en enfer par le spectre, qui a accepté son invitation à dîner pour punir son blasphème. Le repas, d'ordinaire symbole de vie et de communion, de partage et d'échange rituel, n'est donc pas ici un 'festin', terme généralement retenu depuis Molière. L'exaltation, communiquée par la danse tourbillonnante, renoue moins avec la tradition médiévale qu'avec l'Antiquité. Elle engendre un malaise qui relève de l'*hybris* ; la fête est d'autant plus inquiétante qu'elle intègre la profanation railleuse du banquet, généralement vécu comme un rite commun de paix et de médiation, sacré selon les racines gréco-hébraïques de la culture occidentale, 'depuis les Saintes Écritures jusqu'au *Banquet* de Platon et au *Convive* de Dante'.[14] La disposition du banquet, symbole de l'ordre social et divin, est perturbé : la grande table de l'ouverture se trouve désossée, écartelée en éléments multiples, qui symbolisent les éclats de Don Juan, et les désordres des innombrables combinaisons humaines entre hommes et femmes qu'il suscite. Les costumes, noirs ou blancs, trop sobres pour avoir comme fonction unique de flatter l'œil, mettent en valeur 'la plastique corporelle' des danseurs tandis que l'alternance des solos, duos et ensembles fait oublier la course du temps.[15]

12 *Ibid.*, p. 4, citation de Carlos Gil, *Artez* (mars 2006).
13 *Ibid.*, n° 31 (juillet-septembre 2006), p. 3, citation de Philippe Verrièle, *Webthea*, mai 2006.
14 *Ibid.*
15 *Ibid.*, p. 3, citation d'Alexandre de la Cerda, *La Semaine du Pays Basque* (mars 2006).

L'unité, qui se brise aux heurts de multiples conflits, est rendue par un processus de fragmentation, dans lequel les hommes jouent le rôle majeur et initial. Don Juan lui-même est incarné par trois interprètes, symbolisant l'éclatement du personnage, tandis que la figure d'Elvire, reflet de toutes ses conquêtes, se trouve démultipliée par dix. La table de banquet se scinde en triangles acérés pour énumérer et commenter les assauts de Don Juan, témoigner de son désordre amoureux ; ses divisions figurent les 'mâchoires de l'enfer' se refermant sur sa boulimie érotique.[16] Un jeu de dilettante le fait passer d'une femme à l'autre dans une superbe diagonale de chaises sur lesquelles il s'assoit faisant face successivement à une douzaine de jeunes filles avant de se relever et de gagner le siège suivant pour répéter les mêmes gestes de séduction et de corps à corps avec la suivante.

Pour signifier les promesses de mariage, vaines et réitérées, c'est un jeu des couronnes, que se passent, pleines d'espoir, des jeunes filles en robe blanche. Elles évoquent la douceur féminine, mais aussi les promesses de Don Juan, qui ne se contente pas de soumettre les cœurs à sa volonté : il promet aux femmes le mariage et va jusqu'à les épouser, pour sa seule satisfaction, suscitant désespoirs et frustrations.

## 3. Domination masculine et violence des rapports humains

La brutalité apparaît dans la confrontation des corps qui se heurtent, entrent en collision, et cognent violemment les angles des tables démembrées. La chorégraphie, alerte, donne une impression de hâte et de frénésie, celle d'un homme dont les interlocuteurs et partenaires sont multiples.

Thierry Malandain conserve les traits de Don Juan tel qu'il apparaît dans l'Espagne du siècle d'or : coureur de jupons, mélancolique, pour qui toute femme est bonne à séduire, assoiffé d'absolu, mais aussi libre-penseur et libertin tel qu'il est esquissé par Molière. Mais il lui

16 *Ibid.*, n° 29 (janvier-mars 2006), p. 4.

attribue aussi de plus récentes expressions, celles d'un homme d'action qui se nourrit 'exclusivement du moment passé auprès du corps de l'autre' ; celles d'un personnage 'qui à travers les femmes cherche la femme. À moins qu'il ne se cherche lui-même?' [17] Cet homme d'action blasphémateur, en quête de plénitude, mais constamment soumis à l'instant dans la conquête de la sensualité est irraisonnable et ne respecte rien ni personne. 'À défaut de connaître l'extase dans l'unique et l'immobilité, ce séducteur impénitent court avec avidité pour jouir du multiple'.[18] À travers l'objet du désir il entrevoit l'éternité, et poursuit sa route jusqu'à ce que le Commandeur lui tende la main pour l'inviter au royaume des morts. Alors seulement l'inquiétude de voir son pouvoir dominateur tenu en échec est perceptible.

Don Juan symbolise chez T. Malandain l'homme livré à des instincts, exaltant la vie, assoiffé de plaisirs, mais souvent violent et brusque, jouissant avec un certain sadisme de la douleur de ses victimes. Le cumul de l'irrespect et ses excès le conduit de l'impiété au châtiment final : une damnation éternelle spectaculaire et terrible. Le donjuanisme est aussi la perversion de l'individu.

Plus encore que dans *Don Giovanni* de Mozart, ses amantes jeunes ou mères, séductrices ou ingénues, 'ont le pouvoir chevillé au corps', un corps qui dans la danse est 'la cheville ouvrière de leur séduction et de leur perte'.[19] Certaines font l'amour, d'autres disent la frustration de ne plus le faire', d'autres enfin attendent la caresse au risque du viol.[20] 'La chorégraphie fourmille de détails intelligents, à l'image de ces

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[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Marie-Aude Roux, ' L'Éloge des femmes. Popée, Pamina, Hélène, Elvire, Anna et les autres…', *Le Monde* (3 juin 1999).

[20] À la différence d'Elvire, Donna Anna a un père : le viol, ce déshonneur que le bras trop faible d'un vieillard n'a pu empêcher, est réparé par la mémoire d'une fille et la paternelle transcendance ; c'est pourquoi la mort du père cristallise toute la charge érotique sur la vengeance.

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mains qui semblent des éventails agités par les danseurs'.[21] Sous le joug du père ou de l'amant, sous le faix des devoirs, les femmes courbent l'échine, mais ne se résignent pas à être réduites au seul ascendant sensuel – éphémère mais tout puissant – qu'elles exercent.

Par sa mort à la fois personnelle et générique, Don Juan est le miroir inquiétant de la psyché collective.[22] Le mythe semble bien atteindre ici une dimension universelle, qui dépasse celle de ses origines : l'Europe occidentale.

## Le succès du ballet dynamise un mythe en devenir

*Don Juan* est un 'coup d'essai' parfaitement réussi par Angiolini, dont la révolution chorégraphique a précédé celle de l'opéra. Il a offert au ballet, au sens contemporain du terme, ses lettres de noblesse, le mettant sur un pied d'égalité avec le spectacle le plus prestigieux. Il a démontré qu'un ballet réussi est – comme on a coutume de le dire pour l'opéra – le fruit d'une collaboration très étroite entre quatre maîtres d'œuvre qui contribuent chacun à la cohérence et à la puissance de l'ensemble : le librettiste, le musicien, le chorégraphe et le décorateur.[23] Ayant fait la démonstration du pouvoir expressif de la danse sur les spectateurs viennois, submergés par l'émotion, Angiolini a gagné en légitimité pour amorcer sa réforme du ballet, un genre qu'il ressentait prisonnier du carcan des traditions. Il innova de deux manières : en choisissant de donner au mythe une forme nouvelle parce qu'oubliée, celle du ballet pantomime, et en optant pour une histoire relativement récente, issue de la contre-réforme, et non de l'Antiquité.

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[21] *Bulletin d'information du Centre Chorégraphique, op. cit.*, n° 30, p. 3, citation de Philippe Noisette, *Les Échos* (mars 2006).

[22] Philippe-Jean Catinchi, « Dom Juan » de main de maître », *Le Monde* (16 juillet 1999).

[23] S'inspirant de Voltaire, Angiolini et Gluck collaborèrent ensuite à *Sémiramis* (1765).

Par le choix du sujet comme par le mode d'expression, il contribua à l'évolution du mythe qu'il forgea à sa façon, sans passer par le langage parlé ni par le chant, mais par le corps, en accord avec l'expression musicale ; la recherche d'un langage gestuel était la motivation sous-jacente. La créativité des auteurs s'exerça d'autant plus librement qu'elle prenait pour cible un personnage littéraire, qui rejetait lui-même le respect des règles préconçues, et qui – de ce fait – avait été traité assez librement par Molière au théâtre ; en outre, il n'avait jamais encore donné lieu à un ballet : dans ce genre nouveau, tout était à inventer.

Le rôle du ballet dans l'évolution du personnage et du mythe s'explique par la force de l'impact corporel. Il fallait un très brillant danseur pour incarner ce personnage, qui résume à lui seul un type d'hommes, celui des aventuriers parcourant l'Europe, à la manière de Casanova – qui rencontra Galzabigi et Da Ponte et assista à la première de *Don Giovanni* à Prague – ou encore de Jean-Baptiste Édouard Du Puy (1770-1822), surnommé le 'Don Juan du Nord'.[24] Si le personnage dansé est moins complexe psychologiquement que le personnage littéraire, sa vitalité, son ardeur et les ambiguïtés de sa sexualité sont directement perceptibles. Son pouvoir de séduction opère physiquement, par les prouesses accomplies dans les solos et les duos : ses performances scéniques le rendent admirables. Il fascine par ses comportements éminemment spectaculaires, oscillant entre douceur de la séduction et brutalité de la conquête, où il manifeste sa faconde, son égoïsme et son orgueil. Au-delà de la transgression des règles divines conduisant au châtiment dans l'Europe baroque, il met en jeu de façon

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[24] Il est l'auteur de trois opéras, dont *Jeunesse et Folie* (1806), de musique de chambre (musiques funèbres pour le service de Charles XIII) et de ballets (*Arlequin magicien par amour*, sa première composition pour la danse, en 1793). *Opéra comique. Commedia dell'arte*, Arlequin magicien par amour, *ballet-pantomime chorégraphie d'Ivo Cramer d'après des documents du XVIIIᵉ siècle*, Carnaval, *ballet-pantomime*, Le Bourgeois gentilhomme *chorégraphie de George Balanchine, Théâtre national Opéra de Paris, Salle Favart* (décembre 1984), p. 9. Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, *Histoire de ma vie*, R. Laffont, éd. établie par F. Lacassin, vol. 5 (Paris, 2006), p. 30.

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universelle les rapports humains de soumission et domination, et c'est en cela qu'il nous concerne au XXIᵉ siècle, qu'il continue à émouvoir et à faire frémir.

