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NOVERRE'S *LETTRES SUR LA DANSE* THE INCLUSION OF DANCE AMONG THE IMITATIVE ARTS*

Foreword

Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets appeared in 1760 in Lyon and then in Stuttgart. It set the seal on Jean-Georges Noverre's professional achievements in Lyon, Marseilles, Strasbourg and at the Opéra-Comique in Paris (his time in London had been merely a parenthesis) and inaugurated a new period of activity in two major courts. The text was republished several times and also translated into various languages (see 'Appendix' at the end of the present essay). A reprint came out in Vienna in 1767, to mark the beginning of Noverre's employment in the Habsburg court; a second, slightly revised edition was published in 1783 in London and Paris. In 1803, in Saint Petersburg, Noverre brought out a new edition called *Lettres sur la danse, sur les ballets et les arts* which included a complete overview of his artistic achievements from his initial experiments (recorded in 15 letters dating from 1760) through to the creations of his maturity (20 new letters).[1] The following year, in 1804, he added a second volume (in two tomes) in which his theoretical writings were complemented with a miscellany of material, in part unpublished (23 letters) but also published (23 Programmes of the ballets and a project for a new auditorium for the Opéra de Paris dating from 1781). In producing this second volume he seems to have wished to back up his theoretical disquisitions with tangible evidence drawn from his artistic experience. This edition, slightly reduced by the omission of 13 Programmes, was republished as *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général et sur la danse en particulier* in 1807 to mark the recent death of his faithful disciple Dauberval, with a dedication to the Empress Joséphine. In it Noverre combined the letters dating from 1760 with those written forty years later, welding into an organic whole what in 1803 had constituted the dual perspective of an initial programme for his undertakings and some considerations on the outcome.[2]

In addition to the publications outlined above, Noverre compiled a dissertation, *Théorie et pratique de la danse simple et composée de l'art des ballets, de la musique, du costume et des décorations*, which he included in the second of the eleven volumes he presented in 1766 to King Stanislav August of Poland with a view to obtaining employment (see

* Translated by Mark Weir, Università di Napoli "L'Orientale".

[1] The 1760 edition is available in anastatic reprint Broude Brothers, New York, 1967. The first volume of the St Petersburg edition was recently published in facsimile edited by F. Pappacena, Lucca, LIM, 2011.

[2] The first of the 1760 letters, which opens with the lapidary phrase 'Poetry, painting and dancing, Sir, are, or should be, no other than a faithful likeness of beautiful nature', appears in the 1807 edition as the seventeenth in tome I, with the title *De la composition de Ballets*.

'Appendix' at the end of the present essay). It is a summary of his aesthetic credo, together with a series of previously unpublished annotations concerning costumes.

Noverre's Reform in the Context of Changing Taste in Mid-Eighteenth Century France

Although the 1803-04 and 1807 editions give a comprehensive account of the author's approach, with an overview of all his activity, it was the work he published in 1760 that left its mark on the history of dance. The numerous endorsements he received over the next few years showed that the time was indeed ripe for a major reform; both Louis de Cahusac and Diderot had recently remarked that dance had long been awaiting a man of genius, able to point the way.[3] Even in the hidebound milieu of the Opéra de Paris where, as Charles Burney was to remark, time seemed to have come to a standstill, there had been some signs of renewal, as Noverre was forced to recognise, following in the footsteps of Marmontel and Cahusac.[4] 'Danses épisodiques' had been introduced into operas and *opéras-ballets* in an attempt to contrast the irrelevance of the ballets to the action taking place on stage, reintegrating dance into the drama.[5] While such isolated episodes did not mark a fundamental change at the Opéra itself, for some time the Comédie-Italienne, the Comédie-Française and the Opéra-Comique – to speak only of the situation in Paris – had been in the throes of ferment, with innovatory proposals being advanced by Jean-Baptiste François De Hesse, Pietro Sodi, Antoine Pitrot and Jean-Baptiste Hus.[6] These proposals aimed at the gradual stylisation of the pantomime deriving from the

[3] See Louis de Cahusac, *La danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse*, La Haye, Jean Neaulme, 1754, II, Book IV, chap. VII, p. 235 (repub. ed. by N. Lecomte, L. Naudeix and J.-N. Laurenti, Paris, Desjonquères/Centre National de la Danse, 2004). See also Denis Diderot, *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel* (1757), in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by J. Assézat, Paris, Garnier, 1875-1877, t. VII, p. 157.

[4] Cf. Charles Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy, or the journal of a tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for a general History of Music*, London, T. Becket and Co., 1773, pp. 28-36.

[5] In the article 'Pantomime' deals above all with the integration of dance into opera and cites as successful examples Le Ballet des Bergers in the opera *Roland*, Le Ballet des armes d'Énée in *Lavinie*, and in the same opera Le Ballet des Bachantes, Le Ballet de la Rose in *Les Indes galantes*, Le Ballet des Lutteurs for the funeral of Castor (see Jean-François Marmontel, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Née de La Rochelle, 1787, tt. V-X, *Éléments de Litterature*; repub. ed. by S. Le Ménahèze, Paris, Desjonquères, 2005, p. 844). As specimens of 'danse épisodique' integrated in the action Cahusac cites l'*enchantement* of the false Oriane in *Amadis*; the Passacaille included by Marie Sallé in *L'Europe galante*; Le Pas des Lutteurs in *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* (see Louis de Cahusac, *La danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse*, II, Book IV, chap. 11, pp. 235-238). Noverre in Letter VII (1760) cites *l'Acte des Fleurs*, the act of *Eglé* in *Les Talents lyriques*, the Prologue to *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*; the Turkish act in the old *opéra-ballet L'Europe galante* and 'one act among many from *Castor et Pollux*' (1760, Letter VII, p. 126; Beaumont, p. 54). This, like the following citations of the 1760 text, comes from the translation made by Cyril W. Beaumont, published in London in 1930 and frequently reprinted. The volume contains the 15 letters of 1760 but in the corrected, integrated version of 1803 (volume I, tome II). The page numbers refer to the reprint of 1968 (see 'Appendix' at the of the present essay).

[6] On this topic see in particular: Claude and François Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 7 vols., Paris, Rozet, 1767-1770 (facsimile Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1967), and M. H. Winter, *The Pre-Romantic Ballet*, London, Pitman, 1974.

commedia dell'arte and attributed new importance to the *ballets à tableaux*.[7] In the years 1754-1758 Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni was doing something along these lines in the *Spectacles* he put on in the Salle des Machines at the Tuileries, although both his aims and means were rather different.[8] Not only did dance not play a large part in the activities of these three major Parisian theatres, but above all the typology of the ballets put on and the lack of any real critical reflection concerning them ruled out the possibility of these experiences taking root and developing properly. In Vienna, for example, conditions were very different, and Franz Anton Hilverding had been able to take full advantage of them. To judge by the comments and information contained in contemporary accounts and reviews, we can surmise that, although they were different in kind, such operations bear the mark of an aesthetic orientation which was subject to a range of influences. A movement in favour of classicist restoration was gradually making headway, thanks to the rejection of the Rococò aesthetic and the rediscovery of the theatre of antiquity, and this surely exerted a predominant effect.[9]

During the first phase of Noverre's professional activity, at the Lyon Opéra and the Opéra-Comique, calls for innovation in the world of dance echoed aesthetic developments in the various domains of culture. In the 1750s he effectively produced two types of ballet in about equal measure: the first type (*Les Fêtes chinoises, Les Réjouissances flamandes*, *Mariée du Village*, *Fêtes de Vauxhall*, *Recrues prussiennes*, *Bal paré*) were short, virtually plot-less compositions based on the *chinoiseries* then in vogue, the Flemish *bambochades* or the *ballets* staged at the Opéra-Comique. They display that taste for Rococò which imbued all the literary, musical and visual culture in the first half of the century: ballets comprised a succession of set pieces that exploited

[7] On pantomimes and Italian dances deriving from the *commedia dell'arte* see Gregorio Lambranzi, *Neue und curieuse theatrialische Tantz-Schul*, Nürnberg, Johann Jacob Wolrab, 1716. The text, which contains 101 copperplate engravings by Johann Georg Puschner, gives an insight into the Italian actor's activity in the major theatres in Germany, Italy and France (*New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, trans. by Derra de Moroda, ed. by C. W. Beaumont, London, The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 1928; facsimile New York, Dance Horizons, 1972).

[8] We can deduce that Noverre knew Servandoni's productions from the reference in Letter VI (1760) to the *Forêt enchantée* created in 1754 with music by Francesco Saverio Geminiani. On Servandoni's productions in the Salle de Machines in the Tuileries see M. Sajoux d'Oria, 'L'expérience de Servandoni dans la Salle de Machines de Tuileries', in M. Fazio and P. Frantz (eds.), *La fabrique du théâtre. Avant la mise en scène*, Paris, Desjonquères, 2010, pp. 321-331.

[9] We should not forget the experiences of François Prévost and Claude Ballon at the court of Sceaux (Grandes Nuits, 1714), described by Jean-Baptiste Dubos, and the experiments carried out in 1717 and 1718 by John Weaver at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, respectively *The Loves of Mars and Venus* and *The Fable of Orpheus and Eurydice*. These are isolated but significant examples of a new attention to antiquity. The classicist restoration became a widespread trend from mid-century, when a combination of circumstances brought classical art into the limelight. The first reports of excavations at Herculaneum (begun in 1738) and Pompeii (1748), and the *mode à la grecque* they ushered in, had a considerable influence on the world of dance. Other occurrences in the 1750s and 1760s to have a significant effect on dance were Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (which appeared in a French translation within a year of its publication in Dresden in 1755) and the numerous essays published in the *Encyclopédie* by Louis de Jaucourt and Claude-Henri Watelet.

extravagant effects and a picturesque 'beau désordre'[10] catering exclusively 'to amusing the eye'.[11] Whereas in his description of the "grand" genre (*La Mort d'Ajax*, *Le Jugement de Paris*, *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, *Renaud et Armide*) we can recognise a certain affinity with the *Spectacles* put on by Servandoni at the Tuileries, but with greater emphasis on gesture and an unequivocally hedonistic interpretation of the episodes from antiquity.

Although in staging *Les Réjouissances flamandes* for the Opéra-Comique in 1755 Noverre had investigated the possibility of combining dance and action, it was not until he returned to London, where he met Garrick on numerous occasions in the period 1755-57, that he began to undertake more complex compositions and experiment with a narrative structure, drawing on contemporary literary and theatrical productions. Following *Les Caprices de Galathée* (1757), in *La Toilette de Vénus ou les Ruses de l'Amour* (also 1757) Noverre eliminated the use of masks and made changes in the conventions concerning costume, going on in first *Les Jalousies ou les Fêtes du Sérail* (1758) and then *L'Amour corsaire ou L'Embarquement pour Cythère* (1758-59) to develop the use of colour and the concatenation of the different scenes, while making the repertoire of gesture decidedly more dramatic. In the midst of this particularly creative spell he felt confident enough to launch the idea of transposing the literary masterpieces of Diderot, Molière, Racine and Crébillon into ballets, and indeed took a first, prudent step with *Le Jaloux sans rival* (1759) in which a plot of his own invention was embellished with key moments from Voltaire's *Mahomet*, Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*, Molière's *Le Dépit Amoureux* and *Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur*, Racine's *Andromaque* and Crébillon's *Rhadamiste et Zénobie*.[12] This was the first step towards the transposition of the great episodes of tragedy (involving *Jason et Médée*, *Hypermnestre ou les Danaides*, *La Mort d'Agamemnon*, *Les Horaces et les Curiaces*) into ballets, which was to occupy much of his energy during his employment in the courts of Stuttgart and Vienna.

It is clear from what Noverre himself states in the *Lettres* that he deliberately distanced himself from the new type of Italian mimed comedy, preferring to concentrate on what he variously referred to as *tableaux vivants*, *tableaux en mouvement* or *tableaux en situation*. His rejection of the elaborate conventional gesturing of the Italians derived not only from the training he had received in academic dance[13] and

[10] The "beau désordre" was a fundamental aesthetic principle in classicist art, independent from the trends in taste. Extolled by Nicolas Boileau in his *Art poétique*, in the rococò movement it became the tool with which the 'moderns' expressed their antagonism towards the classicist integralism inherited from the tradition deriving from Poussin and reaffirmed by the party of the 'antiquistes', champions of symmetry and order.

[11] 1760, Letter XIV, p. 402; Beaumont, p. 144.

[12] The first quadro was inspired by Diderot, the scene of the attempted stabbing was inspired by Voltaire's *Mahomet* – probably in the wake of Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*. The scene of resentment, with the torn up letters and portraits returned in contempt, was taken, according to Noverre, from Molière's *Le Dépit Amoreux*, while the latter's *Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur* was the model for the reconciliation between Fernand and Ines. The anger, fury and dejection of Fernand were based on the drama of Oreste in Racine's *Andromaque*, while the final recognition scene came from *Rhadamiste et Zénobie* by Crébillon.