Le succès du nouveau ballet fut durable puisque le 2 novembre 1761 'tout le monde' était à la Comédie allemande pour le voir ou revoir; mais il fut brutalement interrompu en raison de l'incendie qui, le lendemain, embrasa le Kärntnertortheater à la fin de la représentation, à cause du feu d'artifice du finale.[25] Le ballet resta au répertoire pendant une quarantaine d'années et fut ensuite repris à l'étranger, mais il n'a malheureusement pas été représenté à l'Opéra de Paris. La rivalité qui éclata au grand jour entre Angiolini, qui défendait le rôle d'Hilverding dans l'invention du ballet d'action, et Noverre, qui revendiquait sa paternité et qui lui succéda à Vienne en 1767, explique sans doute que ce dernier n'ait pas souhaité monter ce ballet lorsqu'il devint maître des ballets à l'Académie royale de musique ; il préféra présenter *Médée et Jason*, qu'il avait créé en 1763 à Stuttgart, mais ce premier ballet d'action représenté à l'Académie en 1776 n'eut guère de succès.[26]

Le mythe dansé du séducteur connut cependant un succès durable. En 1793, furent répertoriées 35 chorégraphies qui, de 1761 à 1800, avaient traité le thème de Don Juan[27], répertoire incomplet qui témoigne de l'impact considérable du ballet, jusqu'à Copenhague, grâce à Vincenzo Galeotti (1781), à Londres, grâce à Charles le Picq

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[25] Karl Graf von Zinzendorf, *Aus den Jugendtagebüchern*, cité par H. C. Robbins Landon, tr. Jean-Claude Poyet, *in* C. W. Gluck, *Don Juan. Semiramis. Ballets Pantomimes by Gasparo Angiolini*, Tafelmusik, on Period Instruments, dir. Jeanne Lamon, Bruno Weil, Conductor, Sony Classical, Vivarte (1993), p. 13.

[26] En 1778, *La Chercheuse d'Esprit* de Maximilien Gardel connut au contraire un énorme succès.

[27] Edward Singer, *Bibliography of the Don Juan Theme, Versions and Criticism*, Morgantown, West Virginia University Bulletin, Series 54 (1954). Da Ponte Institut für librettologie, 'Don Juan Forschung', *Bulletin d'information* (2002), p. 15.

puis Carlo Delpini, qui le reprirent en 1785 puis 1787, et jusqu'à Venise grâce à Onorato Vigano (1787).[28] Comme le soulignait Goldoni[29] dès 1754, grâce à son pacte avec le diable, le mythe de Don Juan prit — comme celui de Faust — de nouvelles formes et connut un constant succès sur les scènes européennes. L'influence de Molière et d'Angiolini est ainsi perceptible sur le *Convitato di pietra* du librettiste Bertati et du musicien Gazzaniga, représenté au théâtre de Monsieur, en octobre 1791 : après avoir saisi la main du spectre, il est poursuivi par une troupe de démons, qui s'acharnent contre lui avec 'un génie absolument neuf', produisant 'le plus grand effet'.[30] L'empreinte du ballet est également perceptible sur la réforme de l'opéra engagée par Gluck et Calzabigi, dans la version française d'*Orphée et Eurydice,* en 1762 puis en 1774[31] (qui reprend la grande chaconne finale pour la danse des Furies) et dans *Iphigénie en Tauride* où le ballet des Euménides inspire la terreur à Oreste encerclé (1779).[32] Mozart, amoureux de liberté comme Don Giovanni, s'inspire de la chaconne du séducteur dans le fandango des *Nozze di Figaro* et du menuet pour le premier finale de *Don Giovanni* [33], bientôt englouti dans la trappe qui s'ouvre au milieu des flammes.

Tout à fait remarquables et dans deux styles très différents, les chorégraphies contemporaines de M. G. Massé et T. Malandain n'ont pas seulement le grand mérite de réparer une injustice, en réveillant la mémoire de ce ballet qui marque un tournant historique dans l'art de la danse, elles réactualisent à leur tour le mythe de Don Juan. Elles lui redonnent sens alors que l'expression ne désigne plus, dans le langage courant, qu'un coureur de femmes au charme indéniable et aux conquêtes innombrables, dénué de scrupules sentimentaux à l'égard de ses victimes.[34] La dimension religieuse et libertine s'est estompée, mais pas le contenu sexuel et moral, aujourd'hui recentré par les deux chorégraphes sur les rapports hommes / femmes. *Don Juan* demeure un ballet troublant et baroque, celui d'une vie devenue mythique qui se referme sur l'absence. Il appartient au répertoire européen, mais il est devenu universel et rayonne dans le monde comme en témoigne son accueil au Japon.

[28] A. L. Bellina, 'Considérations sur les genres', *op. cit.,* p. 84.

[29] Carlo Goldoni, préface à *Don Giovanni Tenorio o sia Il Dissoluto* (*Don Juan Tenorio ou le Dissolu*).

[30] *Chronique de Paris* (27 octobre 1791), p. 1209. *Don Giovanni Tenorio o sia Il Convitato di pietra,* crée à Venise, 1787. *Il Convitato di pietra,* opéra bouffon italien en 4 actes, arrangé pour le Théâtre de la rue Feydeau, de l'Imprimerie de la Feuille du Jour, rue de Bondi, n° 74, à côté de l'Opéra, [le 24 octobre 1791]. A.N., F-Pn : Y[th] 50165. 'La musique est de différens maîtres' : Mozart, Mengozzi, Cherubini. Alessandro Di Profio, *La Révolution des Bouffons. L'Opéra italien au théâtre de Monsieur, 1789-1792,* CNRS Éd. (2003), p. 62, 94, 132, 419 et 420 et tableau p. 445.

[31] Nouvelle version au Burgtheater (août 1774), acte II, scène 1 et 2.

[32] *Iphigénie en Tauride,* acte I, scène 4.

[33] *Ibid.,* n° 19, 21.

[34] P. Van Tieghem, *Dictionnaire des littératures, op. cit.,* t. 1, p. 1151-1155.

# Trois Orphées

By José Sasportes

Depuis sa naissance, l'opéra s'est voulu le lieu idéal pour la confluence harmonieuse des différents arts, mais dès le début le rôle de la danse dans ce cadre a été problématique. Et encore vers la fin du XVIIIe siècle la question était toujours épineuse. Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans son *Dictionnaire de Musique* disait que les 'parties constituantes d'un opéra sont le Poème, la Musique et la Décoration',[1] le rôle de la danse étant matière à de fortes réserves.

La danse théâtrale s'est développée dans le cadre du spectacle lyrique, mais elle a toujours manifesté une tendance à prendre de l'autonomie. Praticiens et théoriciens ont essayé de trouver des formules pour soumettre la danse à l'intérêt général, c'est-à-dire à celui du poète librettiste;[2] sans succès, heureusement, car autrement on ne parlerait pas aujourd'hui du ballet comme d'un art indépendant. C'est justement d'après un schéma suggéré par le poète et librettiste Ranieri Calzabigi que Gluck a entrepris la réforme de l'opéra, mettant ainsi en œuvre une des nombreuses tentatives qui ont été faites pour soumettre la danse.

[1] Jean- Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, vol. II, (Paris, 1785), p. 36.
[2] Voir José Sasportes, 'La parola contro il corpo ovvero il melodramma nemico del ballo', *La danza Italiana*, vol. I (Roma, Autunno 1984), pp. 21-41.

Les scènes de Vienne, de Naples et de Paris ont été le théâtre de cette confrontation et je me propose de vérifier la place de la danse dans trois productions réalisées dans ces villes d'une œuvre emblématique, *l'Orfeo e Euridice* de Gluck.

Une dizaine d'années avant *Orfeo e Euridice* de Gluck (1762), Francesco Algarotti dans le *Saggio sopra l'opera in musica* (1750) avait lancé son fameux anathème contre la danse, accusée de s'être infiltrée dans le *melodramma* et de vouloir détruire son unité. Soit en italien soit dans la traduction française, ce texte a été fort diffusé, établissant une sorte de doctrine. À la cour de Vienne, le surintendant des théâtres comte Durazzo ainsi que Calzabigi étaient bien au courant de la mésentente entre la danse et l'opéra lyrique et ils ont voulu promouvoir deux solutions à ce problème. La première était de renforcer la danse théâtrale en lui donnant de nouveaux et nobles objectifs, c'est-à-dire de favoriser la résurrection de la pantomime antique, de telle façon que le *dramma per musica* et le ballet ne se gênent pas réciproquement. Le résultat de ces propos fut traduit, selon les vœux de Calzabigi, en deux ballets d'Angiolini avec musique de Gluck, c'est-à-dire *Don Juan* (1761) et *Sémiramis* (1764), tous les deux accompagnés de programmes de salle qui définissaient les lignes d'un nouveau genre, le ballet pantomime. La deuxième solution avancée fut celle réalisée dans *L'Orfeo,* qui traduisait une pleine insertion de la danse, inscrite dans l'opéra selon les instructions du poète, car il ne faut pas oublier que l'opéra était considéré comme un outil au service du poète. À la fameuse question *Prima la parola* ou bien *prima la musica*, la réponse était la parole d'abord, et sur cette même discussion Richard Strauss bâtira plus tard son beau *Capriccio* de 1942.

Le thème d'Orphée avait servi auparavant à beaucoup d'opéras et de ballets, mais il prenait surement pour Calzabigi une valeur symbolique car parmi les œuvres fondatrices de ce genre se trouvaient *Euridice* de Jacopo Peri (1600), *Euridice* de Giulio Caccini (1600) et *Orfeo* de Monteverdi (1607), ainsi que le premier *Orfeo* donné à Paris en 1647, celui de Luigi Rossi. Le choix fait par Calzabigi dénotait la volonté de réformer l'opéra en s'éloignant des pratiques de virtuosité

de l'opéra italien de son temps, se dirigeant vers un retour aux origines du spectacle : l'opéra soumis au poète librettiste.

Ce nouveau *Orfeo e Euridice* bâti par Calzabigi, Gluck, Angiolini et le scénographe Quaglio se définissait d'ailleurs *azione teatrale*, terminologie qui n'était pas nouvelle, mais qui était proposée ici pour marquer une différence. *Orfeo* avait seulement trois personnages, un chœur actif et un corps de ballet qui intégrait l'action à des moments explicitement signalés dans le livret. Il ne s'agissait point de danses ajoutées en surplus au développement de l'opéra en tant qu'aimable décoration, c'étaient des danses qui servaient au déroulement de l'intrigue. Une critique sur le *Wienerische Diarium*, probablement écrite par Calzabigi lui-même, signalait la nouveauté d'*Orfeo* et parlait des chœurs en action comme d'un modèle pour l'usage de la danse au sein du spectacle.[3]

Une autre référence sur ce sujet, suggérée probablement par Durazzo, paru dans un rapport sur *Orfeo* dans le *Journal Etranger* de Paris :

> Les ballets sont de la composition de M. Angiolini : ils sont tous liés à la pièce et tirés du fond du sujet, et ne démentent pas la réputation que les talents de l'inventeur lui ont déjà acquise.[4]

Dans l'opéra qu'il a écrit par la suite pour Gluck, *Alceste* (1767), Calzabigi considérait toujours la danse comme étant au service du poème, et la musique de même. Curieusement nous avons un témoignage de Noverre sur la mise en scène d'*Alceste* dans laquelle la danse va au-delà de cette fonction et ordonne tout le mouvement sur la scène, c'est presque une anticipation de *l'Orphée et Eurydice* de Pina Bausch. Il raconte que :

[3] Transcrit dans Patricia Howard, *Gluck- An Eighteenth-Century Portrait in Letters and Documents* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 59-61.