[13] Noverre owed his first experiences of academic dance to Jean Denis Dupré, Louis Dupré, François Marcel, Jean-Barthélemy Lany and Marie Sallé. For an updated chronology of Noverre's activity see S. Dahms, *Der konservative Revolutionär. Jean Georges Noverre und die Ballettreform des 18. Jahrhunderts*, München, Epodium, 2010.

an education grounded in classical culture but also from his interest in the aesthetic developments currently under way in the theatre, in which a re-evaluation of the body's communicative potential played a key conceptual role.[14] As a rule Noverre liked to parade the names of Garrick, Cahusac, Diderot, or the of such artists as Carle Vanloo, François Boucher and David Teniers le Jeune in order to assert the high cultural standing, but also the originality, of his proposals. On the contrary he was very reticent when it came to naming authors he was indebted to, but the *Lettres* are full of references to the aesthetic debate being conducted in these years by encyclopaedists such as Marmontel and Voltaire as well as Diderot and Cahusac. One can also recognise, albeit indirectly, the influence of Charles Batteux's fundamental *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe*, in which dance was included among the imitative arts and the aesthetic notion of mimesis was codified as an expression of the sentiments.[15]

While Noverre undoubtedly took Garrick as his model in proclaiming the importance of the actor's self-identification and ensuring the emotional involvement of the spectator, it is surely not far-fetched to attribute a substantial influence also to French drama. Several of the observations he makes refer to the style of acting favoured by Lekain and to the innovations concerning costume introduced by the operatic singer Chassé and M.lle Clairon as well as Lekain. Likewise there are numerous passages which allude to the emotionalist theory propounded by Luigi Riccoboni and Rémond de Sainte-Albine,[16] and expressions which are indebted to Jean-François Marmontel's comments on the article 'La Déclamation théâtrale' published in 1754 in the *Encyclopédie*.[17] Nor can it be a mere coincidence if we come across an expression such as 'the canvas seems to breathe', or the analogy between a ballet perceived as a sequence of set pieces and the series of paintings done by Rubens to adorn the Gallery in the Palais de Luxembourg depicting the life of Maria de' Medici. The same expression occurs in both Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien* and Cahusac's *La danse ancienne et moderne*, while the analogy is used in the articles dealing with 'Genre' and 'Galerie (Peinture)' written by Claude-Henri Watelet which featured in the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie* published in 1757.[18] Nonetheless the primary sources for Noverre are undoubtedly the theoretical writings produced by Diderot in the years 1757-58 and the above-mentioned text by

[14] See the importance Diderot attributed to expressive gesture and pantomime in *Lettre sur les sourds et les muets* (Paris, 1751), and *De la Poésie dramatique* (1758), in *Œuvres complètes*, t. I, pp. 343-394 and t. VII, pp. 377-387.

[15] Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe*, Paris, Durand, 1746.

[16] Cf. Luigi Riccoboni, *Dell'Arte rappresentativa*, Londra, 1728 (facsimile Sala bolognese, Arnaldo Forni, 1979) and *Pensées sur la Déclamation*, Paris, Briasson, 1738 (reprinted in O. Aslan, *L'Art du Théâtre*, Paris, Seghers, 1963). Cf. also Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, *Le Comédien*, Paris, Desaint et Saillant et Vincent fils**,** 1747 (facsimile Genève, Slatkine Reprints, 1971).

[17] Jean-François Marmontel, 'Déclamation théâtrale', in Denis Diderot and Jean-Baptiste Le Rond d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des Arts et des Métiers*, Paris, Briasson; David; Le Breton; Durand, 1751-80, IV (1754), p. 680 (facsmile Stuttgart; Bad Cannstatt, F. Frommann, 1967). The essay was republished by Marmontel in *Éléments de Littérature*, pp. 337-352. See also the article 'Décoration', pp. 352-355.

[18] See Louis de Cahusac, *La danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse*, II, Book IV, chap. VII, p. 231. See also the entry 'Enthousiasme' published by Cahusac in the *Encyclopédie*, V (1755), p. 719.

Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, published in 1754, together with the subsequent article 'Geste', also published in the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie*.[19]

In spite of the difference between Noverre's proposal for the "ballet en action" and Diderot's reflections on opera, we can recognise the influence of the latter in Noverre's rejection of academic convention, and also in the numerous comparisons he draws between theatrical productions and painting.[20] These include the way in which a succession of dramatic actions is likened to a sequence of canvases; the construction of a set piece, with the figures on stage being moulded into an organic whole and the visual impact of the various scenes being deliberately exploited; or again the importance attributed to gesture, and the possibility of interaction between painter and actor. Furthermore, in the *Troisième Entretien* of *Le Fils naturel* we have the case of a ballet being presented in total autonomy, complete with its acts and scenes.

Turning to Cahusac, his influence can be recognised in the way in which the ballet is conceived and structured, and also in the preparation required of choreographers. Like Noverre in the *Lettres*, Cahusac viewed dance as an autonomous art form, playing its part in the all-inclusive spectacle of opera in which the different languages of the performing arts are brought together. He maintained that "danse en action" should be based on a story divided up into acts and scenes, mirroring the theatrical structure of exposition, intrigue and dénouement, drawing whenever possible on a *pièce dramatique*. Taking pantomime as the language of the passions and referring to the nature of drama in antiquity, Cahusac believed that dance can legitimately take its place among the imitative arts, alongside poetry, music and above all painting. With respect to the latter Cahusac emphasised the analogies as well as the indisputable superiority of dance: whereas painting can only express itself in a single moment, theatrical dance can depict situations in successive moments. By progressing swiftly from one *tableau* to another, dance brings a narrative to life; what in painting is merely imitated is made real in dance. When it comes to the preparation required of a *maître de ballets* (choreographer), a text by Lucian of Samosata on dance clearly influenced Noverre.[21] Both he and Cahusac liken the choreographer to an apprentice painter, endowed with a range of knowledge that has to embrace several specialities, so that he possesses a global vision of the ballet.

Finally, when it comes to the principles of painting, in the *Lettres* we can identify not only a familiarity with both artists (he worked with François Boucher at the Opéra-Comique and formed a friendship with Sir Joshua Reynolds during his second visit to England) and art collections but also a knowledge – which may or may not also have been acquired at first-hand – of the theoretical literature, ranging from Leonardo da Vinci to the more recent Charles-Alphonse du Fresnoy, as related by Roger de Piles, and Félibien, numerous passages from whom featured in the articles of the *Encyclopédie*. The allusion Noverre makes in Letter VII to a dance as a beautiful inanimate creature requiring only the influence of genius to bring it to life testifies to

[19] See Denis Diderot, *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel* (1757), *Réponse à la lettre de Mme Riccoboni* (1758), *De la Poésie dramatique* (1758), in *Œuvres complètes*, t. VII, pp. 85-168, pp. 397-409 and pp. 377-387.

[20] Dance is discussed in the third of the *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel*. In the same *Entretien* Diderot denounces the recourse to allegories and personifications in opera as going against the imitation of nature, although they were to be fundamental in Noverre's ballets.

[21] Lucian of Samosata, *De saltatione*, a French translation had recently appeared in 1664 by N. Perrot and S. d'Ablancourt.

a multiplicity of influences, pointing to the fact that while his proposals for reform were undoubtedly courageous, they were neither unrealistic nor indeed ahead of his times.

The Art of the Actor-Dancer

There is no doubt that the volume published in 1760 embraces a very wide range of interests, but Noverre's overall aesthetic conception can only be assessed in terms of his whole output, from his initial goals and early attempts through to his final considerations. Thus we shall examine the first edition of the *Lettres* alongside the various comments, developments and corrections which he included in the 1803 edition and in the Forewords to the Programmes published in 1804 in the second volume of the *Lettres*.

In the 1760 volume Noverre takes issue with the abstract geometry of academic ballets which featured a symmetry and order based on the obsolete insistence on classical unity still upheld by the Opéra de Paris, on one hand, and on the celebration of pantomime in ancient drama, on the other. This dual reaction lay behind his approach which, as we have seen, adhered to the predominant aesthetic orientation of French culture in mid-century. In fact the principle of the affinities between the arts and the recognition of dance as one of the imitative arts constitute a crucial conceptual assumption in Noverre's theorising. Not for nothing does the first letter begin with an Aristotelian maxim, adopted from Cahusac: 'Poetry, painting and dancing, Sir, are, or should be, no other than a faithful likeness of beautiful nature'.[22] In what follows on this opening page, as in numerous passages throughout the text, it is clear that Noverre is bent on affirming the unreserved integration of dance into the Aristotelian framework of the imitative arts. At the same time, however, in common with many other commentators, he cannot avoid the temptation to establish a sort of hierarchy, for fear that dance will be assigned a position of subordination. Starting from Horace's dictum *ut pictura poesis*, or rather from the adaptation proposed by Plutarch in the *Symposiacs*, he cannot avoid referring to the weakness of "danse en action" as a newly established form of performance, while at the same time extolling some indubitable qualities which highlight the pre-eminence of the art of gesture in terms of immediacy and potential for communication.[23] In this perspective he readily introduced, duly adapted to dance, the discussion on the superiority of one art with respect to another which during the Renaissance had involved artists and theoreticians including Leonardo da Vinci in the battle to secure the inclusion of painting among the liberal arts. But the different viewpoints from which Noverre approaches the question (dance, pantomime, ballet) lead him to make a series of considerations. In what seems almost an evocation of the joyful ring-dance of the Muses in Mantegna's *Parnaso*, he extols the fraternal kinship of dance with poetry, painting and music, only to go on to point out some features which raise it above its sister arts. The absence of verbal content avoids the risk of linguistic

[22] 1760, Letter I, p. 1; Beaumont, p. 9.

[23] 'According to Plutarch, a ballet is a conversation in dumb show, a speaking and animated picture which expresses all in terms of movement, groups and gestures'. 1760, Letter VII, p. 120; Beaumont, p. 52. The affinity between painting and poetry was first explored by the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (sixth century BCE), later by Horace in *Ars poetica*, 361, and Plutarch in *Symposiacs*, IX,15.

incomprehension, and indeed Cahusac (and Leonardo da Vinci before him) had argued for the greater efficacy of gesture as opposed to words. Noverre, after several discussions on the topic and in the light of his experience in Stuttgart and Vienna, concluded in 1803:

> There are, undoubtedly, a great many things which pantomime can only indicate, but in regard to the passions there is a degree of expression to which words cannot attain or rather there are passions for which no words exist. Then dancing allied with action triumphs. A *pas*, a gesture, a movement, and an attitude express what no words can say; the more violent the sentiments it is required to depict, the less able is one to find words to express them. Exclamations, which are the apex to which the language of passions can reach, become insufficient, and have to be replaced by gesture.[24]

This communicative ability, Noverre maintained, confers on the gesture the value of a universal language which can be understood by all peoples because it is the language of feeling, while its immediacy makes it comparable to painting. Nonetheless, dance has a claim to superiority over painting because, as Noverre pointed out following Cahusac, it can reproduce on stage expressive moments which painting can only capture in a single instant. He praised the ability of the dancer to bring a scene to life, and concluded by saying that while painting can be compared to a static pantomime which speaks, inspires and moves by means of a perfect imitation of nature, ballet seduces and entrances thanks to an authentic expression of nature itself.[25] However, he added, it is not a matter of a pedantic reproduction of nature, which would risk giving a mean, imperfect depiction, but rather of an imitation able to correct defects and bestow on nature the grace and allure which make it truly beautiful. Noverre considered Garrick a past master in this respect because, although he had introduced a "natural" acting style, he had never lapsed into a prosaic reproduction of reality:

> Do not think that this great actor was common, trivial and caricaturist; a faithful worshipper of nature, he knew the value of selection, he preserved that sense of propriety which the stage requires even in the parts least susceptible of grace and charm. He never over-acted or under-acted a character which he represented; he gave just that exact interpretation which other actors nearly always miss.[26]

This is clearly a classicistic conception of the actor's role, which corresponds both to the idealising mimesis he took as the founding principle of the art of dancing and to the tragic genre, which he considered to be the most suitable when it came to transposing a play into a ballet. It follows from this that, if the passions are to be explored in all their nuances and degrees of intensity, it is educated people, not the populace, who have to be the subject of the representation. The summary

[24] Noverre's Avant-Propos to 1803 edition of *Lettres* (see 'Appendix' at the end of the present essay), p. vii; Beaumont, p. 4.
[25] See note 18. The ability to bring a representation to life on stage was also remarked by Rémond de Sainte-Albine, Marmontel and Diderot in comparing painting and drama.
[26] 1760, Letter IX, p. 211; Beaumont, p. 83.

expressiveness and schematic gestures of a labourer are set against the complexity of attitudes in the educated person which conceal interior reflections and contrasts.[27]

> The rude rustic can only afford a single gesture to the painter since, in his search for vengeance, he gains from its accomplishment but a low and worthless satisfaction. The man of breeding can, on the contrary, provide the painter with a multitude of pictures; he expresses his passion and distress in a hundred different ways and always with both vigour and nobility.[28]

And if the actor in a play can never be permitted to show anything other than a noble, dignified conduct, it is all the more essential for the gestures of a dancer to reflect that 'exquisite elegance' which marks the elevated tone of the character's sentiments and education, and at the same time reveals the sound technical and artistic schooling of the interpreter.

The idealising imitation of nature, and hence the 'correction' of the imperfections inherent in any natural phenomenon, conceals the genuine difficulty of improving nature without distorting it, but also of not allowing the composer's corrective intervention to transpire, thereby destroying the illusion.[29] In this context too it is quite clear how much Noverre owed to the emotionalist theory propounded by Luigi Riccoboni, Rémond de Sainte-Albine and subsequently by Marmontel. In common with all three he required the actor to identify himself in the character, and for Noverre this also required a profound emotional involvement of the spectator, with, as he wrote in Letter VIII, emotion preceding critical reflection: 'Does the spectator put himself in the actor's place, if the latter do not take that of the hero he portrays? Can he hope to move and cause tears to flow, if he do not shed them himself?'.[30]

The performances of Lekain, Dumesnil and Clairon had shown Noverre the highest achievements of which French tragic acting was capable. He duly relates with considerable pride Garrick's praise for Lekain, hailed as the creator of the art of declamation in France, the latter-day Roscius, an artist of rare finesse who had succeeded in reaching autonomously, 'le génie de son art', 'une perfection vraiment divine'.[31] In more than one passage in the *Lettres* one can recognise Noverre's debt to Lekain, although he draws above all on Garrick in creating his language of gesture and attributing to his use of mime such an intense dramatic force that he succeeds in penetrating the very soul of the spectator.[32] Garrick fascinated him for the lifelikeness, immediacy and perfection of his gestures, and for his ability to identify

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[27] One of the outcomes of the reflection and inner contrasts in men's behaviour (e.g. Jason, Renaud, Aristée) is indecision, and it is not difficult to recognise the influence of Henri in the 9th canto of Voltaire's *Henriade*.

[28] 1760, Letter VI, pp. 87-88; Beaumont, p. 41.

[29] See Letters II and VI (1760). The importance of concealing interventions and artifices was also emphasised by nineteenth-century choreographers. See the comment cited by Carlo Blasis in 1820 – 'Nothing is more harmful or troubling to the listener than to let on to what art has been employed in feigning' 'E niente è più nocivo, e più molesto/All'uditor, che il far conoscer l'Arte/In ciò che d'essere finto è manifesto' – from Luigi Riccoboni's *Dell'Arte rappresentativa* (*Traité élémentaire théorique et pratique de l'Art de la danse*, Milan, Joseph Beati et Antoine Tenenti, 1820; facsimile Bologna, Forni, 1969, p. 28, note 1).

[30] 1760, Letter X, p. 287; Beaumont, pp. 107-108. On Lekain, Clairon and Dusmenil see in particular Letter IX.

[31] 1803, t. II, Letter XVIII, p. 197.

[32] See in particular Letters VIII, IX and XV (1760).

with the most wide-ranging characters while suppressing his own personality ('The change once effected, the actor disappeared and the hero was revealed').[33]

> Mr Garrick, the celebrated English actor, is the model I wish to put forward. Not only is he the most handsome, the most perfect and the most worthy of admiration of all actors, he may be regarded as the Proteus of our own time. […] He was so natural, his expression was so lifelike, his gestures, features and glances were so eloquent and so convincing, that he made the action clear even to those who did not understand a word of English. It was easy to follow his meaning; his pathos was touching; in tragedy he terrified with the successive movements with which he represented the most violent passions. And, if I may so express myself, he lacerated the spectator's feelings, tore his heart, pierced his soul, and made him shed tears of blood.[34]

The various iconographic sources available make much of the expressivity of Garrick's body, arms and hands, but Noverre chooses to focus on the expressive force of his face and eyes. The insistence on this specific aspect is not simply another stroke in his campaign against the masks worn by dancers in the academic ballets. Facial expression was an essential counterpart to verbal expression in Garrick's performances, but as can be seen in the famous portrait of him as Richard III painted by Hogarth in 1745, the eyes and hands played a crucial role. In 1803 Noverre recalled the importance which Garrick himself attributed to the arms, hands and even the fingers ('tongues which can speak' as he described them, adopting an expression of Garrick's). But if in 1760 Noverre extolled the expressive function of the face, the 'faithful interpreter' of mime,[35] in 1803 he insisted on the crucial role of the eyes:

> this variety and mobility would be imperfect if the eyes did not add the mark of truth and likeness; I can compare them to two torches, designed to light up the features and bathe them in that light and shade which will give them distinction and significance. Without the eyes there can be no expression, no truth, no effect.[36]

If we merely go on what Noverre had to say about gesture in the *Lettres*, we risk forming only a partial picture of his conception of the art of mime. Other iconographic and literary sources make clear – whether directly or indirectly – to what an extent the torso of the protagonists in Noverre's ballets was involved in the movement of the whole body, albeit within the limits imposed by the social status of the character, the event and the need to respect the aesthetic canons of classical art. We can refer to the figures illustrated by Louis-René Boquet, who collaborated closely with Noverre over such a long period that he must surely have assimilated the

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[33] 1760, Letter IX, p. 213; Beaumont, p. 83.

[34] Ibid., pp. 209-210; Beaumont, p. 82. There is also a detailed description of Garrick in the letter Noverre wrote to Voltaire in 1763 published in tome II of the 1803 edition (Letters XVIII and XIX).

[35] 'The face is the vehicle of the mimic scene, the faithful interpreter of all the movements in pantomime'. Ibid., pp. 196-197; Beaumont, p. 78.

[36] 'cette variété et cette mobilité seroit imparfaite, si les yeux n'y ajoutoient pas le signe de la vérité, et de la ressemblance; je les comparerais à deux flambeaux faits pour éclairer tous le traits, et y répandre ce clair-obscur qui les distingue, et les fait valoir. Sans les yeux point d'expression, point de vérité, point d'effet'. 1803, t. II, Letter VIII, p. 84. On the importance attributed to the face and the inappropriacy of masks, Noverre agreed with Cahusac: see the article 'Geste', published in 1757 (in *Encyclopédie*, VII, p. 651).

latter's style, achieving great expressiveness in his illustrations. In some of the figures which Noverre presented in 1791 to Gustav III of Sweden (meaning that they must date from the 1780s), the body is invariably leaning away from the perpendicular, either to accompany the impetus of an arm movement or a stride, or as a bodily reaction to a profound sensation (such as repulsion or rejection).[37] Even when the torso remains in a vertical position the overall posture is very intense, as can be seen in the charismatic Horace, the statuary Achilles or the rapt Agamemnon, seen putting a finger to his lips.[38] In general all the bodily attitudes of the characters depicted by Boquet in the 1791 collection bear witness to Noverre's quest for inspiration in drama and in old masters featuring historical, mythological or pastoral subjects. One gains the same impression from the pictures illustrating the title pages of the manuscript Programmes included in the eleven volumes produced in 1766. Thus for example in the picture adorning the title page of *Hypermnestre*, the artist has depicted the scene of the Danaides' slaughter of their husbands trying to render – albeit within the conventions of official art – the crude realism and horror duly recorded in contemporary accounts of Noverre's production, which he himself recalled with pride in Letter XVI (1803).[39] In fact crude realism was a peculiar trait of Noverre's style in which one can recognise not only the influence of Garrick and the acting style of Lekain but also the predilection for horror in the dramas of Crébillon and Voltaire (in *Mahomet* the latter has Séide kill his father in front of all the bystanders, just as Noverre has Médée slay her two children on stage). Then again there is a clear resemblance, certainly more than either an isolated episode or mere coincidence, between the expression 'Death is shown in their features, their eyes are almost closed, bristling hair reveals their terror'[40] which Noverre uses of the two protagonists (Clairville and Constance) in *L'Amour corsaire ou L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, and the way in which Noverre describes Lekain in Voltaire's *Sémiramis* as the actor re-emerges from the tomb of Ninus 'with turned-up sleeves, bloody arms, bristling hair and staring eyes'.[41] Nor indeed should we forget the dramatic moment in which Hypermnestre is seen scrabbling in the dirt and desiring the earth to open up again which, although it dates from 1803, is very similar to the account he gave of a performance by Garrick in Letter IX (1760).[42]

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[37] The two volumes presented by Noverre to the King of Sweden are conserved in the Royal Library of Sweden. The Foreword to tome I containing the Programmes of the ballets bears the date January 20, 1791 but not the dates when the ballets illustrated took place, so our dating is merely indicative.

[38] Also in the collection presented in 1766 by Noverre to Stanislav II August of Poland (conserved in the University of Warsaw Library) there are figurines to whom Boquet has given an expressive trait in keeping with the costume depicted. "Hypermnestre en habit de victime", in the eighth of the 11 volumes (no. 8), is shown with her hair hanging loose on the shoulders and wearing a simplified costume like a tunic, while the body is bent over on itself, as if spent.

[39] On this topic see in particular: L. Tozzi, *Il balletto pantomimo del Settecento. Gaspare Angiolini*, L'Aquila, Japadre, 1972; K. Kuzmick Hansell, 'Il ballo teatrale e l'opera italiana', in L. Bianconi and G. Pestelli (eds.), *Storia dell'opera italiana*, Milano, EDT Musica, 1988, V, *La spettacolarità*, pp. 175-306; J. Sasportes, 'Noverre in Italia', *La danza italiana*, no. 2 (Spring, 1985), 39-66; J. Sasportes, 'Introduzione alla danza a Venezia nel Settecento', *La danza italiana*, nos. 5/6 (Autumn, 1987), 5-16; J. Sasportes, 'Due nuove lettere sulla controversia tra Noverre e Angiolini', *La danza italiana*, no. 7 (Spring, 1989), 51-77; C. Lombardi (ed.), *Il ballo pantomimo: lettere, saggi e libelli sulla danza (1773-1785)*, Torino, Paravia, 1998.

[40] 1760, Letter XV, p. 439; Beaumont, p. 156.

[41] 1760, Letter VIII, p. 189; Beaumont, p. 75.

[42] 1803, t. II, Letter XVI, p. 163. The scene depicts the moment when Hypermnestra appears, sees the Danaides thrown into Hades and runs to the gaping chasm only to find it closed against her.

But if, as he wrote to Voltaire in 1763, in Garrick's productions the gestures of the dancer/actor are eloquent because, rather than being studied in front of the mirror, they spring from the passions, are moulded by feeling and coloured by veracity; if the action in dance (as in mime) is the art of conveying sentiments and passions to spectators by means of the actor's authentic movements, gestures and face, how can a gesture, as swift and spontaneous as a dart loosed from the soul, be subjected to rules? Can rules be imposed on mimicry? Should not gestures issue from the actor's being and be the faithful interpreters of his impulses? Like Diderot and Marmontel before him, in 1760 Noverre ruled out any normative operation which could suffocate the voice of nature and place restraints on creativity, insisting on the impossibility of fixing the whole gamut of moods in a limited repertoire of gestures.[43]

In these and similar considerations from the first edition of the *Lettres*, Noverre tended to be rather generic, giving undue prominence to his sources – from antiquity (above all Quintilian), Garrick and theoretical writings on art. He apparently did not yet possess sufficient experience of "danse en action" to tackle the issues more directly. The first ballet he presented to be organized in terms of exposition, intrigue and dénouement, with a narrative structure and without masks, was put on in November 1757, the year he also began preparing his *Lettres*. Moreover it was only over the next two years – immediately prior to the publication of his treatise – that Noverre began to take a serious interest in contemporary discussions of the theatre, starting to formulate a sort of repertoire of gestures, without however aiming at a genuine classification. In his peremptory dismissal of any suggestion of rules he was obviously once again attacking the schematic rigidity of academic dance, as well as rejecting the language of mimicry which derived from the *commedia dell'arte*. It was only after the experience of *Médée* (1763), *Hypermnestre* (1764), *La Mort d'Agamemnon* (1772) and *Les Horaces et les Curiaces* (1774) that his position with respect to mime changed, as both his chosen texts and the structure of the ballets became more elaborate. The complexity of the individual scenes and the need to anchor the greater scope and heightened rhythm of the action and give unity to the successive *tableaux*, characterising them with coherent gestures and movements, obliged him to structure a vocabulary of gesture and, as a result, to make a meticulous study of the individual roles, experimenting with them himself before he could "teach" them to his dancers. Thus if in 1760 the problems linked to identifying the appropriate gesture, training novice dancers and entering into a role are simply enumerated, and in Letter IX he merely alludes to the need for dancers to be trained in expressing feeling, in Letter XIII (tome II, 1803), Noverre was able to emphasise the responsibilities of the *maître de ballets* with respect to the education of the dancer-actor, his style of acting and the need always to progress in his art.