[4] *Journal Etranger* (Paris, 1762), p. 235.

Gluck avait introduit quelques chœurs dans l'*Alceste* qu'il donna à Vienne. […] Ces chœurs étaient en action; ils exigeaient du mouvement, des gestes et de l'expression. C'était demander l'impossible ; comment faire mouvoir des statues ? […] Sa peine m'inspira une idée : je lui proposait de distribuer les chanteurs et de les placer derrière les coulisses, de telle sorte que le public ne put les apercevoir, et je promis de les remplacer par l'élite de mon corps de ballet, de lui faire faire tous les gestes propres à l'expression du chant et de combiner la chose de manière à persuader au public que les objets qu'il voyait agir étaient ceux qui chantaient. Gluck pensa m'étouffer dans l'excès de sa joie ; il trouva mon projet excellent ; et son exécution produit l'illusion la plus complète.[5]

Noverre pour sa part devait être aussi fort content d'agir à l'intérieur de l'opéra de Gluck, car c'était justement ce qu'il demandait dans les *Lettres sur la danse* publiées en 1760, deux années avant *Orfeo*. Noverre affirmait :

Je dirais simplement que la danse dans ce spectacle devrait être placée dans un jour plus avantageux ; j'avancerais même que l'Opéra est son élément, que c'est là que l'art devrait prendre de nouvelles forces, et paraitre avec le plus d'avantage ; mais par un malheur qui nait de l'entêtement des poètes ou de leur maladresse, la danse à ce spectacle ne tient à rien et ne dit rien ; elle est dans mille circonstances si peu analogue au sujet, et si indépendante du drame, que l'on pourrait la supprimer sans affaiblir l'intérêt, sans interrompre la marche des scènes, et sans en refroidir l'action.[6]

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[5] Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, sur les ballets et sur les arts*, vol.II, lettre XVI (St. Petersbourg 1803), p. 160; édition fac-similée a cura di Flavia Pappacena (Lucca, 2012).

[6] *Ibid.*, vol.I, Lettre VIII (Stuttgart/Lyon 1760), p. 65; avec des variantes.

Cependant, d'après un témoin, dans le cas d'*Alceste*, Noverre aurait lui aussi commis le péché de composer un ballet comique à la fin de la tragédie :

Aujourd'hui les théâtres se sont ouverts avec l'affluence habituelle et au Burgtheater on a présenté un opéra nouveau nommé *Alceste* composé par le chevalier Gluck sur un libretto de Monsieur Calzabigi. Encore une fois le public a trouvé que c'était pathétique et lugubre. Heureusement à la fin il y avait un ballet de Noverre dans le style grotesque qui a recueilli d'énormes applaudissements.[7]

Le mariage consensuel entre la danse et l'opéra n'était qu'une illusion et au cours des années fertiles de la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle, la progression du ballet pantomime par l'action d'Angiolini, de Noverre et de leurs disciples avait amené la danse à une position non seulement d'indépendance par rapport à l'opéra, mais aussi de concurrence, du moins dans le circuit de l'opéra italien, concurrence qui ne cessera de croître, comme devait le constater plusieurs fois notre Calzabigi. En 1792, il regrettait la décadence, selon lui, de l'opéra et soulignait l'attention excessive apporté à la danse :

[Les réflexions] sont réservées aux ballets introduits dans nos spectacles dramatiques si puérils et malheureux. Il est curieux de vérifier comment les spectateurs - qui n'ont pas prêté attention ni à la Poésie ni à la Musique, qui ne se sont pas tus pour écouter l'une ou l'autre, dès que le premier signal de l'orchestre annonce le ballet, immédiatement ces spectateurs exigent solennellement le silence. Tous s'assoient et tous les discours, même les plus agréables, se tarissent. Il semblerait que le ballet a besoin d'oreilles que l'on n'a pas voulu accorder ni à la Musique, ni à

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[7] Patricia Howard, *Gluck- An Eighteenth-Century Portrait*, p. 81.

la Poésie. Les ballets auxquels cette distinction est accordée sont appelés Ballets Pantomimes par leurs auteurs.[8]

Si Calzabigi avait pu la voir, la présentation d'*Orfeo* à Naples en 1770, aurait pu servir d'exemple aux lamentations du librettiste vingt ans après. *L'azione teatrale* avait d'abord été présentée au Palais Royal dans une formule proche de l'original, mais quand la pièce passa au Teatro San Carlo, elle fut transformée en opéra par la présence de quatre personnages additionnels et de morceaux musicaux nouveaux, raison pour laquelle le poème a dû être allongé. Ni Calzabigi ni Gluck n'ont été appelés à superviser ces changements, qui suivaient, en partie, une ligne de pastiche déjà adoptée pour la présentation d'*Orfeo* à Londres sous la tutelle de Johann Christian Bach la même année. Mais le plus outrageux attentat aux objectifs de cohésion de l'émotion dramatique que prônait la réforme gluckienne venait de l'inclusion aux entractes de l'opéra, selon le modèle des théâtres italiens, de ballets étrangers au sujet, détournant le spectateur du climat émotif que le poème et la musique voulaient créer. Après le premier acte on dansa *Adèle de Ponthieu*, un ballet chevaleresque à la saveur médiévale, que le chorégraphe Charles Le Picq proposait au nom de son maitre Noverre et qui méritait un programme de plusieurs pages ; dans le second entracte le public, qui avait laissé Orphée ramenant Eurydice du royaume des morts, se trouvait tout à coup devant un ballet comique, *La Felice Metamorfosi, o siano i petits maîtres burlati*, d'Onorato Viganò. Le troisième *ballo*, dit *Coro dei Seguaci di Amore*, était sans doute le *ballo* qui amenait à la conclusion de l'opéra. Rien n'est dit quant à l'auteur des danses prévues dans le libretto original, qui les considérait comme faisant partie de l'action, mais ce fut probablement Le Picq qui remplit cette mission quinze années plus tard pour une reprise de l'opéra à Londres.

Les déboires d'*Orfeo* ne finissent pas à Naples : à Paris en 1774, c'est Gluck lui-même qui se plie au goût local et consent à traduire en opéra français son *azione teatrale* italienne, de marque viennoise. Puisque le modèle français demande qu'on accorde plus d'espace à la danse à l'intérieur de l'opéra, Gluck n'hésite pas, empruntant et ajoutant la musique de danses qu'il avait lui-même composée dans différents ouvrages antérieurs, y compris celle du final de *Don Juan*. En 1761 ce ballet illustrait à Vienne la nouvelle théorie du ballet pantomime, tout en démontrant une adhésion cohérente de la musique aux desseins de Calzabigi et Angiolini. Mêler *Don Juan* et *Orphée* aurait du paraitre à Gluck en contradiction avec les propos d'unité d'expression énoncés plus d'une dizaine d'années auparavant, mais il présida lui-même à l'opération. En fait Angiolini, de son coté, ne respectait pas non plus ce pacte et plus tard il composa des partitions pour *Don Juan* et *Semiramis* qui remplaçaient celles de Gluck.

À Paris, Gaétan Vestris se chargea des danses des Champs Elysées et de Cupide, tandis que Maximilien Gardel s'occupa des funérailles d'Eurydice et du monde souterrain. Pour *La Correspondance Littéraire*, 'Les ballets d'*Orphée* ont aussi fait plus de plaisir que ceux de l'*Iphigénie* ; ils sont plus analogues au sujet et d'une harmonie plus noble et plus soutenue. Beaucoup de gens mettent cependant le ballet des Champs Elysées de *Castor* fort au dessus de celui qui se trouve au second acte *d'Orphée,* et qui est du même genre. Ce parallèle a fait dire que ce nouvel opéra n'était qu'un demi-Castor'.[9] La référence est évidement à *Castor et Pollux* de Rameau reprise en 1772 avec des danses de Dauberval, Vestris et Gardel.

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[8] Ranieri Calzabigi, 'Lettera a S.E. il Sig.Conte Alessandro Pepoli Ecc nel trasmettergli la sua nuova tragedia intitolata Elfrida' in *Poesie e Prose Diverse* (Napoli, 1793), p. 170, maintenant dans Ranieri Calzabigi, *Scritti Teatrali e Letterari*, a cura di Anna Maria Bellina (Roma, 1994), vol.II, page 594. Le premier volume de cette édition comprend les programmes de *Don Juan* et de *Semiramis*. Pour ce qui est d'autres critiques de Calzabigi sur le rôle usurpateur de la danse, voir les lettres écrites à Antonio Montefani à l'occasion de la présentation d'*Alceste* à Bologne en 1778, dans Matteo Ricci, *I teatri di Bologna nei secoli XVIe XVIIIe* (Bologna, 1888), pp. 632-644.

[9] *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique* (Paris, août 1774), p. 163.

*Orphée* a été proposé régulièrement à Paris et à la reprise de 1778 ce que l'on mettait en relief c'étaient les danseurs :

> Le pas de trois du ballet des Champs Elysées a été dansé par M. Vestris, Mlle. Guimard et Mlle. Heinel, et c'est donner une idée d'une exécution à laquelle on ne pourrait rien trouver de semblable dans l'Europe. Les talents naissants du jeune Vestris ont été vivement applaudis ; il est impossible de donner de plus grandes espérances, et quand on porte ce nom, on doit aspirer à la perfection.[10]

Pour la mise en scène de ses opéras Gluck exigeait une participation dynamique des chœurs, d'habitude figés sur scène, et il a mis tout son tempérament dans les répétitions pour obtenir des résultats à Paris. Les conventions de l'Opéra étaient rigides. Selon lui, elles étaient contraires à l'accomplissement du dessin tragique et il se rebella contre l'obligation incontournable d'ajouter un ballet à la fin. Dans une lettre du 31 juillet 1775 à Franz Kruthoffer, qui s'occupait de ses affaires à Paris, Gluck se plaint des exigences parisiennes :

> Je dirais même plus et j'ajoute qu'à l'avenir je ne composerais plus d'airs de ballet pour mes opéras, sauf celles qui dérivent du déroulement de l'action, et si cela ne plait pas, je n'écrirais plus d'opéras, car je ne veux pas me voir reprocher par les journaux que mes ballets de la fin sont faibles, médiocres, etc… Les voyous n'entendront plus rien de moi et mes opéras se termineront toujours là où le poème finit.[11]

Les trois *Orphées* et leurs différents rapports avec la danse en Autriche, en Italie et en France illustrent, à mon avis, des parcours d'affirmation de l'art de la danse en vue d'atteindre son autonomie. Intégration douce au spectacle lyrique à Vienne, encadrement forcé à

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[10] *Mercure de France* (Paris, août 1778), p. 16.
[11] Patricia Howard, *Gluck - An Eighteenth-Century Portrait*, p. 147.