> If the mechanical part of dance gives the *maître de ballets* such a lot of trouble and requires so many formulae, does not the art of gesture and expression demand every bit as much? Will not rehearsing the movements, giving a lively depiction of the passions, achieving action dictated by the emotions, the general state of agitation and indeed all these transitions bring him to a state bordering on delirium? If Agamemnon, Clytemnester, Achilles and Iphygenia are all on stage together there are four roles which need to be taught. Each of the actors has his or her own end in view, with opposing sentiments and different views; each of them has to be animated by the right kind of

[43] The various considerations referred to are found in Letters II and X (1760).

> passion. Thus the *maître de ballets* has to immerse himself in the inner situation of the four characters; he has to act each of them, making the gestures they have to imitate, his face taking on just the right hue according to the sensations each one is experiencing; he has to assume the demeanour, the age and sex of the four: the transports of Achilles, the pride of Agamemnon, the anxiety, grief and outbursts of maternal love; the obedience and candour of Iphygenia ready to be sacrificed.[44]

Nowadays one might object that, in holding up the dancing master as his "model", a dancer could jeopardise his concentration and his ability to identify with the character in question. But both Noverre's experience and that gained today go to show that, in dance, the analysis of a role and the systematic repetition of the movements, maintaining the utmost concentration on the music and on dynamic and expressive qualities, triggers a process of interiorization of the gesture which leads to a total assimilation, or appropriation, of the gesture itself, which ends by becoming completely "natural".

Noverre wanted nothing to do with the Italian mime tradition, which in the *Lettres* published in 1760 he dismissed as a 'low and trivial form of expression which Italian players have introduced into France',[45] and to ennoble his proposed reform he invoked an ideal link between his invention, the *ballet d'action*, and the drama of antiquity. However, this was really nothing more than an academic exercise, and in the course of time he provided a more rigorous account of its genesis. In the edition brought out in Saint Petersburg he still claimed to have revived *l'art de la pantomime*, which had lain buried beneath the ruins of antiquity, but at the same time he raised some questions concerning the interpretation of ancient drama and Roman pantomime in particular, with a view to playing down its value and quality to the advantage of "modern" dance. In specifying that the *saltatio* had to be viewed exclusively as pantomime, and that the Roman pantomime artists were simply "gesticulatores" and not dancers, Noverre argued that although their repertoire of gesture was extremely effective because it allowed them to express any idea whatsoever, and even develop the notion of past and future actions, it was excessively complicated.[46] The movements of the arms and fingers, which Noverre conceived as similar to the ones recently created by Charles-Michel L'Épée to

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[44] 'Si la part mécanique de la danse donne au *maître de ballets* tant de peines et de fatigues, si elle exige tant de combinaisons; combien l'art du geste et de l'expression n'exige-t-il pas de travaux et de soins? Cette répétition des mouvements, cette peinture animée de passions, cette action commandée par l'âme, cette agitation de toute la machine, enfin toutes ces transitions variées ne doivent-elles pas le mettre dans un état de voisin du délire? Si Agamemnon, Clitemnestre, Achille et Iphigénie se trouvent en scène, voila quatre rôles à enseigner; chacun des acteurs a un intérêt séparé, des sentiments opposés, des vues différentes; chacun d'eux doit avoir le caractère de la passion qui l'agit; il faut donc que le *maître de ballets* se pénètre de la situation intérieure de ces quatre personnages; il faut qu'il les représente tous, qu'il fasse les gestes qu'ils doivent imiter, que sa physionomie s'enflamme au dégrée juste des sensations que chacun d'eux éprouve; il doit prendre le maintien, saisir l'âge et le sexe de ces quatre acteurs; les emportements d'Achille, la fierté d'Agamemnon, le trouble la douleur et les éclats de l'amour maternel; l'obéissance, et la candeur d'Iphigénie prête à être sacrifiée'. 1803, t. II, Letter XIII, pp. 131-132.

[45] 1760, Letter X, p. 263; Beaumont, p. 99.

[46] In these excerpts there is an implicit polemic against the reading of the ancient sources which assimilated dance to pantomime and viceversa. One can also recognise his opposition to Angiolini, who in 1775 had emphasised the dance element in pantomime in antiquity (See L. Tozzi, *Il balletto pantomimo del Settecento. Gaspare Angiolini*, pp. 76-77).

provide a language for the deaf and dumb, had to be very rapid and elaborate, but above all highly codified, making them accessible only to those who had been adequately trained. Here there can be no mistaking his criticism of contemporary Italian pantomime, but Noverre went one step further: if it is plausible to claim that the gesticulation of the ancient pantomime lived on in modern Italian acting, it follows that this ancient art form was trivial, ignoble and devoid of finesse, and thus unsuited to tragedy or the exercise of oratory, which both require dignity and simplicity. In conclusion, for Noverre the conventional gesture, which is in itself unacceptable in dance, becomes 'ridiculously unsightly' if it is derived from the Italian style.[47] He ends by asking whether the theatre goers of his day, being neither deaf nor dumb, could be expected to learn the details of such a complex language just to be able to go to the ballet.

This question actually conceals a certain bitterness at the on-going disputes with his rival Gaspero Angiolini and his clique, who on numerous occasions had clashed with him in the debate on the art of pantomime and on the true nature of the *ballet d'action*. At the same time it betrays an awareness of the structural limits of the language of pantomime. Whereas in 1760 he had alluded to the impossibility of representing past and future, when it came to the 1803 edition he felt obliged to state in no uncertain terms: 'It is quite impossible to express in pantomime the following lines: "I had, my Lord, an illustrious and generous brother./This you will say to him who brought you here"'.[48] So 'Like those intrepid navigators who have brave storm and tempest to discover unknown lands […] but whom insurmountable obstacles oppose in the midst of their travels', he himself, who had done away with a number of barriers, was now forced to yield in the face of the objective limits of his language of gesture.[49]

Noverre came to this conclusion following decades of experience, but the conundrum had exercised commentators for a long time, without any prospect of a solution.[50] In 1822 André Jean-Jacques Deshayes, a perfect exemplar of the style of l'Opéra, seemed to have accepted the structural paucity of the French language of gesture, but shortly afterwards, in 1828, in a chapter specifically devoted to pantomime in *The Code of Terpsichore*, Carlo Blasis recognised how some French choreographers had taken the trouble to integrate their gestural language with Italian

[47] Joseph Uriot placed on record a significant account of the difference between Noverre's pantomime and the one currently in use. See Joseph Uriot, *Lettres Virtembergeoises, ou La Verité sans fard opposée à […] la Verité telle qu'elle est*, Vraibourg, 1766, Letter VI (Stuttgart, July 12, 1766).

[48] 'Il est de toute impossibilité d'éxprimer en pantomime le vers suivants: "J'eûs un frère, Seigneur, illustre et généreux./Vous direz à celui qui vous a faite venir"'. 1803, t. II, Letter VII, p. 75.

[49] 1803, Avant-Propos, p. x; Beaumont, p. 6.

[50] 'The more I work the more I become aware of my inadequacy. In making this declaration, where there can be no question of vanity, I find myself obliged to go on providing Programmes. but in confessing my shortcomings I must also say, with the same frankness, that Pantomime is of all the imitative Arts the most wretched and limited'. Programme for *Eutimo ed Eucari* (Milano, 1775), in J. Sasportes, 'La parola contro il corpo ovvero il melodramma nemico del ballo', *La danza italiana*, no. 1 (Autumn, 1984), p. 36. The same sentiments are expressed in the Avant-Propos to the ballet *Euthyme et Eucharis* in *Recueil de Programmes de Ballets de M. Noverre Maître de ballets de la Cour Imperiale et Royale*, Vienne, Joseph Kurzböck, 1776, pp. 3-4.

idioms to endow dance with the greatest possible scope for expression and contents.[51]

In settling on modern drama as his paradigm, and rejecting the form of pantomime in dance practised by the Italian companies, Noverre made a clear distinction between dance in the strict sense of the term and pantomime, referring to them in Letter VII (1803), as two separate categories. There was 'mechanical dance', concerned with 'execution', and then there was 'pantomimic dance', performed 'in action'; only the latter could bestow on dance the status of an imitative art.[52] This distinction, taken together with comments made by Friedrich Melchior Grimm, have led modern historiography to interpret Noverre's form of dance as a composition which was penalised by the dichotomy between pantomime and dance. In 1770 Grimm wrote: 'In Noverre's ballets dance and *marche cadencée* are clearly separated; dance is only performed in the great transports of passion, at the decisive moments; in the scenes characters walk in accordance with the truth of what is being represented, but without dancing' adding that 'this passage from *marche mesurée* to dance and from dance to *marche mesurée* is no less essential to this spectacle than the passage from recitativo to aria and from aria to recitativo in the productions at l'Opéra'.[53] This appraisal by Grimm confirms the fact that, in his pursuit of pantomime, Noverre took drama as his model. If however we take into consideration other first-hand accounts, and analyse the Programmes of the ballets, there was in fact no such drastic separation between the different facets of dance. Nor moreover was the simple walking in time to music in the scenes of action seen as a weak point in Noverre's dance form. In this respect one only has to think of the choreography of two of the classic moments in nineteenth-century ballet: the scene of the daisy in

[51] Without becoming too technical or complex, we can perhaps refer to a manuscript transcription of the ballet *Giselle* (Opéra, 1841) made by Henri Justamant, *maître de ballet* at the Opéra in the season 1868-69, now in the Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln. Published by Frank-Manuel Peter for OLMS in 2008, it contains elaborate and discursive passages of mime which cannot possibly have been rendered without recourse to conventional gestures from the Italian tradition. From the commentary it is clear that mime was used not only to convey states of mind but that even words were communicated through gesture, organizing them into a dialogue or expressing a thought. Unlike French mime, which was expressed by means of single gestures or poses, the Italian idiom could feature a concatenation of movements, as can be seen from the manuscript transcription done by Enrico Cecchetti of *Caterina La figlia del bandito*, a successful ballet by Jules Perrot staged in London in 1846 and in Milan in 1847. Cf. F. Pappacena, 'Due trascrizioni inedite dagli archivi Cecchetti: *Caterina La figlia del bandito* di Enrico Cecchetti, *Lo Spirito Maligno* di Cesare Cecchetti', *Recupero, ricostruzione, conservazione del patrimonio coreutico italiano del XIX secolo, CNR Roma, 10 dicembre 1999*, Roma, Chorégraphie, 2000, pp. 151-164. A striking example is seen in an excerpt of the film of the *gran ballo Excelsior* made by Luca Comerio in 1913, in which, albeit in a simplified and contaminated fashion with respect to the eighteenth-century tradition, the range of gestures show how some represented elementary emotions with schematic movements (e.g. rage, joy, gratitude), while others required a concatenation of gestures to express a condition (e.g. swearing an oath).

[52] 1803, t. II, Letter XI, p. 106.

[53] Friedrich Melchior Grimm, Jules-Antoine Taschereau, A. Chaudé, Denis Diderot (eds.), *Correspondance littéraire philosophique et critique de Grimm et de Diderot depuis 1753 jusqu'en 1790*, 16 vols., Paris, Furne, 1829-1831, VII, pp. 176-177.

Giselle (act I)[54] and the mingling of James and the house guests in Bournonville's *La Sylphide* (act I).[55]

To return to the question of the possibilities of gesture, the sources suggest how in Noverre's dance form not all the emotions and states of mind were assigned to the language of gesture. When it came to rendering dramatically delicate moments or passages full of nuance, Noverre made use of elements drawn both from iconology and from spatial composition pertaining to painting and indeed to academic ballets. In this respect two scenes from *Énée et Didon* are exemplary. In the first (early on in the ballet), Amor in the guise of Ascanius passes from the embrace of one into the arms of the other, illustrating the mutual love of the two protagonists. The second (part III, scene III) occurs when the love of Dido and Aeneas is consummated in the sanctuary of a grotto. Only Cupid is able to steal the occasional glimpse, and he coordinates Juno, Venus and Hymen in a *pas de quatre* which evokes the amorous encounter for the audience. Another instance illustrating this compositional method with great clarity comes in *Médée et Jason*, with the macabre, grotesque dance of the personifications of the sentiments (Hatred, Jealousy, Revenge) which derange Medea and drive her to carry out her vendetta. And we could add the dotted lines and acute angles, adopted from classical iconology, which were blazoned on the costume of Medea as a visual evocation of the sorceress's evil nature. There could be no more conclusive example than the episode in *Le Jugement de Pâris*, cited in Letter XX (1803), in which Paris awards Venus the golden apple. To make Venus's offer to Paris explicit, and above all 'concrete', Noverre has the bust of Helen of Troy led on to the stage by the Graces and Cherubs, the conventional symbols of love.

In condemning acute angles and dotted lines (whether in gesture or in *port de bras*), while at the same time interpreting the curve as a sign of positive values and good breeding, Noverre was not merely adopting a convention of academic dance, but respecting an aesthetic principle of classical art which imbued eighteenth century culture. In theoretical works published around the middle of the century, authors ranging from Voltaire to Edmund Burke and William Hogarth, as well as Antoine-François Riccoboni, concurred that soft, round contours constituted a tangible manifestation of finesse. In classical culture continuity was seen as an expression of equilibrium and decorum, while the sinuous line, a distinctive trait of the aesthetics of the age of Louis XV, tended to be associated with physical pleasure.

In conclusion, the symbolism of the passions or "situations" was to be conserved, albeit in a different form, in Romantic ballet. As evidence we can cite the various meanings of the circle (for example in *Giselle*, as fate or the death ritual) or the diagonal *en remontant* (again in *Giselle*, when executed by the Willis it is a sign of exclusion), or indeed the celestial melodies (the arrival of the Immortals), miraculous rays of light, and so on.

[54] The ballet *Giselle*, choreographed by Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot on a subject by Théophile Gautier, libretto by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges and music by Adolphe-Charles Adam, was first performed at the Paris Opéra on 28 June 1841.

[55] The version of *La Sylphide* created by the Danish choreographer August Bournonville to music by Hermann Severin von Lovenskjøld was first performed in Copenhagen at the Royal Theatre in 1836.

Conception and Composition of Ballet

As emerges clearly from the Programmes of the ballets he published in 1804 in the second volume of his *Lettres*, Noverre could not do without the grandiose staging and colour schemes which were vital to the first phase of his production, and nor could he renounce the special effects, the materialisation of a *deus ex machina*, the splendid coordinated ensembles and the miraculous visible scene changes which had all played a crucial role in the ballets he had put on prior to his first visit to London. In his mature conception dance was a grandiose and evocative spectacle which made its impact not only, as we have seen, by an expressive intensity which aroused emotions worthy of an artistic masterpiece, but also by beguiling the audience and enchanting their senses. The impact of dance depends, as in an ideal union between soul and body, on both emotional involvement and visual delight (sentiment and beauty), and to achieve this result there had to be a perfect blend of all the components of the spectacle, an equilibrium which it was the choreographer's job to oversee if not indeed to orchestrate. Thus the method Noverre evolved was based on the crucial balance between the visual and aural components of the spectacle; in the former dance, in the strict sense of the term, gesture, movements on stage, colour and scenery were harmonised as in a large painted canvas characterised by bold contrasts, and constructed, as he himself stated, according to the principles of optics and perspective. It was in fact a global approach, in which the role of the choreographer was comparable to that of a modern day director.

In all the editions of the *Lettres* Noverre never fails to point out the kinship linking dance, painting and poetry. But if the affinities between dance and art can be recognised in gesture, in colour combinations, in the construction of space, in the unity of composition and in "beau désordre", how does dance relate to the system of literary genres and, more generically, to Aristotle's *Poetics*? What was Noverre's position with respect to the three unities in tragedy which, in spite of being illegitimately derived from Aristotle, nonetheless constituted an inviolable principle? Diderot himself had confronted the problem, albeit indirectly, when in 1757 he defined dance as a 'pantomime mesurée', going on to say that 'a dance is a poem'.[56] For Noverre, too, dance could be assimilated to poetry since there are numerous and crucial conditions which distinguish it from drama, first of all the incompatibility with prescriptions which apply in other contexts.[57] But fearing that departing too explicitly from Aristotle's *Poetics* could in some way detract from the value of his reformed dance form, he stated:

> According to Aristotle, a ballet, like poetry, of whatever style, should contain two different parts, that of *quality* and that of *quantity*. Nothing exists without matter, form and figure, so that a ballet ceases to exist, if it do not include those essential parts characteristic of all things, whether animate or inanimate. Its matter is the theme which it is desired to represent, its form is the ingenuity of the plot given to it, and its figure is the different parts of which it is composed. Form therefore corresponds to *quality*, and extent to *quantity*. Here, then as you see, are ballets subordinated in some degree to the laws of poetry.[58]

[56] Cf. Denis Diderot, *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel*, p. 158.
[57] This topic is dealt with predominantly in Letters VII and XV (1760).
[58] 1760, Letter VII, pp. 123-124; Beaumont, p. 53. See also Letter XV.

Nonetheless, if the lack of a codification of the poetics of dance formulated by an acknowledged expert, and the example of Shakespeare, whom he made much of in the introduction to *La Mort d'Agamemnon*, helped Noverre to maintain the inapplicability of the rules of drama to the *ballet d'action*, in practice it was his choices of subject, his predilection for the marvellous and his interest in opera which prevented him respecting the unity of place and time enshrined in French tragedy. In this we can see an affinity with the position initially taken by Gaspero Angiolini, the other central figure in the reform of dance, who in the Programme of *Dom Juan ou le Festin de pierre*, staged in Vienna in 1761, proclaimed: 'Dance has no recitatives […]. Our hard and fast rule is verisimilitude'.[59] It was only in 1765, when he began work on a series of choreographic transpositions of works of contemporary literature starting with *Sémiramis*, that Angiolini decided to conform, albeit with prudence and making the necessary adjustments, to an unequivocally classicistic position.[60] Noverre, on the contrary, never went back on his anti-academic conception of dance.[61] If, when he came to take stock at the end of his career, he did show more willingness to recognise the unities, this appears to be a prudent position of compromise, due at least in part to his occasional experiences with ballets that were similar in structure to the drama (*Les Horaces et les Curiaces*, for example).

The liberty Noverre claimed for dance also had its effect on the definition of the number of acts, which he began to introduce while he was in Vienna. He felt under no obligation to match the canonical five of classical tragedy: the number depended on how the story was being interpreted and on the cuts the choreographer was obliged to make. To spin out a story which has no more than a threefold development into five acts, he argued, meant hamstringing the plot, weakening the impact of the action and slowing down the rhythm of its composition. In short, it meant betraying the very objective of his art form: that of gripping the audience in an ever growing surge of emotion.

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[59] L. Tozzi, *Il balletto pantomimo del Settecento. Gaspare Angiolini*, p. 68.

[60] The disagreement between Noverre and Angiolini on the unities was part of a dispute which involved various matters and went on for several years. See 'Introduction au Ballet des Horaces ou petite reponse aux grandes Lettres du Sr Angiolini' (which did not feature in either the 1804 or 1807 edition) in *Recueil de Programmes de Ballets de M. Noverre Maître de ballets de la Cour Imperiale et Royale.*

[61] In 1776, when the dispute with Angiolini was becoming more bitter, Noverre wrote in the 'Introduction au Ballet des Horaces ou petite reponse aux grandes Lettres du Sr Angiolini': 'sera sans doute exposé à la critique du Sr. Angiolini et de ses petits Oracles: ils diront que j'ai péché contre les Règles d'Aristote, et que mon Ballet ne renferme pas les trois unités… je leur répondrai que les Règles d'Aristote n'ont jamais été écrites pour la Danse, que les Auteurs Anglois ne les ont pas suivies; et que les Opera François et Italiens plaisent sans elles; j'oserai même avancer que la critique pourra facilement trouver dans les Chefs–d'œuvre du Théâtre Français des Anachronismes, des suppositions, des Episodes et des Etres absolument étrangers au sujet: mais l'Art, qui fait tout embellir, leur donne, pour ainsi dire, un air de famille, qui les fait adopter en faveur de la ressemblance' ('[It] will undoubtedly be exposed to the criticism of Sr. Angiolini and his little oracles: they will say I have sinned against the Rules of Aristotle, and that my ballet does not contain the three unities... I shall reply that Aristotle's Rules were not written for the dance, that the English authors did not follow them; and that French and Italian operas find favour without them. I shall even dare to venture that critics will have no difficulty in finding in the masterpieces of French Theatre anachronisms, suppositions, episodes and entities which are quite foreign to the subject: but Art, which embellishes everything, gives them, as it were, a family air, so that they are adopted on the strength of their likeness'). Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Even in his first ballets Noverre had taken care to organize the scenes in such a way as to make the subject matter as clear as possible and produce an immediate reaction of curiosity and gratification in the audience. In fact he had "brought to life" some famous old masters such as *Les Réjouissances flamandes* by David Teniers le Jeune (Opéra-Comique, 1755) and *La Toilette de Vénus* by François Boucher (Lyon, 1757), and in 1759 had employed citations from Molière, Voltaire, Racine, Crébillon and Diderot in *Le Jaloux sans rival* (with scenes which were performed partly seated and partly standing and a game of chess which imitated the draughts played in Diderot's *Le Père de famille*).[62] When, however, he came to transpose subjects taken from tragic drama in Stuttgart, he was faced by much more difficult conceptual and dramatic dilemmas. He was conscious of the need to make the subject matter accessible for all kinds of audience. The difficulties of tragic ballet involve not only how the story is to be interpreted and the characters and events transposed into dance without losing the narrative thread, but also the possibility of making the composition a homogeneous whole while conserving its appeal as spectacle. Noverre staked the same claim for the *maître de ballets* as was made for contemporary drama concerning the reinterpretation of classical plays, adapting them to current taste and rendering any acts of 'poetic licence' legitimate even if they detracted from the production's 'scrupulous exactness'. He returned to this topic several times in order to justify what might appear as illegitimate interference with the text. He was also at pains to demonstrate how his interventions did not involve gratuitous additions or substitutions – all the more blameworthy for being introduced into a historical episode –, but were rather imposed by insurmountable problems implicit in the very nature of dance and by his wish to endow ballet with splendour and compositional balance.[63]

Several examples can be cited in the edition that appeared in 1803-1804: from the ballet *Énée et Didon*, which features almost exclusively the phase of the two protagonists' falling in love, to *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, with a Eurydice in the guise of a temptress and a jubilant finale with the two lovers reunited with the blessing of Bacchus and the god Amor. In *Iphygénie en Tauride* Noverre found it impossible to stick to the version of either Euripides or Guimond de La Touche, and feeling the need to balance the components of good and evil, male and female, he invented a wife for the fearful Thoas, a 'remplie de vertus, de douceur et d'humanité'.[64] Nonetheless it is perhaps the *Ballet tiré de l'Henriade*, documented in the letter Noverre wrote to Voltaire in 1763, which gives the most comprehensive insight into his aesthetic credo in the early 1760s.[65] Noverre described his project for a ballet based on the ninth canto of the *Henriade* (*Idée d'un ballet héroïque tiré de la Henriade*), for which Boquet was already at work on the costumes.[66] Here we see Noverre displaying all his artifices, exploiting what he referred to as a 'vast opencast mine'

[62] See note 12.
[63] See 1804, Avant-Propos to *Iphigénie en Tauride*, t. IV, p. 238.
[64] 1804, t. II, p. 239.
[65] The letter dated September 1, 1763 to Voltaire from Noverre was originally given in the second of the eleven manuscript volumes presented in 1766 to Stanislav II August (pp. 168-177). It was subsequently published at the beginning of the tome II of the 1803 edition (pp. 2-6).
[66] In the second volume of the 1766 manuscript Noverre speaks of this as a project: *Idée d'un ballet héroïque tiré de la Henriade*. Boquet illustrated 12 costumes, given in the ninth volume of the same collection. We have no evidence that the ballet was actually put on.

thanks to which he could give full rein to ring together in a single production all the possible expressive genres. Discord led on by Ire provided him with the inspiration for a *pas de deux* 'marqué au coin du terrible'; Amor with the Furies gave him the idea for a *pas de trois* full of action and picturesque ensembles; the storm unleashed by the power of Love conjured up a scene full of awesome effects.[67] The king himself would feature in a *pas de deux* with the beautiful Gabrielle, and here Noverre would illustrate all the delights of a dialogue springing from the sentiments and passion. However, he adds, the ninth canto of the *Henriade* did not provide him with a fitting conclusion for a ballet, since the desperation of the beguiling Gabrielle and the tears of Amor seemed to him too weak an ending. Thus, ruling out Gabrielle's suicide which would have produced 'le plus grand éffet', he submits to Voltaire the idea of an apotheosis worthy of the most elevated allegorical ballet.[68] In his reply Voltaire was fulsome in his praise and expressions of gratitude, but took good care to avoid passing comment.[69]