Paris et émancipation véritable à Naples, qui définit la stratégie future. Le Picq n'avait pas agi au hasard, il connaissait surement l'œuvre de Gluck et peu d'années avant, en 1772, au Teatro Ducale de Milan, il avait donné sa version du ballet dramatique de Noverre sur le même mythe, version forte qu'un spectateur averti subi avec délices, tout en jugeant que la musique était celle de Gluck, ce qui n'était pas le cas. Pietro Verri, un balletomane milanais avant la lettre, écrivait alors à son frère :

> Le second ballet fut celui d'Orphée qui descend à l'Averne et libère Eurydice. Musique superbe, action très convenable, des costumes en correspondance et un couple de danseurs, Le Picq et Binetti, deux vrais divinités. Tu n'imagines pas combien d'âme, de décence et gout raffiné dans chaque mouvement. Une foule de danseurs secondaires remplissaient la scène. Je t'assure que ce genre de spectacle te touche l'âme et l'on sent le froid et le tremblement de la tragédie.[12]

Ce témoignage nous parle du degré d'efficacité que le ballet pantomime pouvait atteindre et il nous indique que quand Le Picq à Naples, en 1770, jugea acceptable d'interrompre l'opéra *Orfeo* avec le ballet *Adèle de Ponthieu*, en fait il assumait et défendait l'indépendance de la danse vis-à-vis de l'opéra. L'important pour lui, ce qui l'intéressait, c'était l'affirmation de son ballet, ce n'était pas de sauver l'opéra. C'était l'attitude générale des chorégraphes dans tous les théâtres d'Italie et je crois que c'est grâce à eux que la danse a conquis son autonomie.

Dans le cas français, l'intégration de la danse dans l'opéra est restée longtemps un idéal qui débouchera dans la formule du grand opéra du

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[12] *Carteggio di Pietro e Alessandro Verri*, vol. III (Milano, 1911-1939). Une partie des lettres où l'on parle de danse se trouve dans *Il ballo pantomimo – Lettere, saggi e libelli sulla danza (1773-1785)*, a cura di Carmela Lombardi (Torino, 1998); la lettre en référence du 21 février 1770 est à page 164.

XIXᵉ siècle, ce qui n'a pas empêché la création de ballets autonomes. Mais la situation de presque monopole exercé par l'Opéra de Paris a freiné la diversification esthétique et la multiplication des productions. Tandis que la création française se chiffre par dizaines de ballets, la production italienne des années 1750 à 1850 est de l'ordre de centaines de ballets. Le cas étant celui d'un art qui lutte pour trouver son poids et sa dimension, la quantité de ballets produits a été à cette fin une qualité essentielle, et il faut ajouter à cela l'exportation de danseurs et chorégraphes italiens par toute l'Europe pour imposer cet art.

Si le chemin choisi par la danse eut été celui de l'*Orfeo* autrichien, la danse n'aurait pas dépassé le statut de collaborateur du spectacle lyrique, au même titre que la scénographie ; si le chemin choisi eut été le français, la danse n'aurait pas dépassé le stade d'un corps de ballet utilisé pour agrémenter les opéras. En fait, le spectacle de Naples, si confus soit-il, fut conforme aux exigences d'un art naissant : il lui fallait ne s'occuper que de soi-même pour rejoindre le statut d'art confirmé et établi. Et c'était d'ailleurs ce que prônaient ses ennemis, ceux qui, de leur coté, désiraient que le ballet s'éloigna du *melodramma*. À la fin du siècle, au moment de l'ouverture de La Fenice, Andrea Rubbi s'écriait de Venise :

Veux-tu encore te laisser transporter par une danse magnifique, illustre, pleine d'intrigues ainsi que d'accidents royaux et gigantesques ? Défoule-toi en liberté. Laisse l'opéra intacte avec sa poésie et sa musique consonantes, laisse lui ses ballets en correspondance avec le sujet, et alors toi tu pourras danser éternellement. Sépare la danse de l'opéra, et tu ne me verras plus accusateur .

Et ainsi fut-il.

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13 Andrea Rubbi, *Il Bello Armonico Teatrale* (Venezia, 1792), p. 112.

# Ballet, Opera and Social Dance: Facets of a Vivid Exchange

By Stephanie Schroedter

Looking at our Western music tradition, it soon becomes obvious how immense, even though extensively underestimated, the influence of dance is on musical developments: Physical kinetics are musically initiated and supported as well as compositionally reflected and stylised. This phenomenon reaches in the 19th century a distinctive point for further developments of modern music and dance cultures, which shall be demonstrated in the following by using Paris as an example – according to Walter Benjamin the cultural metropolis of the 19th century.[1] From large-sized *Bals de la cour*, *Bals de société*, *Bals de charité*, and *Bals masqués* to privately organized and privileged *Bals bourgeois* and *Bals de salon* up to *Bals publics* spread over the whole city and *Les Bals populaires* at the *barrières*, the outskirts of Paris – very different dance and music cultures were in 19th-century Paris geographically close together. Within this complex framework the urban dance cultures deserve particular attention, because they offer an instructive inside view on the reception of opera and ballet productions as leisure time activities – and the other way around: the reception of

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[1] Walter Benjamin, 'Exposés: Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts. Paris, Capitale du XIXe siècle', in: *Das Passagen-Werk*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main (Suhrkamp Verlag) 1983, pp. 45–77.

everyday dance cultures in the theatre, which leads to a vivid exchange of so-called high and low cultural practices. On the one hand catchy opera and ballet melodies were received through dance at the different ball events, and on the other hand exactly those dance practices were reflected and 'dramatized' in operas. Thus the urban dance cultures allow valuable conclusions about the dance scenes in operas – with regard to musical, choreographic and semantic aspects. I will explain this topic in more detail by looking at dance scenes of *Grands Opéras*, *Opéras comiques*, *Opéras bouffes* and *Ballets pantomimes* – before I am going to outline the reception of these productions through dance arrangements for the ballroom and musical salon.

## The dance catastrophes of *grands opéras*

It is a skilfully calculated dramaturgical ploy in Daniel François Esprit Auber's *Gustave III ou Le bal masqué* from 1833[2] to incorporate a ball just before the final escalation of the dramatic action, which culminates in the murder of the monarch. In many *Grands opéras* of the 19th century, dance and catastrophe became synonymous on the non-verbal plot level, which could only be deciphered audibly, visibly, and especially kinaesthetically. Undoubtedly this was a reflection of urban social cultural life, in which spaces formerly protected by privileges and conventions were opened up by dance to conquer a new, although dangerous freedom of movement, in place of freedom for life. For instance the choreographically well ordered 'Contredanse française' mutated already in the first decades of the 19th century into a more vivid and multi-adaptable 'Quadrille Parisien', which further evolved into the turbulent 'Parisian Cancan' in *galop* rhythms, danced at public balls and often culminating in a devastating chaos – as shown in particular in the illustrations of the *Bals masqués de l'Opéra*.

[2] Première: 27 February 1833, libretto: Eugène Scribe, choreography: Filippo Taglioni.
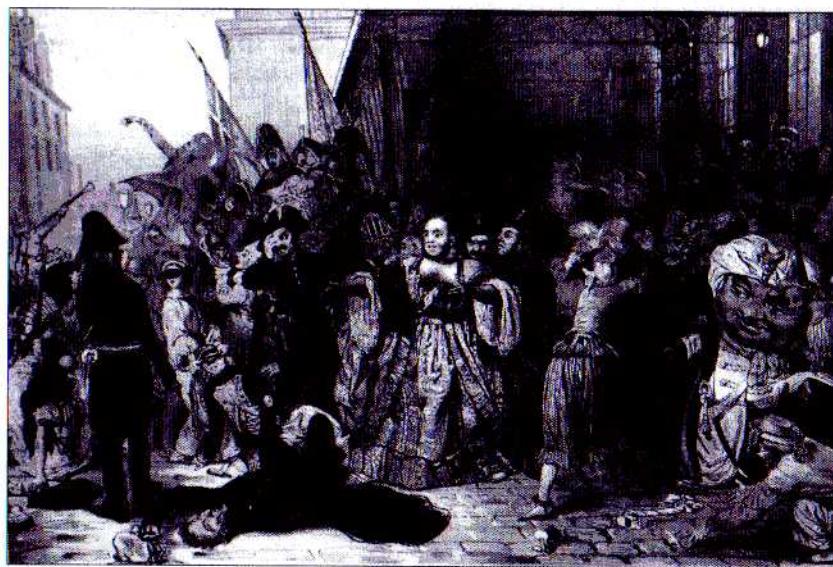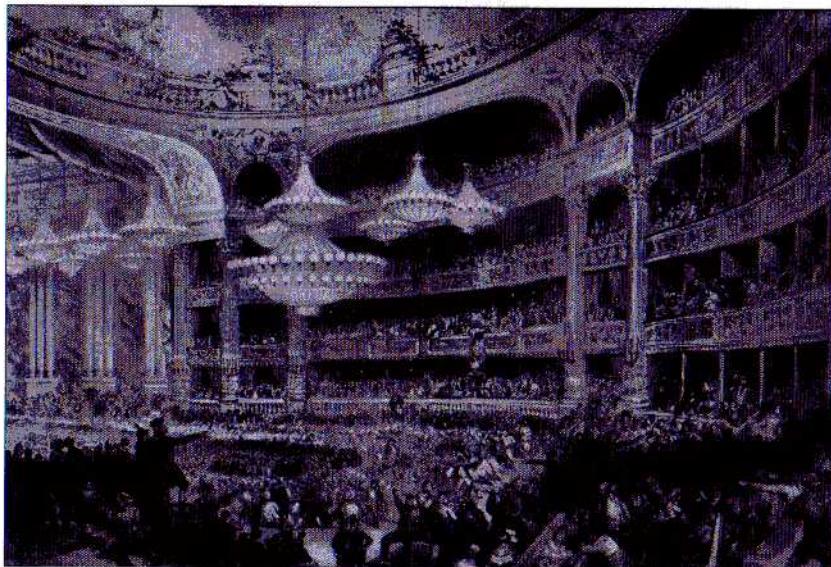




Figures 1 and 2: The carnival ball at the Paris Opéra culminated in the obligatory infernal chaos (Cliché BnF Bibliothèque-Musée de l'Opéra).

In *Gustave III*, a comparable dance catastrophe is gradually prepared by a [*Contredanse-*] "*Allemande*", a "*Pas des folies*", a "*Minuet*", two marches and a closing *galop*, during which the chaos takes its final course. As fashionable dance of the late 18th century, the *Contredanse-Allemande* thus refers to the period in which the dramatic events around *Gustave III* occurred, now projecting politics of the 19th century back into that time. At this point of the composition, the ceremonial entry of the king is imaginable, whose presence and above all authority is announced due to a rhythmically prominently punctuated figure of a seven-times tone repetition of an affirmative character, played in unison by the entire orchestra. The immediately following rising and falling horn motives, accompanied by lying basses in the strings, emphasize the king's moderately dignified striding, whereas the then beginning melody of the flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and strings is obviously accompanying a ballroom society swaying in *Allemande* figures.[3] On the basis of these melodies develops a dialogue between the two groups of instruments, not only directing the eyes but also the ears of the audience towards the protagonists of the dramatic action. This mainly 'harmonious' sound space shows first clouding through the directly following "*Pas des folies*": by grimace-like melodic gestures and by *galoppade* figures that stand out prominently the splendidly displayed structure gradually begins to waver.

In the following "*Menuet*" the king takes the acoustic foreground again – and probably the scenic one too. One should not imagine a couple dance in baroque style though, with these short, only fragmentarily dubbed *Mouvement de menuet* passages amid lively, quadrille-like sequences, since it was, once again, above all a matter of symbolising an outdated 'historicity' through dance movements. In this sequence several sound- and time layers are gradually outlined: the ball event begins to become multi-layered and ambiguous, not only

[3] For the typically high arm figures of the allemande during the 18th century compare the figures in: Simon Guillaume, *Positions et Attitudes de l'Allemande* (Paris c. 1768), and Dubois, *Principes d'Allemandes* (Paris c. 1791).

acoustically with a minuet fragment which is repeatedly interrupted by brief quadrille quotations, but also dramatically through political and private conflicts of interest.

Whereas the royal presence takes on lyrical traits in the minuet – almost giving an insight into the psychological constitution of the monarch – the power that backs the king is supposed to regain stronger contours in the following two marches – through a movement with pronounced accords played by the entire orchestra, supported by beats of a kettledrum, in the first march or rather the fanfare-like calling signals followed by extended wind passages led by horns in the second march. This is where military discipline if not even actual military presence enters the ballroom.[4]

Nonetheless the closing *galop* ruins all efforts to keep the event under control, since a dynamic is gradually built up – by using motivic material from the "*Pas de folies*" – which cannot be slowed down any longer.

Just like the midnight *galoppades* of the carnival balls, the 'infernal' scenario of this *Grand opéra* takes its course. The murder of the monarch, which follows immediately after the *galop*, seems to be the logical consequence of the increasingly tumultuous dance events.

To summarize the final dance scene of *Gustave III*: On the dramaturgic level the retardation of the dramatic events through the ball scene contributes to the increase of tension for the immediately following escalation, which any experienced opera-goer could guess. At the same time, there develops a dramatic tension within the ball scene, which anticipates the immediately approaching catastrophe non-verbally on an audiovisual level, which was kinaesthetically perceptible too, thus an exclusively sensual experience.

[4] For these two marches compare the orchestra score mentioned in note 4, pp. 683–689 and 690–705.

## Dancing fantasy trips to 'other places' in the *opéra comique*

Even though the dramatis personae in the *Opéra comique* are closer to everyday life than the protagonists of the *Grand opéra*, they try to escape from it through active or passive resistance. It is through the dance – either actually performed or just musically perceivable – that 'other places' or rather 'better worlds' are headed.

For example Adolphe Adam's *Opéra comique La Poupée de Nuremberg* (1852)[5] is pervaded by dance, both on the levels of plot as well as music: the carnival ball ("*bal masqué*"), which Cornélius and Donathan can attend without hindrance and which Miller and Berta would love to go to, is never visible but nonetheless often audible due to thrilling rhythms and catchy melodies. The most prominent dance scene though is the episode in which Miller and Berta abandon themselves to a primarily musical, imagined dance frenzy, thus sufficiently replacing the ball event which is missing on stage: indulging waltz rhythms gain through rising and falling, warbling melodies with almost visual-vivid contours. The cover of a "*Grande valse*" print, composed by Philippe Musard (compare figure 3), might give an impression of the staging of this scene.

The interplay between stage and ballroom, which is obligatory in *Grands opéras*, also leaves its marks on the *Opéra comique*. But there it does not take the same dramatic attributes; instead it is characterized by a comparatively harmless humour, despite the unmistakable socio-political explosive power, which gets increasingly satirical tendencies though. Bitingly sharp traits, which crush the tragedy of real circumstances through gallows humour in the performance on the stage, characterize the dance scenes of the *Opéra bouffe*. This prompts



Figure 3: Very often valuably illustrated prints of dance arrangements for private and public ballroom events allow to draw precious conclusions about staging practices of the respective opera- and ballet compositions alike. Here now the cover of a "Grande Valse" composition by Philippe Musard, hinting at the above mentioned scene (Cliché BnF Paris: Departement de la musique Vm12g 10168).
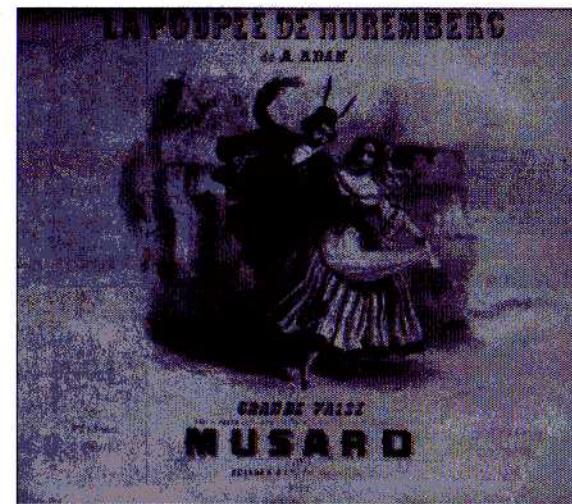
the question whether the whole event might not advance to a dangerously slippery dance floor after all.

## Caricature-like dance frenzy in the *opéra bouffe*

Jacques Offenbach's *Vie parisienne* (1866)[6] presents almost prototypically the essential dramatic intention and dramaturgic function of dance in *Opéras bouffes*. The social dance scenes are no longer primarily illustrative representations, but they are above all the expression of an outer and inner dynamic which threatens all social classes, especially since their dividing lines have opened up increasingly. Nobody is able to withstand this new, specifically urban dynamic so that all of those involved in the events are swept along by a whirl of fast developing occurrences, which neither have a tragic (as in the *Grands opéras*) nor a conciliatory ending (as in the *Opéras comiques*), but rather culminate in a diffuse dance frenzy that levers out

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[5] Première: 21 February 1852, libretto: Adolphe de Leuven [Ribbing] and Arthur de Beauplan. With regard to subject matter, this Opéra comique served as the model for the ballet pantomime *Coppélia* (Première: 25 May 1870; libretto: Charles Nuitter; music: Léo Delibes; choreography: Arthur Saint-Léon).

[6] Première: 31 October 1866, libretto: Henri Meilhac (pseud. of Ivan Baskoff) and Ludovic Halévy (pseud. of Jules Servières).

everything. The omnipresent movement in the *Opéra bouffe* is dramatically or rather psychologically founded on the continually increasing acceleration of the events. Whereas *Grands opéras* present different dances stringed together elaborately, the *Opéra bouffe* is characterized by a monotonous movement, which revolves around itself and gets increasingly turbulent so that it cannot be stopped in its fatality. The protagonists seem no longer to be dancing actively and willingly but they 'are danced', i.e. they almost passively abandon themselves to the dance – speeded up by the musical dynamic. Thus the wild dance hustle in *La Vie parisienne* (3rd act, finale), which is positioned at a central dramatic turning point, is characterized by stereotypical rotary motions followed by an excessive *galop* final, culminating in an expansion of the consciousness or rather in a suspension of consciousness of the protagonist Baron Gondremark: "*Tout tourne, tourne, tourne, tout danse, danse, danse, Et voilà, déjà, Que ma tête s'en va!*"[7]

## Opera and ballet in the ballroom and the musical salon

Social dance scenes in opera and ballet[8] – and vice versa: the transfer of melodies from the opera and ballet into the ballroom was a general custom until late into the 19th century. Focusing only on the juxtaposition of dance arrangements of *Grands opéras*, *Opéras comiques* and *Opéras bouffes* for the ballroom and also the musical salon, one can detect the tendency towards an extensive 'corporalization' of the music theatre by dance: Whereas in the field of the *Grands opéras* only the dance scenes themselves were mainly

arranged for the ballroom, the practice amidst the *Opéra comique* to 'dance away' every melody in the ballroom enjoys increasing popularity. In the field of the *Opéra bouffe*, which from the middle of the century seriously competes with the *Grand opéra* with regard to its widespread impact, the practice of dance arrangements takes inflationary tendencies. And whereas one can find amid the arrangements of *Grands opéras* and *Opéra comiques* both pieces for the ballroom as well as for the musical salon, pieces just for hearing and not for dancing move into the background in the *Opéra bouffe* arrangements in order to serve especially for big dance events. At the same time the diversity of dance forms – which one can find in the cases of the *Grand opéra* and *Opéra comique* (including numerous national and character dances which were so popular at that time) – within the *Opéra bouffe* clearly decreases: what is left are mainly *quadrilles*, *polkas*, *galopades* and *marches*, i.e. the catchiest but also the most plain dance forms.

Table 1: Dance-arrangements of **Gustave ou Le Bal masqué**[9]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Herz, Henri. | **3 Airs de ballet en Rondeaux** pour piano (L'Allemande, L'Anglaise, La Folie) | Paris: Troupenas |
| | **Galop favori** pour piano | Paris: Troupenas |
| Lemoine, Léon. | **13me Bagatelle**, morceau facile pour piano avec accompt. de flûte ou violon ad libitum sur le **Galop favori** | Paris: Troupenas |
| Ropicquet, A. [?] | **Pas styrien. Valse favorite** dansé par Melle. Elssler pour piano avec accompt. de violon ad libitum | Paris: Launer |
| Sellenik, Adophe Valentin. | **1r Pas redoublé** pour musique militaire | Paris [Tournier / Goumas] |
| | **2e Pas redoublé** pour musique militaire | Paris: Tournier / Goumas [1858] |
| Trojelli, Angelino. | **Galop favori** pour piano | Paris: Ménstrel [1882] |

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[7] For this scene compare the finale of the third act in the new critical edition (OEK) of *La Vie Parisienne* (1866/67/73) by Jean-Christophe Keck, Berlin: Boosey & Hawkes/Bote & Bock.