The *ballet d'action* involves a series of limitations caused, as we have seen, by the lack of verbal text, its brevity (about twenty minutes in the case of Noverre's first creations; forty-five for the later, more complex ones) and by the need to make it spectacular. For these reasons Noverre felt it was indispensable to focus on the most salient moments of the original story, excluding whatever was 'superfluous': minor characters, who would only make the story line more involved, scenes of dialogue without action ('dialogue tranquille'), and any form of reflection or description, which was impossible to render using merely the language of gesture. The Programmes show that this reduction of the text of the dramas was compensated by a more copious and analytical description given in the *libretti* (then known as Programmes). In fact the discursive nature of the Programmes was a controversial issue at the time, with Gaspero Angiolini and his supporters criticising Noverre above all for the pointlessness of going into such detail on a story which was already familiar to audiences or in which they would not have found it difficult to grasp the essentials. Some critics alluded to an incongruity between what took place on stage and the story as it was related in the Programmes. Angiolini was less generic, pointing out the contradictions (such as dialogues in which characters not on stage were referred to), and accusing Noverre of possessing 'those means by which past,

[67] 1803, t. II, First Letter to Voltaire, p. 3.
[68] Ibid., p. 5.
[69] The apotheosis is staged thus: As Henri is leaving, kneeling in front of his beloved and unable to part from her, Noverre imagines the appearance of Glory accompanied by all the virtues which contribute to sovereigns' fame. The scene changes: the spectres of Luxury disappear, Love flees carrying off the beautiful Gabrielle; Discord and Ire take to the air, one brandishing a banner and the other crushing serpents. The scene changes to show the temple of Immortality, partly hidden in the clouds: Henri, struck by the splendour of the virtues surrounding him, renounces all the passions that could obscure such glory and discards the ornaments he had received from Luxury to resume his weapons. The images fade out, the doors of the temple open, Immortality reaches out to Henri, and Glory, followed by the heroic virtues, leads him into the temple, where he takes his place alongside the 'sovereigns who have been great and just, and who have combined with the heroic virtues that rare humanity which is the foundation for the glory of sovereigns and the happiness of their peoples'.

future and personal ideas can be expressed'.[70] Such objections were well founded, but fail to take into account the fact that the approaches of Noverre and Angiolini were totally different. As Noverre specified in the *Petite Reponse* published in 1776, his Programmes are not a prose transposition of the stage action, but are designed as autonomous texts, standing alongside them, a sort of prose poem in fact. His objective was to remind the audience of the story line, clarify the choreographer's interpretation, recall what had gone before, highlight the scenes that had been selected and the cuts, integrate the shortcomings of the pantomime, and lastly to ensure the spectator's emotional involvement before the curtain went up. This accounts for the care taken over the literary form of the Programmes and the presence of reflections and observations concerning those dramatic high points which were penalised by the lack of verbal text (as for example Dido's tumultuous thoughts in the first scene of *Énée et Didon*). Surely this aspect is not so perplexing if one views Noverre's Programmes in the light of those produced in the nineteenth century, or indeed towards the end of the eighteenth century. If for example we compare the libretto for the *gran ballo Excelsior* with the manuscript transcriptions conserved in the Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan, one can recognise numerous passages which have no equivalent in the choreography; they are inserted to back up the narrative and ensure that spectators will understand the details of what they are witnessing.[71] There are analogous instances also in more cursory Programmes like the one for Dauberval's *Telemachus in the Island of Calypso* (King's Theatre, March 1791). On page 21 one is informed of the reason for the hatred which Venus nurtures towards Telemachus, although this detail is certainly not expressed on stage.

Going on remarks contained in the *Lettres*, dating from both 1760 and 1803, and on the Programmes included in the tome III of 1804, it emerges that Noverre based the organization of his ballets on three over-riding criteria: contrast, rapidity and surprise. Contrast, which lay at the heart of classical tragedy, is the keystone of dance and was conceived as an extension of variety, another cardinal principle of classical art. It is found in all the aspects of the production, from the concatenation of the events to the characterisation of the protagonists and the rendering of their behaviour. It is in fact a vital element, generating energy, making the course of the action dynamic and preventing it becoming static and tedious.[72] The other two

[70] Angiolini accused Noverre of having Clytemnestra order Aegisthus to kill two people who were not on stage: Agamemnon and Electra. The letter is published by Giovanni Rasori in his Foreword to the Italian translation of the *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785-1786) by Johann Jakob Engel (*Lettere intorno alla mimica*, Milano, Giovanni Pirrotta, 1818-1819, p. ix).

[71] In the Museo Teatrale alla Scala two complete transcriptions of the *gran ballo Excelsior* are conserved – by Giovanni Cammarano and Eugenio Casati – as well as a partial one by Enrico Cecchetti (cf. *Excelsior. Documenti e saggi/Excelsior. Documents and Essays*, ed. by F. Pappacena, Roma, Scuola Nazionale di Cinema-Cineteca Nazionale; Di Giacomo, 1998).

[72] In the scenography the contrast is made apparent in the juxtaposition of contrasting settings (splendid halls, shady woods); contrasting states of mind in characters (the delicate, sensitive Hypermnestra as opposed to her fierce and vindictive father Danaus); characters with opposing behaviour, either straightforward (generally the female protagonist, such as Medea) or contradictory because tormented by second thoughts (often the male hero). This aspect is readily apparent in the ballets *Énée et Didon*, *Renaud et Armide*, *Admète et Alceste*. But in Letter VIII in the 1760 edition Noverre cites an emblematic example – the shepherd boy Aristée – in which he states one of the key themes of his ballets (the victory of friendship over love), as proof of dance's status as an imitative art with lofty moral content.

compositional criteria – rapidity and surprise – enabled him on one hand to keep the spectator in a constant state of agitation, a prey to emotions, and on the other to create set pieces which were homogeneous and well balanced in terms of visual impact, gesture and sound. Rapidity involved brief scenes and a swift evolution in the situations (as Noverre put it in Letter XIV, 1760: each scene was to be as quick as a flash of lightning). To ensure surprise Noverre often had recourse to *coups de théâtre* and both visual and aural special effects (such as miraculous apparitions).

Among the elements of surprise, silence and vocal interjections are among the most original and evocative solutions. In Letter XIV Noverre asserts that he introduced silences as early as 1757 in *La Toilette de Vénus*, explaining that it was an ingenious expedient to make the audience concentrate on what was happening on stage and appreciate the perfect composition of the *tableau vivant* with its air of solemn calm. Whereas when it comes to the tragic ballets he composed in Stuttgart and Vienna, silence has a dramatic function which can be compared to its role in theatrical idiom, serving to underscore key moments in the drama and to emphasise the moral message.[73] In *Les Horaces et les Curiaces* (II, 1), for example, the silence bestows solemnity on the oath of loyalty taken by the King of Rome, Tullus, and the King of Alba, Metius, in front of their armies drawn up prior to battle. In the second scene of the first part of *Hypermnestre* the appearance of the menacing spectre of Gelanor to Danaus is made all the more terrifying by silence, amidst which the lugubrious words 'Frémis Tyran, la mort t'attend', pronounced by a singer hidden among the group of sculptures from which the spectre emerges, announces the tyrant's pending downfall.[74] Later on, two passages described by Noverre illustrate a vocal interjection realised in the same ballet by means of a chorus off stage.

> if on his [Danaus's] departure daylight returns, and with the dawn a fearful hubbub is heard expressing regret, remorse and grief (cries uttered by a women's chorus); if at this very moment the curtain parts again and the Danaïdes, hair flying, arms steeped in blood and grasping daggers, are seen fleeing the scene of their misdeeds, pursued by the ghosts of their husbands, the furies, and personifications of crime, remorse and vengeance […] the spectator will not be able to stand the sight of so many excruciating tableaux without being cut to the quick.[75]

Another vocal interjection, this time used to evoke Greek tragedy, occurs in *La Mort d'Agamemnon*. When Clytemnestra is accidentally stabbed by Orestes, the chorus says: 'quel horreur! quel crime affreux! ah dieux',[76] going on to address Orestes with the words: 'Monstre, c'est ta mère! Tremble, frémis, oh épuvantable! fuyons,

[73] It is very likely that Noverre took his cue from the importance that was attributed to silence in the stage play tradition. See Jean-François Marmontel, 'Déclamation théâtrale' and Denis Diderot, *Réponse à la lettre de Mme Riccoboni.*

[74] 1804, t. IV, part I, scene II, p. 186.

[75] 'si à son départ [de Danaus] le jour paroît, et qu'au lever de l'aurore on entend des cris confus et effrayants poussés par les remords, le repentir et la doleur; (cris prononcés par un chœur de femmes) que dans cette instant, on voye les rideaux s'ouvrir encore et les Danaïdes les cheveux épars, les bras sanglants et armés de poignards fuir le lieu de leurs forfaits, si on les voit poursuivies par les spectres de leurs époux, par les furies, les crimes, les remords, et la vengeance personnifiés […] il n'est plus possible que le spectateur puisse soutenir la vue de tant tableaux déchirants, sans être vivement ému'. 1803, t. II, Letter XVI, p. 162.

[76] Ibid., p. 167.

abandonnons ces lieux'.[77] It was a successful ploy which, as Noverre himself says, produced an enormous, terrifying effect, which we can liken to the effect of the writing in words of fire traced by a hand on the walls of Danaus's residence: 'Tremble, un fils d'Egyptus, va règner à ta place', surely inspired by Voltaire's *Sémiramis*.[78]

In his decision to base the new form of dance on the drama, on one hand, and on opera on the other, Noverre could not escape having to make use of personification.[79] In both the *Lettres* and the Programmes allegories and personified passions occupy a particular place on account of their ability to highlight, through their visual impact, either the dramatic message or the moral content. The stock personifications from mythological ballets such as Playfulness, Laughter and Pleasures embellish the divine processions with luxuriously decorated costumes to heighten the splendour of the staging. The personifications of Jealousy, Hatred and Revenge in *Médée*, and the allegories of Crime, Remorse, Perfidy and Betrayal in *Hypermnestre*, flaunt their grotesque costumes and infernal blazons with outrageous movements, making tangible Medea's perverse fantasies and the horrible deeds of the Danaides. The disquieting symbolism featured in the costumes of the allegories (with torches, serpents, blindfolds, material with ragged fringes resembling tongues of fire, acute angles and dotted lines) fulfils the same function, serving to arouse in the spectator a sentiment, at once immediate and profound, of disgust and horror. These were conventional allegorical figures taken over from either the drama or the opera but which take on a unique dramatic force in the dumb show of ballet.

In the *Lettres* of 1760 and also those of 1803 Noverre repeatedly makes the point that in his ballets the music plays a crucial role in completing the *tableaux en mouvement*, the main features of the spectacle, with an aural dimension. He advocated a symbiosis between melody and movement, with the music playing its part in creating the overall illusion. In his theoretical writings and in the Programmes he referred to music which was highly descriptive or evocative: trumpets and drums provide a solemn accompaniment to triumphal entries or the start of a battle; fanfares and resounding horns announce the arrival of the royal family during a hunt; celestial melodies herald the descent of the Immortals.[80] But above all he insists that the music should be perfectly at one with expression and emotion. In Letter VII (1803) Noverre remarks that when the musician worked closely with the choreographer he was able to coordinate the harmonies and melody with the scene changes and the developments in the action, and he could also render, and even intensify, the dancer's gestures, so as to hold the audience spellbound with the force

[77] Ibid. In the same letter Noverre relates that he got the idea of using a hidden chorus when he was involved in a production of Gluck's *Alceste* in Vienna, probably in 1767.

[78] 1804, t. IV, part I, scene II, p. 185.

[79] Personification was an ancient practice found in wall paintings from classical times, much used in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera and drama. See Jean-François Marmontel, 'Opéra', in *Éléments de Littérature*, pp. 798-824.

[80] Celestial melody was a *tópos* of eighteenth century choreography. It features, for example, in Marie Sallé's *Pygmalion*, staged in London in 1734. A century later it was used by Luigi Manzotti in the first quadro of the *gran ballo Excelsior*, first performed at the Teatro alla Scala on January 11, 1881.

of the illusion.[81] The contribution of the composer, Noverre added, became truly effective if he abided by the indications of the choreographer, as had been the case when Gluck composed the characteristic air of the *Ballet des Sauvages* for the production of *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Opéra in 1779.[82]

Scholars investigating Noverre have often wondered to what extent these affirmations are conditioned by his wish to portray himself in the best possible light, or by a vein of nostalgia for times past, or again what they really mean in technical terms, and indeed whether the compositions of Deller, Rodolphe, Starzer, Aspelmayr and Louis de Baillou really were so impressive.[83] In 1760 Noverre argued that the *maître de ballets* should have a knowledge of music that extends to practical music making. In the Programmes he refers to moments in productions involving specific requisites for the action on stage which would inevitably have placed strict conditions on the composer (to give just one example, the specification of silences and suspense). Moreover, we can find more than one passage in the Programmes which indicate Noverre's competence in music (for example, the scene described at the beginning of the Programme of *Psyché* in which Psyche is slumbering on a couch surmounted by a baldachin with the curtains half open, looped up with diamond bows, surrounded by Graces and Nymphs, allegories of Playfulness, Laughter and Pleasures, where Noverre suggests the employment of mutes, pizzicati, flutes and oboes). Even if Noverre's knowledge of music could not compare with that of Angiolini, Maximilien and Pierre Gardel or Carlo Blasis, he could nonetheless count on the solid grounding provided as part of dance training. And finally, it should be borne in mind that when Noverre had to modify the music written for an earlier ballet, he was not obliged to completely alter its structure to leave the composer a free hand.