[8] For a very instructive overview on social dance scenes in ballets compare: Marie-Françoise Bouchon, 'Les représentations du bal dans le ballet du XIXe siècle', in: *Histoires de Bal: Vivre, représenter, recréer le bal,* ed. by Claire Rousier on behalf of Cité de la Musique (Paris 1998), pp. 153–178.

[9] This study is based on research at the BnF Paris, especially in the Bibliothèque/Musée de l'Opéra and the Département de la Musique. My findings rely on the (mostly handwritten) cataloged stock – I cannot rule out that this includes only a part of the music supplies which were circulating during the 19th century. Nonetheless, it can be said that this selection is representative for a general tendency.

Table 2: Dance-arrangements of *La Poupée de Nuremberg*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Burgmüller, Frédéric. | **Grande Valse brillante** pour piano | Paris: Brandus [1852] |
| Pasdeloup, Jules Etienne. | **Rédowa** pour piano | Paris: Brandus [1852] |
| Pilodo, A. [?] / Fradel, Charles. | **Polka** composée par Pilodo, arrangée pour piano par Fradel | Paris: Brandus [1852] |
| | **Schottische** composée par Pilodo, arrangée pour piano par Fradel | Paris: Brandus [1852] |
| Musard, Philippe. | **Grande Valse** pour piano avec accompt. de violon, flûte, cornet et basse | Paris: Brandus [1852] |
| | **Quadrille** pour piano avec accompt. de violon, flûte, cornet et basse | Paris: Brandus [1852] |

Table 3: Dance-arrangements of *La Vie parisienne*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Arban, Jean-Baptiste-Laurent. | **Galop** pour piano | Paris: Heu |
| | **Quadrille** pour piano | Paris: Heu [1866] |
| Blancheteau, A. [?] | **Quadrille** pour moyenne fanfare | Paris: Gautrot [1868] |
| Corad, Emile. | **Valse** pour musique militaire | Paris: Buffet Crampon |
| | **Quadrille** pour musique militaire | Paris: Buffet Crampon |
| Dureau, Théophile Louis. | **Ronde** pour moyenne harmonie arrangée en **Pas redouble** | Paris: Gautrot [1867] |
| Ellenbogen, Adolf. | **Quadrille** pour piano | Pest: Rózsavölgyi |
| Mey, Auguste. | Suite de *Valses* pour orchestre | Paris: Jaquot [1867] |
| | **Valse** pour piano | Paris: Heu [1867] |
| Offenbach, Jacques. | **Galop** pour piano | Paris: Heu |
| Sohier, Henry. | **Galop** pour musique militaire | Paris: Gautrot |
| Strauss, Isaac. | **Polka** pour orchestre | Paris: Marx [1866] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strauss, Isaac. | **Polka** pour piano | Paris: Gregh [1875] |
| | **Quadrille** pour orchestre | Paris: Marx [1866] |
| | **Valses** pour orchestre | Paris: Marx [1866] |
| | **Valse** pour piano | Paris: Gregh |
| Wittmann, Gustave-Xavier. | **Marche** pour musique militaire | Paris: Margueritat [1868] |
| | **Marche** pour musique militaire [final du 3e acte] | Paris: Braun [1868] |
| | **Pas redouble** pour musique militaire | Paris: Margueritat [1868] |
| | **Valse** pour musique militaire | Paris: Margueritat [1869] |
| | **Marche** pour musique militaire | Paris: Margueritat |
| | **Pas redouble** pour musique militaire | Paris: Braun [1866] |

If one compares the dance arrangements of operas with those of ballets (the latter were enjoying great popularity since the phenomenal success of *Giselle, ou Les Willis*),[10] one arrives at valuable information about special dance fashions – not least of all are these arrangements a far less uncomplicated way of learning about which social dances or rather national and character dances found their way into the respective ballet compositions than through the scores which are for the most part only handwritten available.

Apart from the popular Spanish dances (in this context compare for instance the "*Cachuchas*" in *Le Diable boiteux*[11] and *Lady Henriette*,

[10] Première: 28. June 1841, libretto: Théophile Gautier and Jules Henri Vernoy Marquis de Saint-Georges, music: Adolphe Adam (with additions by Friedrich Burgmüller), choreography: Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot.
[11] Première: 1 June 1836, libretto: Adolphe Nourrit, music: Casimir Gide (with quotations from compositions by Gioachino Rossini, Auber, Ferdinand Hérold and André Ernest Modeste Grétry), choreography: Coralli.

*La Servante de Greenich*,[12] the "*Pas espagnol*" in *La Péri*[13] or the "*Pas des Manteaux*" in *Paquita*[14]) one can find Italian dances (like for instance the "*Tarantelle*" in *La Fille de marbre*[15] and *L'Étoile de Messine*[16]), an early "*Pas des Bayadères*" in *L'Île des pirates*[17] as well as the ornate-decorative "*Pas des Almées*", "*Pas des Châles*" and "*Pas de l'Abeille*" in *La Péri*, finally the "*Pas du Voile*" from *L'Étoile de Messine* and *La Source, ou Naila*,[18] which also falls into this context. Such 'exotic' dances were preferably turned into "*Divertissements*" and "*Rondes*" for the musical salon.[19]

Whereas in *Giselle* the *galop* is for the first time effectively dramatised as frenetic, mind-expanding dance, the polka or rather "*Polka des fous*" from *Lady Henriette* is assigned a comparably 'dramaturgic' function. First stylised "*Cracoviennes*" appear in *La*

[12] Première: 21 Februar 1844, libretto: Saint-Georges, music: Friedrich Adolf Ferdinand Freiherr von Flotow, Edouard-Marie-Ernest Deldevez, and Bürgmüller, choreography: Joseph Mazilier (Giulio Mazarini).

[13] Première: 17 July 1843, libretto: Gautier, music: Burgmüller, choreography: Coralli.

[14] Premiere: 1 April 1846, libretto: Paul Henri Foucher, music: Edouard-Marie-Ernest Deldevez, choreography: Mazilier.

[15] Première: 20 Octobre 1847, libretto: Saint-Léon nach André Jean-Jacques Deshayes, music: Cesare Pugni (with quotations from compositions by Pierre Costa), choreography: Saint-Léon.

[16] Première: 20 November 1861, libretto: Paul Henri Foucher, music: Nicolo Gabrielli, choreography: Pasquale Borri.

[17] Première: 12 August 1835, libretto: [Nourrit], music: Gide and Luigi Carlini (with quotations from compositions by Rossini and Ludwig van Beethoven), choreography: Henry (pseud. of Louis Bonnachon).

[18] Première: 12 November 1866, libretto: Nuitter, music: Delibes and Louis Minkous, choreography: Saint-Léon.

[19] Compare for this e.g. the "Rondo brillant pour piano" based on the "Pas des Bayadères" from *L'Île des pirates* by Charles (Karl) Schunke (Paris, Schlesinger, 1835), or the "Divertissement pour piano" based on the "Pas des Almées" from *La Péri* by Henri Herz (Paris, Colombier, 1843) as well as his "Variations caractèristiques pour piano sur un thème arabe" based on the "Pas de l'Abeille" from the same ballet (Paris, Colombier, 1844), finally the virtuoso arrangement of "Pas du Voile" from *L'Étoile de Messine* by Edouard Wolff (Paris, Brandus, 1862).

*Gipsy*[20] and *La Jolie fille de Gand*,[21] "*Redowas*" for the first time in *Paquita*, *La Vivandière*,[22] *Le Violon du diable*[23] and *Stella, ou Les Contrebandiers*[24] – thus not only marking Arthur Saint-Léon's preference of this dance form but also its heyday, which led to its inclusion in Giacomo Meyerbeer's *La Prophète*,[25] where it was integrated in an impressive ice-skating scene.

The mazurka effectively asserted itself as stage dance, above all with *Le Diable à quatre*,[26] especially as it marked a dramatic turning point as it were, since the female protagonist Mazourki initially express her passion for dance in accordance with her countryside roots by polkas. But after her social advancement to the position of countess, caused by a 'devilish trick', she introduces herself to the aristocratic audience at the ball with a mazurka or rather mazurka valse, which she could only manage to learn with the assistance of a benevolent devil.[27]

During the 1830s and 1840s the popularity of a dance form was defined by its ability to adjust to different social needs, that is effortless

[20] Première: 28 January 1839, libretto Saint-Georges, music: Fraçois Benoist, Charles Louis Ambroise Thomas and Marco Aurelio Marliani (with quotations from compositions by Beethoven, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Schubert and Carl Maria von Weber. For this Cracovienne there exists also a "Divertissement" arrangement for piano, which again points at the elaborated demands of this dance (by Camille Schubert, Paris, Prilipp, 1839).

[21] Première: 22 June 1842, libretto: Saint-Georges, music: Adam, choreography: Albert (François Decombe).

[22] Première: 20 Octobre 1848, libretto and choreography: Saint-Léon, music: Pugni.

[23] Première: 19 January 1849, libretto and choreography: Saint-Léon, music: Pugni.

[24] Première: 22 February 1850, libretto and choreography: Saint-Léon, music: Pugni.

[25] Première: 16 April 1849, libretto: Scribe, choreography: Auguste Mabille.

[26] Première: 11 August 1845, libretto: de Leuven, music: Adam (with quotations from compositions by Étienne Nicolas Méhul and Michail Glinka), choreography: Mazilier.

[27] Further ballets, which include mazurka compositions, which again were adapted as polka-marzurkas for the ballroom, are: *Paquita* (s.a.), *La Fille de marbre* (s.a.), *La Filleule des fées* (Première: 8 October 1849, libretto: Saint-Georges, music: Adam, Alfred Comte de Saint-Julien, choreography: Perrot), *Les Elfes* (Première: 11 August 1856, libretto: Saint-Georges, music: Gabrielli, choreography: Mazilier), *La Source, ou Naila* (Première: 12 November 1866, libretto: Nuitter, music: Delibes and Minkous, choreography: Saint-Léon).

adjustment to different social classes and the respective ballroom events, and at the same time by being able to transgress in a virtuoso manner different levels of artistic-cultural action on the stage, in the ballroom and in the musical salon. Around the mid-19th century, with the beginning of the Second Empire those different classes were yet again clearly marked by the styles of dance. The Ballet pantomime *Coppélia, ou La Fille aux yeux d'émail* shows this very intriguingly: the character and national dances which were selected there[28] were formerly included in the urban dance cultures as dances of ethnic origin before they were stylised for the stage because of their widespread impact in the cities and due to the course of the urbanization of the theatre. Now they advanced to an art form, which once more tried to firmly distinguish itself from other 'popular' forms of entertainment and thus achieved musical independence. From then on until shortly after the turn of the century the formerly danced reception of ballets via arrangements for the ballroom turns increasingly into 'suites' and 'fantaisies' (*concertantes*, *fantastiques* or *brillantes*),[29] which pointedly underline 'refined' musical demands of ballet compositions, at the same time trying to reveal the dance not only to the eyes but also to the ears. Despite those attempts at dissociation of ballet productions from popular forms of entertainment at the *Opéra*, the dance still has the task to mediate between different levels of artistic-cultural action in the theatre, the ballroom and the musical salon. At the same time it is meant to promote listening in a way that understands music generally as movement – even without being performed as dance or rather choreography: A (bodily) movement which one cannot necessarily see but hear and, above all, perceive kinaesthetically.

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28 Meant are the mazurka, czardas, boléro and gigue.

29 For *Coppélia* compare e.g.: the "Fantaisie concertante pour piano et violon" by Jules A. Garcin (Paris: Heu, 1872), the "Beautés de *Coppélia*: Deux suites pour piano à quatre mains" by Renaud de Vilbac (Paris, Heu, 1876/77), the "Fantaisie fantastique (Fantaisie slave) pour violon et piano" by Jules Herman (Paris, Ménestrel, 1884), the "Suites concertantes pour deux pianos à 4 mains" by Théodore Marie Lack (Paris, "Ménestrel, 1889) or the "Fantaisie mosaïque pour orchestre" by Emile Tavan (Paris, Heugel, 1906).

"Allemande" from the piano score: Paris, Léon Escudier [L.E. 2032], pp. 418f (also in following page)
For the orchestration compare the facsimile of the orchestra score, New York and London (Garland Publishing) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 620–645.

## 2. Air de Danse.

### Pas des Folies.

"Pas des folies" from the piano score: Paris, Léon Escudier [L.E. 2032], pp. 425ff. (also in following pages)
For the orchestration compare the facsimile of the orchestra score, New York and London (Garland Publishing) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 646–674.

### 3. Air de Danse.



"Menuet" from the piano score: Paris, Léon Escudier [L.E. 2032], p. 433ff. (also in following pages).
For the orchestration compare the facsimile of the orchestra score, New York and London (Garland Publishing) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 675–682.

## 4. Air de Danse.

"Galop" (excerpt) from the piano score: Paris, Léon Escudier [L.E. 2032], p. 442.
For the orchestration compare the facsimile of the orchestra score, New York and
London (Garland Publishing) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 706–732.

"Tralalala …" (excerpt) from the piano score: Paris, Brandus [B. et Cie. 8944], pp. 37f.
For the orchestration compare the score published by Brandus (B. et Cie. 8937), pp. 67–89.

# Through the Looking Glass: The Relationship Between Music and Dance in Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*

By Robert F. Waters

Composer Philip Glass is a central figure in American contemporary music. His early instrumental works reflect a trend known as "minimalism", which – like its visual arts counterpart – occupied a prominent aesthetic position beginning in the 1960s. But it is his operas and other stage works, beginning in the late 1970s – such as *Einstein on the Beach* – that have attracted widespread attention, works that include collaborations with notable figures such as stage director Robert Wilson, as well as dancer-choreographer Lucinda Childs.[1] Compositions such as these have helped place his work in a broader context and have attracted a wide audience from an unusually diverse array of followers, including opera lovers, classical musicians, music historians, music critics, rock musicians, the "downtown" New York art world (including painters, sculptors, and performance artists), dancers, and other constituencies. Glass's stage works often contain an interrelationship between theatre, dance, and music wherein all three forms are equally important. This is

[1] Lucinda Childs is an American postmodern dancer and choreographer whose compositions are known for their minimalistic movements. After opening her own dance company, The Lucinda Dance Company in 1973, Childs went on to collaborate with Robert Wilson and Philip Glass as performer and choreographer in *Einstein on the Beach*. Robert Wilson is an American avant-garde stage director, playwright, choreographer, performer, and sound and lighting designer.

apparent in Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, a stream-of-consciousness composition that suggests performance art, while alluding to Albert Einstein as the representative of the birth of the atomic age.[2] This hybrid theater-dance piece defies conventional narrative through non-sequential action and nonsensical behavior, and highlights visual and aural dissociation as a theatrical technique, through seemingly unrelated set design and ambiguous language.

*Einstein on the Beach* not only includes a symbiosis between theater and dance, but also contains a relationship between dance and other types of physical movement.[3] This is the result of Glass's collaboration with Robert Wilson as well as with dancer-choreographer Lucinda Childs, who both encouraged this type of dancing in their choreography. Andrew deGroat was the original dance choreographer in *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976, at a time when Glass and Wilson used amateurs in the production. DeGroat's choreography was intertwined with simple components, primarily running, jumping forwards and backwards, kneeling, and his trademark element: rapid virtuosic spinning; that is, movements that dancers could undertake naturally.[4]

Lucinda Childs replaced deGroat as choreographer in 1984, at which time she hired professional singers and a separate group of professional dancers. Glass and Wilson considered this undertaking, together with her formal and somewhat intellectualized approach to dance choreography, better suited to the music as well as the imagery. As someone who began her dance and choreography career in 1963 as a member of the New York based Judson Dance Theater, Childs initially danced to silence as well as to music, echoing Merce Cunningham's and John Cage's aesthetic, despite the fact that she did not share their evolving view that choreography and music should co-exist in the same performance as separate entities.[5] She also disagreed with Cage's and Cunningham's claim that linking dance steps to notes, phrases and melodies was becoming *passé*. Nonetheless, the collaboration between Cage and Cunningham led her and others to pursue music-dance hybrid compositions associated with reductive minimalism prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, replete with reduced instrumentation, drones, and repeated modules. And this is where *Einstein on the Beach* is often misunderstood, because although Glass's collaboration with Childs and Wilson led to a stage work that is often said by critics to result in movement and music designed independently, without any overt attempt to relate to each other, Keith Potter in *Four Musical Minimalists* has suggested that Glass's music helps sustain and build momentum for dancers, regardless of the fact that this occurs in subtle ways, which includes harmonic motion.[6] This begs the question: did Glass eventually come to the conclusion that theatrical dance is only sustainable if it is complemented by tonal motion, no matter how vague and intermittent? The answer is 'yes', but Glass's development in this regard began as early as *Einstein on the Beach*, not after, as has been alleged. Glass's tonal structure in *Einstein on the Beach* subsequently became a trademark: he explored key relationships and themes that formed montages, postponing harmonic resolution until the conclusion of sections.

[2] The former work was commissioned by the French government with its premiere at the Avignon Festival in France and this was followed that same year by performances in Venice, Belgrade, Brussels, Paris, Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam, which then resulted in two evenings at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1976. The Brooklyn Academy of Music had the work performed eight years later and the Stuttgart Stage Opera presented the work in 1989. The composition subsequently toured the United States, Asia, and Europe in 1992, and was delivered in September of 2012 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which was followed by an international tour. This work alludes to physicist Albert Einstein who developed his Theory of Relativity in 1905 when he observed that a large amount of energy could be released from a small amount of matter, which was expressed by the equation E=mc2 (energy = mass times the speed of light squared). The atomic bomb eventually illustrated this principle.

[3] This includes walking backwards and forwards, echoing "minimalist" choreographer Ann Halprin's innovations of incorporating into dance natural movements that human beings execute within their daily lives. This occurred in San Francisco in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

[4] This transpired in the original première of *Einstein on the Beach* in Avignon, France, in 1976.

[5] See Allen Fogelsanger, 'Dancing to the Music between Balanchine and Cunningham', *Cornell Dance Program Newsletter* (2000).

[6] Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), p. 339.

Confusion as to the relationship between music and dance in *Einstein on the Beach* arises from the fact that Cage's and Cunningham's dance works influenced Glass and Wilson in the latter two's disjunction or dissociation between language and stage design. Visual dissociation in this regard encourages audience members to consider the design of the production as separate from language, so the performance therefore becomes a relatively emotionally detached aesthetic experience. Visual and aural components related to stage movement are rarely doubled and are therefore placed on non-reinforcing tracks. Wilson's explanation of this suggests paradigms set by Cage:

> If you place a Baroque candelabra on a Baroque table, both get lost. You can't see either. If you place the candelabra on a rock in the ocean, you begin to see what it is. Usually in theatre the visual repeats the verbal. The visual takes second place to language. I don't think that way. For me the visual is not an afterthought, not an illustration of the text. It has equal importance. If it tells the same story as the words, why look? The visual must be so compelling that a deaf man would sit through the performance fascinated. Once in a while I let the visual align with the verbal, but usually not. Most directors begin by analyzing a text, and the visual follows from that interpretation. This naïve use of the visual code bores me. I always start with a visual form. In most theater the eye is irrelevant. Not in mine. I think with my eyes.[7]

Wilson's use of movement, architectural interest in geometric lines, and emotional distancing are points of interest he shares with Glass and are incorporated into *Einstein on the Beach*. Wilson requires actors to act not so much as traditional characters; Instead, they are figures engaged in physical activity.[8] This approach has persuaded some to criticize Wilson's aesthetic as cold and unemotional. His concept is to have little meaning attached to movement, where structure becomes important and behavior is emphasized rather than the psychological motivation behind the movement. Childs, who performed in *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976, was known to think of her role not as a character, but as a series of actions to perform, or as she stated, 'mechanical gestures pilots or computer engineers would use'.[9] In fact, Wilson has claimed that he needs actors who possess a good eye, excellent visual memory, and a body that can move effectively.[10] This approach is apparent in his audition process, where Wilson dances an elaborate movement sequence and then asks the actor to repeat it and most are unable to remember the entire progression. Only if the actor is able to successfully comply does Wilson then ask the actor to read a section from the play.[11] During rehearsals for *the CIVIL warS* (1984, a work partially composed by Glass), Thomas Derrah, who worked with Wilson on this project undertaken with the American Repertory Theatre, remarked:

> I didn't know much about Wilson except that he was *très* avant-garde. We were all waiting outside the rehearsal room […]. When I went in, he asked me to walk across the room on a count of 31, sit down on count 7, and put my hand to my forehead on a count of 59. I was mystified by the whole process. I didn't have a clue about what I was doing or why I was doing it. But I did it. As soon as I finished, he jumped up, clapped his hands, and shouted, 'Bravo. You're the first actor today who can count.' I left the room confused […]. But I was intrigued, and by the end of the rehearsal process, I loved his way of working. It's all about precision of movement. He demands meticulous attention to detail down to the angle of the fingers and the eyes.[12]

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[7] Arthur Holmberg, *The Theatre of Robert Wilson* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 53.
[8] *Ibid.*, p.14.

[9] *Ibid.*.
[10] *Ibid.*, p.136.
[11] *Ibid.*, p.136
[12] *Ibid.*, p.137.