The affinity between dance and painting constitutes, as we have seen, the main Leitmotiv of the *Lettres*, and one of the cornerstones of Noverre's aesthetics. Drawing a parallel between choreographer and artist meant on one hand underlining the importance of taking a global vision of the stage, and on the other envisaging the use of the compositional techniques of painting, namely perspective, use of colour,

[81] See the entry 'Ballet' in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris, Duchesne Veuve, 1768) published by Carlo Blasis in 1820 in his *Traité élémentaire théorique et pratique de l'Art de la danse* and thereafter in *The Code of Terpsichore*: 'The music of a dance or ballet must be livelier, and of a stronger accent and cadence, than vocal music; and as it is required to signify a greater variety of things, it ought also to be much more diversified. It is music alone that can inspire the dancer and mimic with that warmth of expression which a singer derives from his words. Music supplies, in the language of the soul, all that dancing, by its attitudes and gestures, cannot make known to the spectators' (Carlo Blasis, *The Code of Terpsichore: a Practical and Historical Treatise on the Ballet, Dancing, and Pantomime; with a Complete Theory of the Art of Dancing*, transl. by R. Burton, London, James Bulcock, 1828; repr. New York, Dance Horizons, 1976, p. 57).

[82] The collaboration between the *maître de ballets* and the composer is amply discussed as early as Letter V (1760). In the Foreword to the 1803 edition of the *Lettres* Noverre affirms the total subordination of composer to choreographer (p. 3).

[83] Florian Johann Deller and Johann Joseph Rudolph composed the music for the ballets created in Stuttgart; Joseph Starzer and Franz Aspelmayr those in Vienna; Louis de Baillou collaborated with Noverre in Milan.

visual rhythm, variety, "beau désordre", and so on.[84] It also meant that the choreographer had to possess an extensive culture, like that which Lucian of Samosata prescribed for the pantomime (history, mythology, geometry, painting, anatomy, drawing, geography, music etc.) as well as competence in the specific skills of the performing arts (scenery construction, music, stagecraft, lighting), so that he could conceive ballets without misconstruing the subject but also intervene in questions concerning the production.

Going into the technical details, Noverre was convinced that the choreographer would benefit from drawing on art not only in deciding on posture, poise and inclination of the head, and expressions of the face and eyes; it would also enable him to give homogeneity to the set pieces and verisimilitude to the scenes. This homogeneity in a dance number is indispensable and has to be guided by taste, finesse and imagination. It implies the coordination of the characters on stage viewed as components of a harmonic whole, and also an attention to the details of form and expression, above all in the supporting roles ("Figurants"), which Noverre managed to integrate into the overall spectacle and harmonise with the leading characters.[85]

Noverre considered verisimilitude, another fundamental principle of classical art, as the essential prerequisite for illusion. In his ballets it is based, as we have seen, on the coordination of all the components of the spectacle (scenery, costumes, lighting, music, gesture, dance). In purely visual terms it relies on the "beau désordre" of the classical tradition, a lifelike spatial construction, and historical and geographical appropriateness for the costumes and staging. In ballet "beau désordre" implies an irregularity in the placing of figures on stage which gives the impression of naturalness without degenerating into confusion, which would destroy the overall equilibrium of the spectacle ('regularity in irregularity'). The grouping of the Nymphs and Fauns in *La Toilette de Vénus* (Lyon, 1757) was the example Noverre himself gave in Letter I (1760) to illustrate the desired effect and dramatic function. In rejecting the symmetrical distribution of the twelve Nymphs required by academic convention, Noverre suggested forming odd number groupings combined with different expressive intensity, thus introducing the innovation of spatial and expressive asymmetry. The numerous references to the painter François Boucher and the model figures of Louis-René Boquet (in both the Warsaw and Stockholm collections) point to solutions which were profoundly influenced by the Rococò aesthetic and the "modern" taste for the diagonal, variety and sinuosity of line.[86]

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[84] 'A composer who desires to rise above his fellows should study painters and copy them in their different methods of design and execution. Both arts have the same object in view, whether it be for the achieving of likeness, the admixture of colours, the play of light and shade, or the grouping and the draping of figures, posing them in graceful attitudes and giving them character, life and expression; but now, how can a *maître de ballets* hope to succeed if he do not possess the abilities and qualities which go to the making of an eminent painter?'. 1760, Letter V, pp. 68-69; Beaumont, p. 35.

[85] On this aspect his contemporaries were full of praise and admiration. See for example what Pietro Verri wrote to his brother Alessandro in a letter dated August 3, 1774: 'Noverre's ballets have an elegance, nobility, sentiment which are truly enchanting, exquisite taste in the costumes, and the prodigious achievement of making the secondary characters less remissive, always striking beautiful and picturesque poses' (in L. Tozzi, *Il balletto pantomimo del Settecento. Gaspare Angiolini*, p. 132).

[86] In the figurines Boquet created for Noverre's ballets there is a preponderance of oblique cuts and an irregular stratification of the materials which are in marked contrast to the symmetry and schematic nature of traditional costumes.

Another aspect which contributes to creating the "beau désordre" and avoiding any artificial uniformity was a subtle play of nuances in the colour scheme, with carefully judged degrees of shading.[87] The same objective underlay the adaptation of artistic perspective to the stage, which Noverre conceived to harmonise with movement on stage by settling on a specific viewpoint.[88] He paid a great deal of attention to this topic, suggesting how to give the effect of distance and avoid clashes between the stature of the performers at the back of the stage and the simulated height of the scenery depicted on the backcloth and the furthermost wings.[89] His solution was as ingenious as it was costly: to use dancers of different statures (very short performers giving the effect of distance, increasing in height as they came towards the foreground), and replacing them with artifices as they moved from the rear (or from on high) towards stage front and vice versa. Recalling his experience with the *Ballet des Chasseurs*, Noverre claimed that the expedient had achieved a significant impact because it was coordinated with the fading away of sounds and diminution in the intensity of colours.[90]

In comparing the spectacle of a ballet with pictures Noverre, in common with other commentators from Rémond de Sainte-Albine to Diderot, could not avoid noting the discrepancy between the two ways of representing subjects with respect to behaviour. Noverre denounced the failure of stage designers to document themselves on the customs and habits of different peoples, preferring, whether through negligence or lack of taste, to follow the fashion of the day or the caprice of a leading dancer or singer rather than pursue solutions which would favour the achievement of illusion. Furthermore, he pointed out how the gap separating the costumes from the action was the consequence of a conception of dance based on the abstraction of gesture and the elimination of characterisation. A Greek, a Roman, a Shepherd, a Hunter, a Warrior, a Faun, a Rustic, Playfulness, Laughter, Pleasures, Tritons, Winds, Flames, Dreams, the High Priest and the Sacrificers all wear the same style of dress and are distinguished only by its colour and by their ornaments, which are in any case always very showy. Finally he wonders whether it is appropriate to have characters on stage who are overwhelmed by loss or by devastating events but maintain an impeccable coiffure, rather than being disfigured by grief and with their hair all over the place.

Noverre rejected the wearing of *tonnelets* which were so rigid and voluminous that in certain dance positions they practically brought the hip up level with the shoulder, and concealed the body's contours just as masks concealed the face. But he also rejected any static symmetry in the set design and décor, commenting that simple draperies in contrasting colours can allow the dancer's figure to be seen and bring

[87] Noverre devotes considerable space to this topic in Letter XV (1760), when he speaks about the ballet *Les Jalousies ou les Fêtes du Sérail* (1758).

[88] In Letter XIII (1760) Noverre takes the *premières loges* and *parterre* as the specific viewpoint. He argued that conceiving the action in this way in terms of a frontal view on the same level ensured a correct visualisation from all over the theatre.

[89] Of such importance in achieving illusion, the assimilation of the performers into the stage setting was totally ignored in the stage play tradition. See, in Letter VI (1760), Noverre's criticism of the *Ballet des Chasseurs de la Forêt enchantée* by Giovanni Niccolò Servandoni, based on Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1754, music by Francesco Saverio Geminiani).

[90] On this topic see also F. Pappacena, 'Le "tableaux en mouvement" de Jean-Georges Noverre 1754-1758', in M. Fazio and P. Frantz (eds.), *La fabrique du théâtre. Avant la mise en scène*, pp. 389-398.

out the dynamism of the movement. Noverre was considerably ahead of his times in visualising costumes which were not designed according to the latest fashion but were merely soft draperies in which the material was so disposed as to fall in attractive pleats and masses, gathered up in cascades which were free to billow out and take on ever new forms.

It is true that we are in the realm of reflections and aspirations, but underlying these declarations there was nonetheless a clear desire, albeit a prudent one, for reform. In 1757, under the stimulus of the reforming campaigns of M.lle Clairon and Chassé and provoked by what Marmontel had written in the *Encyclopédie*, in *La Toilette de Vénus* Noverre drastically reduced the *panier* worn by female dancers and slimmed down the male *tonnelet*, eliminating the typical elliptical form spreading out at the sides.[91] In the 445 illustrated figures of Louis-René Boquet, known to us since the discovery of the eleven volumes which Noverre presented to Stanislav August, King of Poland in 1766, we see an elegant compromise in which, although he does not renounce the elaborate headgear, abundant ornaments and scintillating sequins, the costume appears soft and diaphanous, fashioned using asymmetrical cutting and irregular stratifications of different materials. Certainly there are plenty of examples of licence and extravagance which betray the typical libertarianism of the Rococò, but after all, Noverre himself took liberties in tackling the problem of verisimilitude, striving not to displease a public which was as keen on novelty as it was attached to imperative visual conventions.

Noverre spoke of this aspect in the penultimate of his *Lettres* in justifying the cases of poetic licence in his ballet *Les Jalousies ou Les Fêtes du Sérail*:

> If one were too scrupulous in depicting the characters, manners and customs of certain nations, the pictures would often be poor and monotonous in composition. Again, would it not be unjust to condemn a painter for the ingenious liberties he had taken, if these same liberties contributed to the perfection, variety and elegance of his pictures?
> When the characters are sustained so that those of the nation represented are never changed and nature is not concealed under embellishments which are foreign to and degrade it; when the expression of sentiment is faithful so that the colouring is true, the shading artistically contrived, the positions noble, the groups and masses ingenious and beautiful, and the design correct; then the picture is excellent and achieves its effect.
> I think, Sir, that neither a Turkish nor a Chinese festival would appeal to our countrymen, if we had not the art to embellish it, and I am persuaded that the style of dancing common to those people would never be captivating. This kind of exactitude in costume and imitation will only present a very insipid spectacle, unworthy of a public which only applauds in proportion as artists possess the art of bringing delicacy and taste to the different productions which they offer to it.[92]

The problem of how his ballets were to be conserved for posterity did not receive much consideration from Noverre. The discussion on the use of a graphic system to transcribe the choreographies, which occupies Letter XIII, appears to be primarily a pretext to deliver another attack on academic dance, highlighting its most problematic features, namely abstraction and the absence of creativity. Rather than offering an objective appraisal, Noverre launches into an invective against the system called *chorégraphie* created by Pierre Beauchamps and first published by Raoul Auger

[91] See Jean-François Marmontel, 'Décoration'.
[92] 1760, Letter XIV, pp. 431-433; Beaumont, pp. 153-154.

Feuillet (Paris, 1700). *Chorégraphie* was created with the dual aim of preserving the choreographic heritage and endowing dance with the same resources as the other arts (a system of notation and an analytical method). The ease with which Beauchamps's system could be used had ensured a considerable diffusion of the method and publications containing the transcription of parts of ballets dating from the end of the seventeenth century and a record of the steps codified by the Académie Royale de Danse. Noverre insisted on the limitations of this method and denounced its incompatibility both with the technical progress that had been made in the second half of the century and with the expressive use of gesture that characterised ballets with a narrative structure. Moreover, Noverre pointed out the incipient danger in transcription: a senseless limitation of the choreographer's creativity and an impediment to improving on and updating the work in question.