In *Einstein on the Beach*, Wilson and Glass suppress links in the narrative chain through non-sequential action. Explanatory matter is also avoided, not just as a method of being enigmatic or incoherent, but also as a way of allowing audience members to interpret various movements in individual ways. Wilson's ideas surrounding movement are not only influenced by Cunningham, but also by the abstract dance works of choreographer George Balanchine, as it is Balanchine's aesthetic distance in specific pieces as well as Cunningham's particular modern dance sensibility that interests Wilson:

> When I arrived in New York in the early sixties to study architecture, I went to Broadway to see plays. I hated them and still do. I saw the work of George Balanchine and the New York City Ballet. I liked that very much and still do. The first major influence on my work was Balanchine's choreography. I was fascinated by his abstract ballets – no story, just the visual rhythms of bodies moving through space. I liked the architectural patterns. I even liked his story ballets because the performers maintained a distance. The best dancers danced for themselves, not for the audience; their interpretations were for themselves. So the audience had more space to think about what it was experiencing [...] Later I saw the ballets of Merce Cunningham. I liked them very much and still do. They were abstract constructions of time and space.[13]

This so-called abstraction and architectural patterns that Wilson favors are combined with Glass's melodic contours and core motives, which are presented in all sections of the opera. It is true that the work is sometimes harmonically ambiguous, but part of the reason for this is that harmonic structures that appear pan-diatonic and at other times tonal are often in fact modal, particularly pentatonic modes that sometimes alternate with functional harmony; there is also a blend between functional harmonies and non-chordal sonorities. So at certain

13 *Ibid.*, p.133.

moments, Glass incorporates harmonic movement in *Einstein on the Beach*, illustrating a break with the rhythmically charged but harmonically static music that he composed in previous works with the exception of *Another Look at Harmony* and "Part Twelve" of *Music in Twelve Parts* (1974).[14] These works together with *Einstein on the Beach* illustrate not only the culmination of his earlier style in which he had accomplished all that he could within specific rhythmic paradigms, but also the genesis of harmonic movement. In his composition *Another Look at Harmony*, composed after *Music in Twelve Parts*, but before *Einstein on the Beach*, the evolution of material became the basis for an overall harmonic structure intrinsic to the music itself, but without harmonic language giving up the moment-to-moment content. *Einstein on the Beach*, on the other hand, often links harmonic structure directly to rhythmic structure, using rhythm as a basis from which to develop perceptible root movement. This is apparent in "Dance 1" and "Dance 2", the two formal dance interludes in *Einstein on the Beach* known as "Field Dances", which were originally choreographed by deGroat in 1976 and remade in their current form by Childs for a 1984 revival. What does make the Childs-Glass collaboration in "Dance 1" and "Dance 2" similar to that of Cage-Cunningham is in the foregrounding of movement while downplaying the persona of each individual through a lack of artifice, elusive narrative content, and the elimination of non-dance information, including plot, character, and situation.[15] "Dance 1", for example, contains three prominent harmonic pitches, which are D, A, and E. This outlines a tonal center of D minor, which helps sustain and build momentum for dancers by the consistent drive to D minor cadences. It's true that harmonic succession alternates between Dm7 and either Bb7, E7, or C7, and the added pitch of E to the Dm7 chord seems to create a conflicting tonal or modal center; but

14 The exception to this is in "Part Twelve" of *Music in Twelve Parts*, where he does include harmonic motion, although he employs it sparsely.
15 John Cage commented in 1944: 'Personality is a flimsy thing on which to build an art.' Quoted by Steve Reich, 'Notes on Music and Dance', *Ballet Review*, vol. 4, no. 5 (1973); reprinted in Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen, eds., *What is Dance?* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 337.

this pitch, in fact, solidifies key, since the added note is included in the dominant chord, which implies an alternation between tonic and dominant. This also occurs with the Bb7, Em7, and C7 chords.



Example 1. Philip Glass, *Einstein on the Beach* (London: Chester Music, 1976; 2nd ed., 2003) Dance 1

"Dance 1" unfolds within a single texture and contains a two-note motive of D-E, which eventually morphs into three separate pitches: D-E-F in a pattern of four: D-E-F-E. This can be observed by comparing Example 1 to Example 2. Another pattern coexisting with this one is

heard as an arpeggio in the treble register that is simultaneously sounded as an inversion within the bass line. This four-note grouping of three ascending pitches and one descending one is subsequently enlarged to include an additional pitch grouped into a pattern of six based on a Em7 chord. This occurs at the same time that the D-E pattern is enlarged to D-E-F(-E), as seen in Example 2.[16]



Example 2. Philip Glass, *Einstein on the Beach* (London: Chester Music, 1976; 2nd ed., 2003) Dance 1

[16] See Milos Raickovich, '*Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass: A Musical Analysis' (Ph.D. Dissertation, City of New York, 1994), p.46.

Childs often explores the pulse and harmonic succession in the music by her timing of the dance in relationship to these musical changes, and does this with much uniformity. Some critics, including Wendy Perron, have even claimed that Childs has sanitized deGroat's original choreography, the latter creating what had been described as eccentric and 'crazed', but containing more human contact than Child's dance routines.[17] Her work includes quicker movement with clearer diagrammatic and mathematical patterns; and this latter approach helps to foreground the rhythmic and harmonic motion within these sections. And more significantly, her choreography of these two dances serves a critical function in relationship to Wilson's stage choreography, occurring before the penultimate scene, when one witnesses the view from inside a spaceship where horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines included throughout the entire opera meld together in a switchboard of flashing lights. Child's "Field Dances" allude to these geometrical connections before this scene arrives.

DeGroat's choreography, used in the original 1976 international premiere in Avignon, evokes a completely different aesthetic. Although both Childs and deGroat employ 360 degree turns, deGroat's dancers spin without using balletic movement or ballet steps. Dancers often move with their arms straight up in the air while glancing at the ceiling, and at other moments, with arms folded close to their bodies. DeGroat's dancers often stop spinning altogether to engage in a variety of movements, including jogging in circles around a central spinner, or jumping up and down with their bodies immobile and arms by their sides. This latter gesture occurs either with the entire troupe, or at other moments, some jump while others simultaneously undertake seemingly dissimilar or incongruent movements; additional choreography by deGroat includes walking backwards and forwards. This aesthetic paralleled the work of Ann Halprin fifteen years earlier and illustrates the primary difference between deGroat's 1976 choreography and that

17 Wendy Perron, 'Einstein on the Beach: Less Eccentricity But Still Transporting', Dance Magazine (September, 2012).

of Childs a decade later: that is, her choreography is very structural and changes very little in order to echo similar movement within the music. She also employs movement more aligned with a type of post-modern classicism, which includes perpendicular and parallel lines. DeGroat, on the other hand, mixes various patterns in seemingly anarchic ways. His choreography now appears more casual and representative of 1960s and 1970s popular culture, while moving within circular lines. The dancing seems to disintegrate towards the end of each dance, while Child's choreography remains brisk throughout.





Example 3a. Philip Glass, *Einstein on the Beach*, "Dance 1", choreography by Lucinda Childs (2012). Photo by Sara Krulwich; Brian Seibert, 'An Opera's Real Story is Its Choreography', *New York Times* (September 17, 2012).

Example 3b. Philip Glass, *Einstein on the Beach*, "Dance 1", choreography by Andrew deGroat (1976).

Child's "Dance 1" also represents visual and aural relief within the stage work, as this section contains fast-paced energetic music with rapid dance movement, in contrast to the slow tempo and movement during much of *Einstein on the Beach*. In "Dance 1", dancers often perform traditional balletic dance movements while continually alternating their entries and exits from the left and right wings of the stage as each dancer quickly returns back to the stage. Dancers interweave in and out of sync with each other, while they perform *sauté arabesques*, *soutenu* turns, pirouettes, loping leaps, and *chassées*.[18]

"Dance 1" is dependent on various types of interrelationships which cover much space on stage. Dance movement appears repetitive but Child's choreography still maintains a definite feeling of purpose, which becomes the visual counterpart to Glass's musical loops. This continues for some time, as "Dance 1" unfolds for seventeen minutes. "Dance 2" largely contains the same music and dance movements as "Dance 1", but with even more abrupt movements, while lasting twenty minutes. In both dances, arms are held in fixed positions, and in "Dance 2", this is accompanied by Einstein playing ascending and descending scales on the violin. Ballet steps in both dances are traditionally delivered to provide a sense of artistic convention, and they help make repetition in the music more apparent. These dances, however, are danced more vigorously than in most traditional ballet in an overt attempt to emphasize pattern over nuanced emotional content.

Another moment in *Einstein on the Beach* where dance occurs is in "Train 1", when Childs initially improvised a movement based on walking diagonally backwards and forwards repetitively, often within irregular groupings, wherein Childs makes minor changes that reflects the subtle evolution within the music. This often includes walking forward for five steps and backwards for six or seven, while the arms remain in a fixed position. Although Childs was not the primary dance

choreographer in the premiere, she was one of the primary dancers, and did initially choreograph this section; the arrangement still exists today in its original form.

Glass has always had a pronounced interest in dance and *Einstein on the Beach* is an example of a stage work in which dance becomes not a divertissement, but an integral part of the process. This hybrid work represents an evolution in the operatic genre and reveals a musical world that appears different to those looking from the other side of the mirror's reflection. Many have stepped through this mirror to find an alternative world for a different millennium.

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[18] Marina Harss, 'Robert Wilson and Philip Glass-*Einstein on the Beach*-New York', *Dance Tabs* (September 25, 2012).

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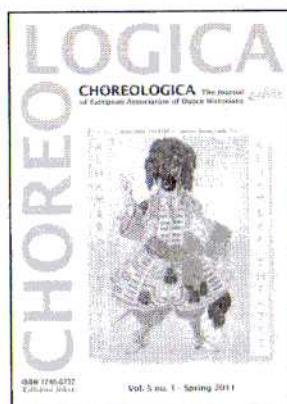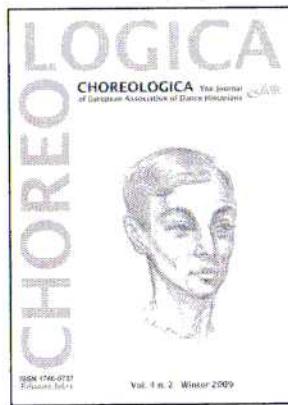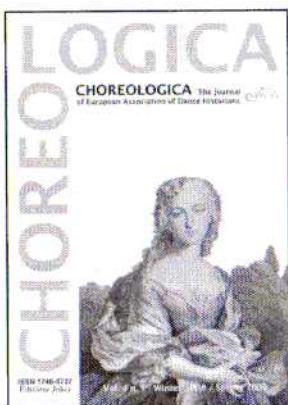
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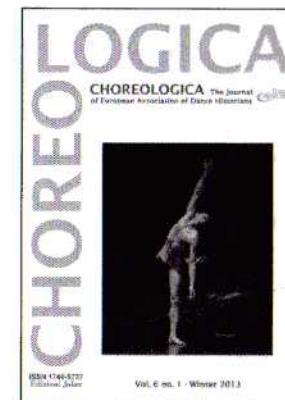
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