This latter consideration is not far removed from the observation that '*chorégraphie* deadens the imagination' with which Noverre once again proclaimed his aversion to the academic tradition and its apologists.[93] If he had been engaged in a lucid and objective analysis, as André Jean-Jacques Deshayes pointed out in 1822[94] and Arthur Saint-Léon thirty years later,[95] Noverre would never have confused the creative process with the transcription *a posteriori* of the dance steps, which was in fact the function of *chorégraphie*. The definition he used of a 'bird's eye view' in dismissing Beauchamps's notation as being incapable of respecting the main viewpoints – from the lowest tiers of boxes and the stalls – because he chose to view the movement from above is clearly instrumental, serving to strike yet another blow at hidebound academe. Later in the same letter Noverre drops his polemic tone and proposes a more comprehensive system featuring not only technical and analytical transcriptions but also firsthand drawings reproducing the expressive attitudes characterising the various dances and actions. In his proposal, which is perhaps rather utopian but undoubtedly very ambitious, he imagines a collaboration between the renowned François Boucher, for the drawings, and the famous court engraver Charles Nicolas Cochin le Jeune, to see them into print. This was indeed a rather drastic scheme which was later to come in once again for fierce criticism from Gaspero Angiolini, himself the champion, although not in fact the instigator, of graphic systems designed to conserve the choreographic heritage.

[93] 1760, Letter XIII, p. 393; Beaumont, p. 141.
[94] André Jean-Jacques Deshayes, *Idées générales sur l'Académie Royale de Musique, et plus spécialement sur la Danse*, Paris, Mongie, 1822.
[95] Arthur Saint-Léon, *La Sténochorégraphie ou Art d'écrire promptement la danse*, Paris, Brandus, 1852 (republ. ed. by F. Pappacena, Lucca, LIM, 2006).

APPENDIX

1760 *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets, par M. Noverre, Maître des Ballets de Son Altesse Sérénissime Monseigneur le Duc de Wurtemberg, & ci-devant des Théâtres de Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Londres, &c.*, Lyon, Aimé Delaroche, 1760. The book is published on January 11, the "Privilège" is dated December 21, 1759. The volume is dedicated to Karl Eugen von Württemberg (in-8°, pp. 484). An edition without "Privilège" and "Approbation" ("A Stutgard et se vend a Lyon chez Aimé Delaroche") also appeared in 1760.

1766 *Théorie et pratique de la danse simple et composée, de l'art des ballets, de la musique, du costume et des décorations, par Mr Noverre Directeur de la Danse et M. des Ballets de S.A.S. le Duc regnant de Württemberg*, the first of eleven volumes in manuscript containing an abridged version of the treatise, dated 10 November 1766. The other volumes comprise programmes (with the correspondence between Noverre and Voltaire from 1763 and 1764), musical compositions by Johann Joseph Rodolphe, Florian Johann Deller, François Granier and Guillaume Renaud, 445 figurines by Louis-René Boquet and technical considerations on staging ballets. The manuscript, which Noverre presented to Stanislaw II August, King of Poland ('Sa Majesté Stanislas Auguste Roi de Pologne'), in the hope of securing employment, is now conserved in the University of Warsaw Library.

1767 Reprint: *Lettres sur la Danse, et sur les Ballets, par M. Noverre, Maître des Ballets de Son Altesse Sérénissime Monseigneur le Duc de Würtemberg, & ci-devant des théâtres de Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Londres, &c.*, Vienne, Jean-Thomas de Trattnern, 1767. The volume is dedicated to Karl Eugen Duke of Württemberg (in-8°, pp. 444).

1783 Second edition: *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets. Par M. Noverre, Pensionnaire du Roi, & Maître des Ballets de l'Empereur*, Londres; Paris, la Veuve Dessain junior, 1783. The volume is dedicated to Monsieur Amelot, Ministre au Département de Paris (in-8°, pp. VIII-368), and in London to the Prince of Wales.

1787 Cyril W. Beaumont records an edition published in 1787 in Amsterdam (*Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, London, Cyril Beaumont, 1930, p. xii).

1801 The two letters Noverre wrote to Voltaire concerning Garrick were published by Arthur Murphy in *Vie de David Garrick suivie de deux lettres de M. Noverre à Voltaire sur ce célèbre acteur, et de l'histoire abrégée du théâtre anglais, depuis son origine jusqu'à la fin du XVIII siècle*, translated by Jean-Etienne-François Marignie, Paris, Riche et Michel, an IX (1800-1801).

1803 *Lettres sur la Danse, sur les Ballets et les Arts par Mr Noverre, ancien Maître de Ballets en chef de la cour de Vienne et de l'Opéra de Paris*, St. Petersburg, Jean Charles Schnoor, 1803 (4 tomes in 2 vols., in-4°, pp. X-480). Tome I (pp. 1-240) contains the 15 letters from 1760 including the corrections and integrations made in the second edition 1783. Tome II (pp. 1-240) contains 20 new letters, the first being the one Noverre

addressed to Voltaire on 1 September 1763 and the latter's reply, dated 11 October; letters XVIII and XIX contain Noverre's life of Garrick, dedicated to Voltaire (pp. 184-211).

1804 The same publisher, Jean Charles Schnoor of St. Petersburg, issued two further tomes (III and IV) comprising the second volume (pp. 484).
Tome III (pp. 1-226) is entitled *Observations sur la construction d'une Salle d'Opéra et Programmes de Ballets* (pp. 3-32), a reprint of *Observations sur la construction d'une nouvelle Salle de l'Opéra*, Amsterdam, Changuion; Paris, P. de Lormel, 1781. This is followed by 15 Programmes of the ballets (libretti): *Les Horaces*, *Euthyme et Eucharis*, *Médée*, *Les Graces*, *Rénaud et Armide*, *Adèle de Ponthieu*, *Psyché et l'Amour*, *Enée et Didon*; *Hymenée et Cryséïs*, *La Mort d'Hercule*; *Les Amours de Vénus ou Les Filets de Vulcain*; *Apelles et Campaspe, ou la Générosité d'Alexandre*; *La Rosière de Salency*; *Pyrrhus et Polixène*; *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (pp. 33-226).
Tome IV (pp. 1-258), entitled *Lettres sur la Danse, sur les Ballets et les Arts*, begins with 'Question d'un homme de lettres sur la musique' followed by 'Réponse à la question proposée', constituting the first of 18 letters (letters 1-6 addressed to Monsieur, 7-18 to Madame). This is followed by a second series of five letters addressed to Monsieur, entitled 'Sur les Fêtes Nationales' (pp. 109-140). From p. 141 onwards there are 8 Programmes of the ballets (libretti): *La Mort d'Agamemnon*; *Le Jugement de Pâris*; *Les Danaïdes, ou Hypermnestre*; *L'Épouse persanne*; *Alceste*; *Plan du ballet d'Alexandre*; *Belton et Éliza*; *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

In **1803** the book was published in 4 volumes by Bonnier in Copenhagen. This fact is mentioned in Joseph Marie Quérard, *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens, et gens de lettres de la France, &c.*, Paris, Firmin Didot père et Fils, 1827-1839, t. VI, pp. 461-462.

1807 *Lettres sur les Arts imitateurs en général, et sur la Danse en particulier, dédiées à Sa Majesté L'Impératrice des Français et Reine d'Italie. Par J.-G. Noverre, Ancien Maître des Ballets en chef de l'Académie impériale de Musique, ci-devant chevalier de l'Ordre du Christ*, Paris, Léopold Collin; La Haie, Immerzeel, 1807, 2 vols., pp. xvi-468-520, in-8 (I volume: 30 letters, pp. 468. II volume: 24 letters, Programmes of 10 ballets, in total pp. 520).
At the beginning of volume I the 'Lettres de M. Noverre à Voltaire et de Voltaire à M. Noverre' (1763, published in 1803) have been inserted, together with the letters from Voltaire dated 26 April 1764 and 4 April 1772, and the letter from the Abbé de Voisenon of 10 February 1760. In a note on page 15 Noverre specifies that the *Lettres* were addressed to Dauberval, who had died in 1806 ('Ces lettres et les suivantes ont été adressées à M. d'Auberval, élève de l'auteur'). Noverre specified that : 'La lettre et les suivantes [up to XIII] sont adressées à une Princesse souveraine d'Allemagne avec la quelle l'auteur a eu l'honneur d'être en correspondance' (volume II, Letter IV, p. 92, note).
Unlike in the previous editions, here the letters are organized in chapters according to a new criterion. The first volume features part of the letters from tomes I and II of 1803; the second volume features letters from all four tomes from 1803-1804. From p. 329 to p. 517 there are the Programmes of the ballets: *La Mort d'Agamemnon*, *Les Graces*, *Les Danaïdes ou Hypermnestre*, *Le Jugement de Pâris*, *Adèle de Ponthieu*, *Psyché et*

l'Amour, *Énée et Didon*, *Belton et Éliza*, *Alceste*, *Plan du ballet d'Alexandre*, *Apelles et Campaspe*.

CIRCULATION

From the moment of its first publication this work was considered the manifesto for a reform of the dance. The aesthetic principles and methods of composition set out therein circulated throughout Europe from as early as the end of the 1750s and constituted the basis for ballet at the Paris *Opéra* in the years of the French Revolution and in the Romantic era. Excerpts from the *Lettres* dating from 1760 were included in the section on *Danse* in volume 126 of the *édition métodique* of Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, 1786. From 1762 and throughout the nineteenth century all publications on the dance contained more or less explicit references to Noverre's work (see Giovanni-Andrea Gallini, *A Treatise on the Art of Dancing*, London, Dodsley, 1762, and Gennaro Magri, *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo*, Napoli, Orsino, 1779). Another book which was greatly indebted to the *Lettres* was Carlo Blasis's *Traité élémentaire théorique et pratique de l'Art de la danse* (Milan, Joseph Beati et Antoine Tenenti, 1820), that became the stylistic and pedagogical model for nineteenth century dance. Excerpts from letters XI and XII of 1760, taken from the *Encyclopédie métodique*, were inserted in chaps. 1-3, 6, 7 of the *Traité*.

ORIGINAL TRANSLATIONS

German translation of the *Lettres*: *Briefe über die Tanzkunst und über die Ballette, vom Herrn Noverre. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt*, Hamburg and Bremen, Johann Hinrich Cramer, 1769 (facsimile Leipzig, Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1977 and 1981; Münich, Heimeran, 1977; Leipzig, Henschel, 2010).

Unpublished Italian translation of the *Lettres* by Domenico Rossi: *Lettere sopra la Danza e sopra li Balli di Monsieur Noverre, maestro di ballo di S. A. Serenissima il sigre. duca di Würtemberg e prima de teatri di Parigi, Lione, Marsiglia, Londra etc. Tradotte dal sig. Domenico Rossi*, 3 vols., Napoli, 1778 (the manuscript is conserved in the Cia Fornaroli Collection, New York Public Library).

Between 24 May and 16 July 1794 the first eight of the 16 letters appeared in *La Gazzetta urbana veneta*. See Elena Ruffin, 'La prima traduzione italiana delle *Lettres* di Noverre: Venezia 1794', *La danza italiana*, no. 1 (1998), 35-58.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets, *précédées d'une vie de l'auteur, par André Levinson*, Paris, Éditions de la Tourelle, 1927 (the 1760 edition). In the same year the 15 letters dating from 1760 were published by Duchartre & Van Buggenhoudt in Paris.

Письма о танце и балетах, edited by Yu. Slonimsky, Leningrad, Akademia, 1927; reprint Leningrad-Moskva, Iskusstvo, 1965. The first 15 letters (tome I, volume I) of

the St. Petersburg edition (1803), followed by the Programmes of the ballets: *Euthyme et Eucharis*; *La Mort d'Agamemnon*; *Les Horaces*; *Médée*; *Psyché et l'Amour*; *Belton et Éliza*.

Letters on Dancing and Ballets, translated by Cyril W. Beaumont, published separately in the *Dancing Times* and then as a single volume (London, Beaumont, 1930). Translations of the 15 letters dating from 1760 in the 1803 revision, complete with the *Preface* published in 1803 (reprint New York, Dance Horizons, 1966, 1968, 1975; Alton, Dance Books, 2004).

Lettres sur la danse et les arts imitateurs, Paris, Lieutier, 1952 (facsimile Paris, Librairie théâtrale, 1977). 35 letters selected by Fernand Divoire from the 54 given in the 1807 edition, reorganized by the curator. In an appendix a *Notice biographique* and the Programme of the ballet *Médée*.

Facsimile of the 1760 edition (Studgard): New York, Broude Brothers, 1967.

Lettres sur la danse, Paris, Ramsay, 1978. Foreword by Maurice Béjart and Thierry Mathis. The 15 letters dating from 1760.

Italian translation of the 1760 edition with numerous cuts: Jean Georges Noverre, *Lettere sulla danza*, edited by Alberto Testa, Roma, Di Giacomo, 1980.

Lettres sur la Danse, sur les Ballets et les Arts (1803), edited by Flavia Pappacena, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2011. The 35 letters contained in volume I (tome I and II) dating from 1803.

Lettere sulla Danza, sui Balletti e sulle Arti (1803), edited by Flavia Pappacena, translation by Alessandra Alberti, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2011. The 35 letters contained in volume I (tome I and II) dating from 1803.